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THE CHARLES IHLE HOME SITE IS BEING LEVELED AND FILLED BISCAYNE SHORES PARK TAKES SHAPE - WHAT SHAPE?

The other night at the GNMHS Society someone asked, "Where is the Biscayne Shores Park?" It is just west of Biscayne Boulevard on the south side of NE 116th street. No one at this meeting of local history buffs asked why it is historically significant. But for those who may not know.

The area surrounding what is now Biscayne Shores Park became the first land that was settled in the area. It was purchased from the State of Florida for a dollar an acre by Charles Ihle. Mr. Ihle purchased 80 acres and probably moved on the site prior to the sale. He had lived in the area a short while after his recent discharge from the United States Marine Corps. Upon arriving in the Miami River area he became friendly with those Dade Countians as well as the ones in the Lemon City area, who pointed out the area to the north that was still untouched. Marine Corps style training would have pointed him to reconnaissance, which according to records he did. He found the land he wanted for a farm and set to work to make it a livable place. He lived in what was a homemade chickee type shelter for quite a while. He began to clear what must have been a veritable jungle on the edge of the tidal mangrove swamp on the edge of Biscayne Bay.



GNMHS COLLECTION - 2000

A PORTION OF THE HISTORICAL CHARLES IHLE PROPERTY LOOKING WEST FROM BISCAYNE BLVD.

He began farming on the land as he cleared it. The first few years proved difficult, due to the climate, primitive farming tools, and insects. After time, however, his farm was known all around the county. In Thelma Peters book, "Biscayne Country" she describes the neat organized farm and well-known tropical preserve that Ihle had developed. She also relates his good fortune in being able to sell or convey it to a family who appreciated his work and time and could continue his tropical horticultural adventure.¹ Mrs. Peters also mentions the story of Houston Gribble with others as kids, who were chased off the Ihle farm every now and then. Bill Gribble, the son of Houston, added a little to that story, saying, according to his dad, that the kids were getting too close to the watermelons on occasions. Bill also added a little more information on the Ihle's road to the bay that is mentioned in Peters book. Houston had at one time mentioned to Bill that the road served.

Cont. Page 2

¹ Thelma Peters, Biscayne Country P 173 – 180

in getting produce to the bay, to be transported to other points but also that Ihle used the ditch on the roadside as well, having a small boat that would come-up as far as the tide would permit. Ihle's farm was productive enough that it sustained him and his lifestyle into his later years. In his later years it was becoming a burden.

Mrs. Peters says in her book, "In his old age with his paradise burgeoning beyond his power to control, Ihle had the satisfaction and good fortune to turn over to a family who cherished it quite as much as he had and who were, if possible, even more knowledgeable about tropical horticulture." The Perrine family (pronounced Pereen) purchased 8 acres (the grove) of the Ihle's estate. Over the years that followed the Perrines nurtured the land with same care and devotion that Ihle had and named the estate "El Palmango." El Palmango received considerable coverage in the press over the years. They cleared the areas of undergrowth that needed it and built a home on the site. The remainder of Ihle's land eventually went the way of the Perrines El Palmango, it was conveyed to others. Only a title search could tell us who and when others acquired the land. As for El Palmango it again became newsworthy in the early seventies when a townhouse project was slated for the site. There were many problems for the developer to overcome. There was no sewer capacity, and high development cost due to soil/muck excavation plus replacement with good soil, and drainage cost due to being in a swampy area. The County Manager quoted their engineers estimate for construction cost at \$125,000. The final Coup de Gras was when the environmentalist and historical issues became paramount. After a year or so of furor, political posturing, environmental nagging, and legal opinions, Dade County purchased the land for \$338,000. The original townhouse developers, maybe to look good for the environmentalist (probably again a future adversary) were quoted in the Miami Herald (10/25/71) that they had purchased the land for \$272,000 and "they always wanted the county to have the land" and all they wanted to do was break even. The Herald on 10//25/72 quoted County Commissioner Joyce Goldberg, who headed an appeal for money to help buy the property, as saying "she was elated at the settlement and predicted that the land would become a botanical garden." That was 1972 and it is still a swamp that is infested with exotics, mosquitoes, vagrants and drug dealers.

