

The Greater North Miami Historian



Summer Edition

Volume II Number 2

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THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The citizens around the Greater North Miami area have been good to us this year. Donovan Jones gave us an old newspaper that updated and created a new and positive image of the North Miami Dirty Shirts Ball Club of the 40's. They were the kids that had to play all of their games out of town as the City did not have a field. In addition he followed up with data and original photos of his Dad the Water Plant Engineer for the City of North Miami. If you haven't seen a picture of the 1925 Arch Creek School, we have one, thanks to Shirley Huff. Seth Bramson and Jeff Levine independently donated in mass two large collections of photos and negatives that cover wide and varied areas of the city. From Blair Conner we got a collection of 1950's Post Cards picturing the motels down the Boulevard and around the area and Joan Quinn gave us a photo of the Glenn Curtis Flying school. Want to see Keystone Point in 1948 on the Pages of Life Magazine. Stop by, Janna Mc Connell provided us a copy. Thanks to Bob and Jean Schomber for the 50th Anniversary photos for the yearbook. Burnham Neil got us a map of 1921 Dade County and our local Land Surveyor Al Toussaint on 127th Street pitched in a couple more ancient maps covering the North Miami area. We have a one of a kind item in Commissioner Sherman Winn's personal fire-hat that was converted into a lamp by the local firemen as a parting gift as he moved on to higher office. If you have a problem finding a parking meter in the city, stop by and put a nickel in our private meter, a gift from Bill Valentine. Hey Folks! Thanks for the memories.

This is an exciting time to be part of the Greater North Miami Historical Society! Our Membership is growing, we continue to organize community events and we are always looking toward the future.

Our membership has grown to a total of 56 members as July 1, 1999. This is not bad for a group that began with a few people sitting around a table. Many thanks to those who have brought friends and neighbors to the table.

We have hosted an evening at the North Miami Police Department with former Chief Devaney as the keynote speaker as well as a Night in Biscayne Gardens. Presently we are working toward future projects that might include a 75th Anniversary Committee and the construction of permanent display cases for police station memorabilia. Without a doubt, the GNMHS is going places.

THE ROAD SHOW

What's been happening? Well, former Chief of Police Jim Devaney was our Keynote Speaker one evening in one of large public conference rooms at the new Police Station. He went back a few years with his story to a time when you could count all of the city policeman on your ten fingers and have one or two fingers to spare. It was a rare tale of intensity, dedication and humorous side trips.

A short time later the Board of Directors of the GNMHS visited with the Biscayne Gardens Homeowners Association and made a presentation on the beginnings, the maps, and the land of Biscayne Gardens. The best part of this presentation was a delicious buffet that was prepared by and for the members and their guest (us). It was delicious with many juicy morsels coming from the local gardens. We need more invites like this.

“ACTIVIST OF THE DECADE” PENNY VALENTINE

Congratulations to Penny Valentine one of the GNMHS most dedicated members, The North Miami Mayor’s Economic Task Force named Penny as “Activist of the Decade” She was recognized at the Task Force’s banquet on June 23, 1999. She was recognized for her many years of dedication to the City of North Miami. She is the Executive Director of the of the Greater North Miami Chamber of Commerce. In addition to this challenging job she lends a hand to a variety of Community organizations including the GNMHS.

Truly, Penny could have easily been named the North Miami’s “ Activist of the Century”. The GNMHS thanks Penny for the time and effort that she has given us. Thanks again Penny.

OTHER HAPPENINGS

WOCN 1450 AM got bit by the “History Bug” and “what was it like in North Miami back in the good old days.” The “History Bug” was our own Glenn O’Hearn. WOCN invited Glenn to bring them up to date on what is the GNMHS. Glenn spoke to the folks out in Radio Land about North Miami and the Arch Creek Communities that existed around the turn of the Century. He related how those early settlers were a long way from any real urban area and how they were agricultural in nature but set the base for today.

The North Miami Senior Citizens Foundation was also entertained by a talk in June by a GNMHS Director, Tad Mozynski at one of their regular meetings. In that there were a lot of local old timers at the meeting, Tad may have picked some historical facts from that group that we can follow up on. .

WANNABEE A MEMBER

The Greater North Miami Historical Society meets on the first Friday of every month. The meeting place is the North Miami Chamber of Commerce building at 1300 West Dixie Highway, The meetings start at 7:30 PM. Come on over and hear the latest about the past. While you are there become a member. Just fill out the information on the application in this periodical. If you can’t get here and would like to support the GNMHS then mail in the application to the GNMHS at 1300 West Dixie Highway. In either case attach a ten-dollar check payable to the GNMHS.

THE GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORIAN WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

The past several months have been productive as to new members. There are a lot of people out there (in Greater North Miami) that have a real interest in history and now they are finding a way to have a positive relationship with the community collecting, preserving and/or donating old photographs, memorabilia, artifacts, historical documents other historical ephemera.

The membership rolls reflect that our new members for the last several months are:

Lou Ann Colodny
Lee Feldman
Phillip Ferrera
Eddie Liles
Christine Moreno
Clara Romano
Hector Sanchez
Alan Schnieber
Macy Sezzin
Mij Sezzin
Marcello Toimil

Some of the new folks above have made contributions from their own private collections to the Society’s archives. They’ve got the spirit. Thanks a lot folks, we appreciate your support.

