

# The Greater North Miami Historian



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OCTOBER 1999

## WILL THE PUMPKIN COME AGAIN ?

## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

--- SCOTT GALVIN ---

The characters in the cartoon "Peanuts" waits every year for the "Great Punkin" to return but it never comes about. In the City of North Miami, however, the return of the "Great Punkin" is an annual event. The Wise Men and Shepherds precede Christmas, the Easter Bunny comes with his entourage of candy, eggs and chicks. Old Tom Turkeys come and go with Thanksgiving dinner. It is "Coxie's Army, however that escorts the "Great Punkin" in to North Miami. On the day after the night before the mighty punkin is perched on the steeple of the "E. May Avil" Library, but from where does he come? Only "Coxie's Army knows.

He first appeared on Halloween night 1969 along with a poem about the members of Coxie's Army. This was not the Coxie's Army (Veterans of W.W.I) of the 1930's that marched on Washington DC but it is the Army of the "Great Punkin", who we believe are protectors of all tricksters" not the treaters. The Miami Herald described Coxie's Army in 1998 as former North Miami Boy Scouts who have chose too keep within the Scout Law and not be destructive with their prank.

It is rumored that the "Great Punkin" is the protector of the Library and the way the Library grown since 1969 you might well believe that. The library staff may believe so. It is believed that they put out offerings of root beer and goodies on Halloween night for Coxie's Army. With the growth of the Library the steeple also has grown to a great height. In 1969 a Boy Scout may have handled the assignment easily but now it may take several men with a sophisticated mechanical plan to put the "Great Punkin" on his throne.

Some of the poetry of Coxie's Army is beyond repair but on occasions it is readable and makes philosophical points.

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I was going to relate some personal Halloween moments in this issue but I decided to change my topic after having a brush with true history yesterday, October 2, 1999.

I was invited to attend a fundraiser for U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy aboard the yacht of former North Miami Mayor Howard Premer. Knowing that this would be an exciting opportunity, I made sure to be there. I could not have imagined that the trip would hold for me so much more.

We had not left dock before Senator Kennedy happened to take a seat on the couch next to Debra Kay Cohen, a local attorney and me. For the next 45 minutes, I would not leave my seat as I hung on every word he said. I listened to the Boston accent that is so familiar to all of us. I am so impressed by the sacrifices he has made during his life, from subtle things like spending his Saturday on a yacht with strangers but ordinary Americans.

I took the opportunity to ask him if he had any advice for me as a newly elected city official. He told me to read the last chapter of Profiles in Courage. He said it touched well on points that would serve me well. However, the most notable moment came when he said the chapter covered issues which, "my brother captured." My mind focused on those words. He was talking to me about John F. Kennedy, THE John F. Kennedy, and American legend. He was calling him simply, "my brother." How fortunate I was to have this moment.

As we departed the boat at the end of the afternoon, he wished me luck in my political endeavors. He noted that younger politicians like myself and his son, Patrick, a State Representative, would face many challenges in the future. I was flattered to hear him include me in the same sentence as his son.

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## MEMBERSHIP GROWS

The word is spreading that North Miami has a real history. Membership is growing as members talk with their friends. Some of the old timers are coming out with their tales and reminisces and a few donations.

New Members for this Quarter:

James H. Nunn, (Now of Atlanta) Mary Culhane, Peggy Hurst, Blanca Cobo, Carol Keys, Paul Blazej, Joanne Blazej, Joyce Mumford, Red Mumford, Lydia Kordalewski, and Carmen Justice, Gallardo and Sueiro Design Inc.

A lot of our new members have lived in North Miami a long time and sometimes we can prove it. Clara Romano joined the GNMHS last quarter and while we were archiving the old newspapers, donation from the library, we came across some interesting stories and advertisements. How about this one? Clara - 1950 what?

**THE HUB**  
**OF NORTH MIAMI**

*Where Everybody Meets  
Everybody*

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- DRUGS
- SUNDRIES
- STATIONERY
- BEER & WINES
- SODA FOUNTAIN
- MAGAZINES

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**No. Miami Store**  
CLARA & LOU ROMANO  
125th St. & W. Dixie

## WRITTEN AND VISUAL HISTORY COMES TO ARCHIVE ROOM

Our library of historical books received a shot in the arm this time from another old time family, the Harner family. Mrs. Marie Harner donated some books about early Dade County. Several of the books were pictorial or photographic publications, which are always great to have. They give that visual perspective that does not come with the written word. The adjacent column shows a Harner Real Estate advertisement in about 1950. Thanks Marie.