Its time, however, has come; the front loaders, the fill trucks, the bushwhackers and maybe a bulldozer are leveling and filling the "would be" botanical garden. Mr. Ihle's 100- year old cistern, a focal point of El Palmango, is no more. It has been plowed under. Yes, we know it is not filled with potable water but the county archeologist may have wanted to take a look-see. What happens to the botanical garden is almost a sure thing. There will be some posturing from the naturalist and some from the recreationalist and that is the way it is. One thing for sure, it probably will never be like Palmango. Maybe it will be a compromise situation park, with a lot of natural trees and vegetation around the basketball courts and other recreation facilities.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer has found things relatively slow on the historical front after an amazing spring, however, with our 75th celebrations at Bryan Elementary School and at the north campus of Florida International University we deserve the time off. We were honored to have Rick Ferrer of the Dade County Historical Preservation Board Staff at the August Meeting of our Board of Directors. He brought with him Simone Chin, a North Miami resident and a Staff Member of the City of Coral Gables Preservation Unit. They gave us an update on the work being done on Biscayne Shores Park.

Recently the Daly Building on NE 125th Street between 7th and 8th Avenue was razed by the City of North Miami as part of a parking lot project. It had been pondered whether the said building is the original Chamber of Commerce building that appears in an old photo that is on file in the GNMHS archives or not. With the Daly Building now gone, the section of the wall of the adjacent building on the west is now visible. It appears that the adjacent wall on the west had a window at one time and that said window had been blocked in. The Chamber building in the photo stands alone. It is reasonable to believe that the building to west would not have had a window if the Daly building was first. This considered then the Daly Building came later and could not have stood alone as the photo shows. The other choice is same type of building that stands on NE 125th Street between NE 6th Avenue and NE 7th Avenue. The history of this compliments the situation. This building has a known history of being a bakery in the thirties and forties. The original Chamber building as shown in the photo housed a Sweet Shoppe that probably was a bakery. The investigation of this mystery will continue. How about it old timers! What do you think?

MRS. WILLIE PARTEE PIONEER TEACHER AT ARCH CREEK

Many years before there was a William Jennings Bryan Elementary School or Junior High School in North Dade County, Florida there was an Arch Creek Community School that served the children around the Arch Creek Natural Bridge and surrounding area. Today there are many schools that serve the area but in 1918 a new school was opened and officially named the Arch Creek Rural Consolidated School in the then Biscayne School District.¹ It replaced a two-story frame school building on the Dixie Highway (now NE 125th St.) just west of the FEC Railway. The old school building had become overcrowded (83 students). The new school was a 2-story pink frame-stucco building on a 10-acre treeless lot and was built at the edge of what was described as a prairie.² The need for this new school with grades from 1-8 is understandable as the farmers from other parts of Florida as well as farmers from other states were moving in to plant tomatoes and other vegetables that grew well in the fall and winter months. The vacated frame building did go to waste in this fast growing farm community. A fraternal organization famous for promoting brotherhood called the Knights of Pythias purchased the old school building for a meeting hall and also made it available for other organizations meetings. Community activities were held in the building along with Victrola/records dance classes and ball room dancing.²



Arch Creek School – Irons Manor/Conner Collection

The community was growing and families were moving onto the heretofore-virgin lands to till the soil. One of the pioneer families and a pioneer teacher in North Dade was the Partee family and the Teacher, Mrs. Willie Partee. In her later years she wrote a book at the insistence of her children and called it “You Asked For It.” The following is some enlightenment as to her involvement in the local school and community experiences and now related to her children and the readers of her story.