You don’t have to have a collection or an artifact to join. We need people to help in many ways. We need to interview some of the old timers before they move along. We need their words of remembrance on tape or video so that the next generation can know how it really was in the good old days.

We need folks to go out into the community and photograph the significant architecture of today as well as what is left over from the past. North Miami is a hot bed of little old frame-stucco Mediterranean homes from the “Iron” Manor era. These homes need to be identified and photographed. Yes we help on the archival process.

Speaking of the archival room, the City of North Miami has provided an archival room for the GNMHS collection. The room itself is of some historical significance. It is part of a series of rooms that were designed as a bomb shelter in case of nuclear attack. You might say it is room in time but it is great, the only real problem is that we are shortly going to out grow it. We appreciate the City support at present and look hopefully to the future.

THE MIAMI AVIATION COUNTRY CLUB THE SANCHEZ SWAMP AKA KEYSTONE POINT

Prior to 1944 the area east of Biscayne Boulevard and north of 125th Street was a giant mangrove (tidal) swamp that was referred to as the Sanchez Tract or plat but by some other folks it was called the Sanchez Swamp. Shortly thereafter a busy airport erupted out of the swamp. Today we know the area as the Keystone Point Subdivision, an upscale single family subdivision of waterfront homes.

In 1945, two fellows from Cleveland, Ohio, Jack Keefe and Richard Flynn broke ground for an airport unlike any other around the state. Their dream was to create an airport that would cater to the businessman flyer or the flying enthusiast. They were going to create a single-family residential subdivision that would provide homes and a clubhouse in and around the runways. A businessman could run out to his plane in the morning and be off to Orlando or Atlanta and inversely return directly to his home when returning.

This type of Country Club Airport was not unheard of but it was not in the mainstream of airport construction. The Keefe and Flynn addition to the concept was the "Hangar Home." where a plane could be taxied to and housed in the distinctly structured home.

World War II had just ended and these two fellows had a feel for the new airplane industry that was to burgeon out and cover America with aircraft of all sorts. They had been active in aircraft sales, having had an agency for the Beachcraft in Cleveland. They were also active in the area of flying schools and flight training. They had trained thousands of Army Air Corps Cadets in WW II. So with this background they came to Florida with its year round good weather and brought their dream out of the Sanchez swamp.

The airport business took off like a rocket. Keefe and Flynn expanded their business to become sales agents for two other aircraft companies. One of these companies manufactured a plane called the Ercoupe. The residences that were envisioned were designed to accommodate the Ercoupe. The airport and the flying schools prospered but the sales for "Hangar Homes" never got off the ground. The best estimate is that they only constructed two or three of The "Hangar Homes.

Why the airport closed is speculation as it was doing well. One would guess the great expansion of land around the airport for the Hangar Homes did not sell off and the several million dollars (loan?) expended for development was a burden. This is speculation. The partners did split up and the remaining partner may have seen the need to change the concept to stay alive. With only one or two hangar/home sales there seems to have been a marketing problem. Consider that waterfront homes were going well elsewhere and everyone did not have plane but almost everyone had a boat. Thus Keystone Point rose out of the ashes of The Miami Air Country Club.

Greater North Miami Historical Society

Excerpts from talk by Blair Conner at the Miami Memorabilia Club

April 1999

FOURTH OF JULY 1950

FESTIVITIES, FIRE WORKS, AND DANCING

Hot dogs, hamburgers, sodas and watermelon served at all events

The North Miami Youth Foundation the organization resulting from the North Miami Dirty Shirts effort to secure free recreation for the youth of North Dade sponsored a fourth of July outing in 1950 under the leadership of Police Chief Karl Engle. The schedule for the day

2:00 PM softball for the girls - Baseball for the boys Ping-Pong & Darts for all ages

Shuffleboard & Horseshoes for the old guys Foot races for the little guys & gals

7:00 PM The Big Fireworks Show by Chief Engle

8:00 PM Dancing under the stars to the music of the Vergil Loyker Band (Vergil Who?)

The Greater North Miami Historical Society



The Greater North Miami Historical Society is an organization established to preserve historical artifact, written, and oral history, ephemera, and memorabilia relating to the current City of North Miami and the areas surrounding the city.

The Society came into being when a group of interested citizens decided that the history around the Arch Creek Basin was as important to county history as is the Miami River Basin. Collections or data gathering, along with archiving are its basic tasks. The Society needs the papers, the photos, the stories, and any other documentation that is important to the historical archives of the community. The Society needs the help of the community and the friends of the community. So if you have a document, a photo or a story that you can donate or let us copy please contact us at the below address

13100 WEST DIXIE HWY
NORTH MIAMI, FL 33161
(305) 891-7811 FAX (305) 893-8522

**GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
13100 WEST DIXIE HIGHWAY
NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA 33161**

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
13100 WEST DIXIE HIGHWAY NORTH MIAMI, FL. 33161**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ **FAX** _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES \$10.00 ANNUAL