## MUSIC IN THE MANOR

In October of 1923 Arthur Griffing opened his Biscayne Park land sales office. In the days preceding the opening he advertised the opening and made plans to welcome all the prospective buyers. Opening day was an outdoor festival with bar-b-que and a balloon afternoon and he kept at it for several weekends. A few years later Earl Irons was platting the land north of Griffing's Biscayne Park and in the Town of Miami Shores (later to be renamed North Miami). Iron's kicked off his land sales program in the Halcyon Hotel in downtown Miami. It was a great night of glamour and champagne.

Mrs. Sadie Rogers tells the story of coming out into the country with her husband Leo to partake of Mr. Griffing's bar-b-que but not necessarily to buy a lot at that time. At a later date, however, she did live at 11389 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Ave in Biscayne Park. It is unknown if she made the champagne circuit at the hotel, but she told another story about Mr. Irons and his land sales program and how he sponsored musical Sunday afternoons. Mrs. Rogers said that Irons constructed a large gazebo in a vacant tract at the intersection where West Dixie intersects NE 125<sup>th</sup> street. On Sundays he hired a brass band to set up and play in the gazebo for the prospective buyers. According to Mrs. Rogers there was no bar-b-que but the music was stirring. In addition there was free transportation in Irons Manor buses from the Hialeah racetrack or from downtown Miami.

As you can see, North Miami had a musical beginning and music is still with us. Once again citizens are to be entertained with monthly musical interludes. Last year the City of North Miami sponsored a musical program called "Lunch time in the Courtyard" and it has been rescheduled. This year, beginning very shortly there will be "Music in the MOCA Courtyard." It will be on the final Thursday of every month. There also will be an evening program in the Courtyard entitled "Twilight Music." on the final Friday of every month.

**Lots and Acreage  
in North Miami and  
Biscayne Park**

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**E. C. HARNER**  
578 N. E. 125th St.  
NORTH MIAMI, FLA.

## **NORTH MIAMI 1926 GROWTH ANNEXATION AND DEANNEXATION**

The little Village of Arch Creek in the northerly end of Dade County was beginning to expand in 1926. The Indians were gone and the farms were more or less on their way to oblivion. Flagler's railroad had opened a floodgate for a large group of newcomers. Many of them were coming from "Up North".

The "Up North" connotation was laid on the newcomers by many of the old timers who were farmers that had migrated to the community at the turn of century. Many of them came from central Florida and Georgia. Some came by railroad car. Coming down in a railroad car did not necessarily mean that you were in a passenger-car, as we know today. It is said that Houston Gribble, a former North Miami Tax Collector and an "Old Timer", came down just after 1900 with his father (as a family) in a railroad car from Linden, Florida. According to Bill Gribble, Houston's son, the Gribble family came with all their household possessions as well as a few farm animals, all in a railroad stock car. This I understand was not an unusual method to move an entire family (who could afford it) and their related items for a short move. According to Bill his grandfather "The Patriarch" went on to establish a general store on the southeast corner of the intersection of the FEC Railway and NE 123<sup>rd</sup> Street.

The railroad brought many more families like the Gribbles. Arch Creek was growing and by 1926 had outgrown its agricultural setting. Along with growth came politics. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1926 the Town of Miami Shores became a municipal reality. The Town of Miami Shores of early 1926 was not the same entity or city that we know today. It was a much larger area than we have today. It not only included parts of the city of the present day City of North Miami but also a large portion of the City of North Miami Beach.

Later in October of 1926 the town council was not satisfied with the first boundaries they created and looked east to the ocean and there they could see a future gold mine (tax base). They then decided to annex this barrier island to the east. Ocean front land would give the tax base new life. The annexation covered the entire beach from the north county line through what we know today as Surfside.

According to one newspaper article in 1926, the Miami Shores Town Council "increased its limits by four square miles and four miles of ocean frontage." The Town Council passed an annexation ordinance declaring its intention and thus posted notices in the community announcing their intention. After 30 days (the required time) the Mayor (Earl Morgan) stated, "no notice of any objection had been served" and consequently the territory becomes part of the Town of Miami Shores. Now that was a simple way to do it.

Property owners and registered voters had the right to file an objection to the annexation with the Clerk of the Circuit Court. If there had been any objections, all actions on the annexation would have been stayed and brought before the court for review and decision. From the article in the newspaper, "the residents and property owners in the territory annexed have been enthusiastic in their approval of the annexation move."

The article also went along to say the major opposition to the annexation move was the bootlegging and rum running syndicate that was operating in north Dade County. Rum running from Cuba in that era was a major industry. In a short period of time, however the voters and property owners on the beach became disenchanted with the mainland Town Hall. The demographics of the community did not favor them at all and the great depression of the twenties was in full swing. The Town Hall was across Biscayne Bay on the mainland and the beach folks were out of sight and hearing thus out of mind.

