

Tequesta

THE JOURNAL OF THE HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

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Number LVIII

1998

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THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Tequesta

is published annually by the Historical Association of Southern Florida. Communications should be addressed to the Managing Editor of *Tequesta*, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 101 W. Flagler Street, Miami, Florida

33130. Telephone: (305) 375-1492. The Association does not assume responsibility for statements of facts or opinions made by contributors. (ISSN 0363-3705)

On the Cover: Cuban immigrants in Miami. HASF 1995-277-2916

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Editor's Foreword

This issue of *Tequesta* offers articles addressing three distinctive eras of Miami history. Francis Sicius, Ph.D., a professor of history at St. Thomas University, has spent more than a decade studying and researching the story of Cubans in Miami *before* Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba in 1959, an event that led to the influx of nearly 800,000 Cuban refugees to Miami-Dade County. Miami's sizable pre-Castro Cuban exile community is often overlooked in the rush to chronicle the story of those who fled Cuba for Miami after 1959. Knowledge of these earlier refugees and the larger community's reaction to their presence in Miami is, however, essential to our understanding of those who came later and whose presence has helped transform a Deep South community into today's robust international city. Readers of the Sicius essay, entitled "The Miami-Havana Connection: The First Seventy-Five years," may also find surprising the author's account of the strong ties, commercially and otherwise, that existed between Miami and Havana since the beginnings of modern Miami in 1896.

A frequent contributor to *Tequesta*, William M. Straight, M.D., offers readers, with "Life In A Pioneer Settlement: Miami's Medical Community 1843-1874," a wonderful window into the Miami of yesterday. Straight's research provides an exemplary example of how the effective utilization of scant, scattered primary source material can, with plenty of tender-loving-care, bring to life the story of a tiny, isolated riverine settlement and its medical "community." Dr. Straight has enhanced our awareness of the area's medical history for more than four decades, and I believe that this article is one of his best efforts to date.

Historians researching the early decades of modern Miami history have, until recently, benefited from the fact that pioneers could still be found in the Magic City. The inexorable passage of time and the resultant attrition have changed that picture, however, as the number of remaining pioneers has declined precipitously. We are fortunate, therefore, to publish an essay by Aretta Semes, entitled, "From Rising Sun To Daunting Storm: Miami in Boom and Bust, A Reminiscence." Presently a resident of California, Mrs. Semes arrived in Miami in 1923 with her family after a long automotive journey from New Jersey. The city and the entire state were, at the

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time, on the cusp of a great real estate boom, and its bright future prospects were what brought her family here. In this essay, Mrs. Semes has provided a first-person account of the excitement of boomtime Miami, along with the heartbreak that came with the bust, the killer hurricane of 1926, and the ensuing economic depression.

We know that you will enjoy reading this issue of *Tequesta*, and we invite you to avail yourself of the other fine publications, exhibits, and events provided by the Historical Association of Southern Florida for the people of South Florida and beyond. We stand ready to assist you in probing the rich history and culture of Miami and the region surrounding it.

Paul S. George
Editor, *Tequesta*