The 1926 hurricane damage and the inability to respond to it did not do anything but compound the problem of the great depression that was creating chaos in the real estate world. People moving out and leaving their land as bad investments heavily eroded a great portion of the tax base. Town services were almost non-existent on the mainland. The folks on the beach were not getting anything for their tax dollar so they elected to get out of town. During the next five years there was bitter political litigation. This litigation caused the de-annexation of the beach and other areas in 1931. It also created The Village of Miami Shores, thus forcing the Town of Miami Shores to change its name to the Town of North Miami in the same year.

### **Dr. GREGORY W BUSH WILL SPEAK TO THE GNMHS**

Dr. Gregory W. Bush will speak to the GNMHS about the Miami Circle Project and other selected issues. He played a great part in salvaging the "Circle" for the public. Dr. Bush teaches History at the University of Miami and is the Director of "The Institute of Public History" at the University. The event is on Friday Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999 at 7:30 PM and is free. It will be in the Community room of the City of North Miami's new Police Station at 700 NE 125<sup>th</sup> Street. By entering the parking area from the east from NE 8th Avenue you can also have free and easy parking

## REMINISCING WITH ARTHUR CLARK

Ninety- one year old Arthur Clark a pioneer resident of Dade County wove and interesting tale in person and on tape of his lifetime in the area. Mr. Clark came to Miami in 1916 at the age of 8 from Louisiana. His family settled in a houseboat on the Miami River at a point that is now adjacent to Mahi Shrine Temple. The family shared their dock area on the river with Seminoles when they came down the river to trade and obtain supplies. The river in those days was free from garbage and was clean enough to swim in. Later the houseboat gave way to a five-room coral rock home in the Allapattah area that the family constructed. The Clark home was one of the few homes in the area that remained intact after the 1926 hurricane. The Clark family took in 35 less fortunate neighbors after the hurricane. This act of kindness lasted a month or more until they found new housing.

In listening to Mr. Clark you have to believe that he was exceptionally gifted in electric motor repair. He was apprenticed at an early age with the “Miami Armature Works” that was located adjacent to the old “Railroad Roundhouse” on NE 34<sup>th</sup> Street. This was probably the best shop of its kind on the southeast coast of Florida. In time he became the owner of the shop and was known for his electrical skills. In his time he contracted work for all the prominent businesses and pioneer businessmen. He ran over a few names in his ledgers like Frank Stoneman, Rodney Burdine, James Deering, George Merrick, and John S. Knight. One of his favorite stories was that in the 1920’s he was the first person to repair an electric car in Miami. The car belonged to the wife of Mayor E.G. Sewell and Mr. Clark was the only repairman on the car for its life.

Another one of his stories dealt with the time that Senator Ernest Graham’s (Town of Pennsuco) sugar cane plantation and refinery closed as result of a plant disease and he (Clark) was the recipient of all the electrical and mechanical equipment from the refinery. He also told the story about working on the elevator at the Burdine store and how Mr. Burdine personally involved himself with a hands-on approach. He took one of Mr. Clark’s electrical meters and connected it to the wrong line and burned the meter up. He replaced the meter with one that Mr. Clark could not afford but was quite happy to receive.

In the 1930’s the Clark family moved out to the area that would later be called Biscayne Gardens. He purchased the land from the Seaboard Railroad Company, that was one of the busy land companies in the area. According to Mr. Clark there wasn’t any problems with neighbors as they were few and far between. The nearest roadway was along Biscayne Canal and there was not any traffic congestion to worry about. North Miami was not much of a town as it only had a few stores. Miami was still the center of all things. The Clark place was on a drainage way (ditch) off the Biscayne Canal. Today it is called the “Spur Canal” and has a host of upscale homes and a condo development along its edge. This part of the “Gardens” is not the highest area of the county and Clark said it took tons of dirt to fill the home-site up to safe level from rising water or hurricane down pours. Today the same poor drainage problem is not altogether solved. Clark has a nice CBS home that his brother in 1930 designed and built to withstand the 120-mph winds and the other elements of a hurricane. Arthur Clark a Miami pioneer as well as a Biscayne Gardens pioneer is now on tape in the Greater North Miami Historical Society archives.

## CAPTAIN ROMAN PROSKE AND THE ROYAL BENGAL TIGERS CIRCA 1950



## DRYBREAD MUSIC AND THE PODACARPUS

At the last meeting of the meeting of GNMHS Arthur Clark came to tell us about early Dade County and on the same program was Dorothy Drybread who was going to tell us about her days in Dade County which came a little after Mr. Clark. Well Dorothy related a story to us that was more than interesting. It began in 1924 and came up to the present day. The problem was, that the story had very little to do with Dorothy. It in essence was a love story. It was her story about a man, her husband Claude and his life and his impact on this community. Claude Drybread was known as “Crusty” to his friends and he was very talented man. Crusty came to Miami in 1924 with his family. On their arrival they lived on the outskirts of Miami on NW 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1st Street. The elder Drybread was a carpenter and in following his trade they moved to Hallandale when the famous Hollywood Beach Hotel was under construction. Crusty put his time in like all the kids of that time. He went to the local schools, was a Boy Scout, and did his family chores until the 1926 hurricane. After the hurricane their house was roofless and living conditions were bad, so Crusty was sent to Indiana to live with his Grandmother. In this Indiana sojourn he graduated from high school and was introduced to music via the school band. Music was to become his lifetime love and work. In the early thirty’s he returned to Miami.

Like all young fellows of that time and just out of high school, work was on the horizon and for many young men the airplane was the future. Crusty, however, moved in that direction but it was toward the “Lighter than Air” type aircraft. The Zeppelins and Blimps had caught his imagination. In the end however music overcame the “Lighter than Air” world and became his lifetime work. With his great talent he immediately was into the band or orchestra world of the Miami and Coral Gables society set. It was at a grand affair at the Coral Gables that he got the name Crusty. This grand soirée was hosted by a Mrs. Gavley the owner of the Coral Gables Riding Club and Academy and she said to him, “with a name like Drybread, they should call you Crusty, not Claude. So from then on it was Crusty.

Traveling with the band took him to many places and he came to meet many new people. In 1933 it was a trip to Grand Rapids, Michigan where he met Dorothy Middleton and her family. In the following year the Middleton family visited Miami and the romance between Dorothy and Crusty blossomed. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of May 1936 they were married. It wasn’t very long and they were back in Miami. Shortly to follow was the birth of their daughter Janis in 1938 and son Don came in 1940.

Coming down from Michigan had a few little shocks, Dorothy said. You would not have seen women out in public smoking cigarettes in Grand Rapids. It seemed like all the younger women had their hair dyed and most chose bright red. The older women preferred the blue and some had a purple cast. It was never like this in Grand Rapids. There were a lot of things that went on in Miami that you never would see in Michigan. Dorothy told us about the Cuban people who came in the summer to shop in Miami stores like Burdines and the stores in the Seybold Arcade. The Arcade was famous for its gorgeous and beautiful jewelry and wonderful perfumes. There were occasional street vendors like the “Peanut Man” on Flagler Street who sold sweet peas along with his peanuts.

Music may be self-satisfying but many times it doesn’t put food on the table. So on the advice of friends Crusty decided on an alternate occupation and entered the La France Beauty School in downtown Miami. Dorothy told us that down town Miami was a lot different in the thirties and forties. There were streetcars that ran out to the fringes of the city and there were policemen who directed traffic at the two main inter-sections on Flagler Street. One of the policeman was a fellow named Jimmy Sullivan who Crusty had met up with in World War II Sullivan later became the Dade County Sheriff. One of the bands that Crusty played in, was the band in the Olympia Theater. The Olympia is a landmark building known as the Gusman Music Hall today. In those days it was one of the better theaters on the vaudeville circuits. He also played with a five-piece ensemble at Child’s Restaurant, a premier dinning establishment in Miami and also New York City. Dorothy went on to elaborate about the many famous places of that era where Crusty played ie, The Gingham Club, The Colonial Inn, and the Boca Raton Club. If it was class, Crusty played there.

When World War II came around Crusty decided that being a pilot in the Air Corp was the place he wanted to be, but the Air Corp told him that a man with a wife and two kids was not what they were looking for. Go back home and wait and see what the Draft will do for you. Well Crusty did not wait and his musical background got him a slot in a unit that was called the “Contact Caravan.” These were the people that put the musical programs together and traveled around and entertained the troops. Dorothy said it was Crusty’s unit that

filled the slot that Glenn Miller left when he went lost over the English Channel. After the war Crusty returned to Miami and his family and renewed his old acquaintances and began to look for work. The future was going to be more than music for him. Of course music would always be big in Crusty's life but there were to be other endeavors that he had not even thought about. In 1950 Crusty was traveling up to Boca Raton to play, as well as beginning a new career. He was now a booking agent (part time) for other musicians. This was a natural thing, as he knew all the hotel and club managers on the East Coast. During this time with the advent of television he also become involved in selecting musicians to accompany contestants for the "Ted Mack Amateur Hour. With all this traveling and mostly north they decided to move north but not too far north. So in 1953 they moved to the country. They would have moved earlier but Crusty needed a phone and they were not available. The population boom was ahead of the Phone Company in Dade County.

When you live in the city, the city takes care of you. If you live in the unincorporated area (Biscayne Gardens) you have to take care of yourself as to public amenities like sidewalks, storm drainage, police and fire protection, and many more little things that are not readily available. In taking care of yourself it means locking arms with your neighbors and putting the politicians on notice. The Drybreads were to become activists in the Home Owners Association. Dorothy went on to tell about the plant sales, bingo games, and a hundred other fund raisers that supported the group and its efforts to build a community center. The Biscayne Gardens Home Owners Association was organized a few years before the Drybreads moved in. A fellow named R. M. Brooks headed it up and put the Drybreads to work. After their move to the Gardens where the soil is fertile

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**Biscayne Gardens  
Civic Association**

The Biscayne Gardens Civic association, which was formed several months ago, now has a membership of 115. Their goal is to have every property owner in this district a member. The association is a non-profit corporation, run by and for the people of Biscayne Gardens.

Plans are now being drawn for a beautiful Civic building, and a building fund has been started. The Women's Auxiliary is giving a Bingo party on Saturday evening, June 9, 8 p. m., at Paul's Service Station grounds, 154th st. and N. W. 2nd ave., to which the public is invited. The proceeds of the party will go to the building fund.

A community song book is also being prepared by Mrs. C. H. Brown. She is making up 1,000 copies of this song book and advertising space is being sold in it, also for the building fund.

All property owners in Biscayne Gardens are being asked to attend the regular monthly meeting, held the first Thursday of each month at the Biscayne Gardens Baptist church, or send applications for membership to R. M. Brooks, president, P. O. Box 261, Little River Station, Miami.

**The presidents Message cont.**

To be sure, yesterday afternoon is one I will remember for a lifetime. When I am a grandfather, I will be able to relate the story of the afternoon I talked with an American icon. How exciting it is when history comes to life!

and conducive to farming, Crusty began a new venture. He did not become a gentleman farmer but became commercial producer of the Podocarpus tree. This tree is one that is used by Landscape Architects to fill in where messy fruit trees and large canopy trees don't work. There was and still is a demand for this tree and Crusty became one of the suppliers for the Landscape Architects. He, however, continued in the music field with his own band, "The Society Dance Band." Directing the band and growing trees was not enough for Crusty. His next endeavor ran simultaneous with his other pursuits. It was into gem cutting. He with another great Miamian, Lynn Collar went on to establish the Miami Lapidary and Mineralogical Guild.

It has been said that Crusty Drybread was busy up until the time that the man upstairs called him to gather up the best musicians for the last "Big Show"

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**The "Great Punkin" Cont.**

In 1990 the poet wrote:

"The feeling of fellowship is one that we share.

We'll probably be doing this till we're on Medi-Care"

Coxie's Army has aged and has dispersed all over the country. It is said that they roamed from Anchorage to Opa Locka. But have a few remained in the City to keep an eye on the steeple? It seems so, as they have always got the job done on time. Their Army is still resolute and strong and the bonds and ties of youth still remain. They come annually to reaffirm those ties and hoist the Great Punkin" as a sign to their common convictions and youthful endeavors. Last year in 1998 the poet wrote:

"So every year we come - this one 29.

How many more years will we make this tall climb?

Will we keep on coming till just one remains?

And - he has to climb the steeple with use of a Cane"

Will they recruit from the youth someday or will Social Security take the "Great Punkin" away

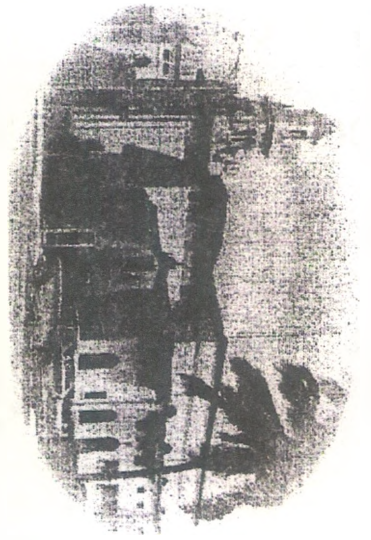
# The Miami Shores Bulletin



OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup> 1927

A COPY OF THE FRONT PAGE OF THE MIAMI SHORES BULLETIN  
DRAWN BY AN EARLY PIONEER OF NORTH MIAMI AND BISCAYNE PARK  
EARL J. HENSHAW

# 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**