Like many others in 1919 Mrs. Willie Ross Partee and her husband Sawyer Partee, a Baptist Minister, arrived from Kentucky with their six children. Previous to the family’s arrival Sawyer Partee had been in the area scouting around for land and a favorable community to raise a family. He purchased 10-acres of farmland west of the Fulford/Ojus area and sent for his family who were back in Kentucky. Mrs. Partee and the children arrived at the Ojus train station in a railroad boxcar with all their possessions. This was not an uncommon way to move a family in that era. Houston Gribble’s family (North Miami’s long time Property Appraiser) arrived the same way. On the arrival the family went by horse and wagon to their new home. The Partee home was about 2 miles from the train station and there was only one other home between theirs and the railroad station.

The home was built of sturdy Dade County pine and would later withstand the great hurricane. It was, however a one-room home. Mrs. Partee said she was shocked at the concept of living in a one-room home. The saving grace was that it was a long room and had a long porch on one side that was under the roof. The Partees divided the porch with heavy tarpaulins into 6 bedrooms for the children. The home was not the most comfortable but it sufficed for the time. Five acres of the farm was soon under tomatoes and the other 5-acres was under avocados with a chicken yard, vegetable garden, and a wandering milk cow.

¹ Thelma Peter Biscayne Country 1875 – 1925 pp 212 – 213

² Ibid

Getting the children to school was the next challenge that faced the Partee's. The new consolidated school was open but there was a considerable distance from West Fulford to Arch Creek. The school district, however, was now providing a bus for the children in the outlying areas. Three of the older Partee children were on the school bus to Arch Creek. The school bus was more like a flatbed truck with an army tent for a top. Mrs. Partee said it had benches down each side of a flatbed that set on the rear frame and the top was covered with canvas.



GNMHS ARCHIVES
MRS. WILLIE PARTEE

By 1923 all the Partee children along with their mother the teacher were attending the Arch Creek School. The Partees and the other new farming families in the Fulford area along with Arch Creek families began to overcrowd the school system. Along with the need for new buildings there came a need for teachers. Any local high school graduate after a series of testing could be issued a Temporary Teaching Certificate. In 1923 Mrs. Partee as she said "at the mature age of 39," with two years of teachers training, previous teaching experience in Kentucky, and missionary work in Brazil impressed the Superintendent of Schools and was given a teaching assignment in the Arch Creek School. Her first Principal was Bessie McDonald who was a dedicated and respected community leader. According to Mrs. Partee school life for teacher and pupil was one with no frills. Even the textbooks had to be purchased by the parents.

Three years into her teaching profession Mrs. Partee became the owner of an automobile and no longer had to depend on others or on the limited transportation that was available. Transportation could be problem in that era if you were some distance from your work. Mrs. Partee remembered that some of the folks rode into town with the milkman. Others took the Florida East Coast Railway from Ojus for a dime all the way to down town Miami. Getting to the Depot, however, could be big problem. Mrs. Partee now was on the road with her car. Many of the roads were just crushed rock and she said that if you were in swampy areas you could be driving over and crushing land crabs as they scurried around roadway. On one of her trips through the natural area she was halted while a large gator crossed the road.

As the mid twenties came about the community life began to change. The suburbanites from Little River were moving north and the farms were disappearing as residential real estate brokers offered generous prices to the farmers for their land. Community life was changing. In 1926 the Community of Arch Creek was incorporated as the Town of Miami Shores and later changed in 1931 to the Town of North Miami.³ In the mid-twenties life became easier and even Thursday afternoon in the summer became party time at the beach for many. Land sales were booming everywhere until the late twenties but that's another story.

In 1926 the Partees moved into Town and into one of Arthur Griffing homes on the east side of the Biscayne slough (now Biscayne Canal), near what is today NE 129th street and 4th avenue. Griffing was the major developer of Biscayne Park and part of the west section of down town North Miami. Two days after they moved in, a neighbor came by an announced that the Indians were forecasting a hurricane. According to Mrs. Partee the Indians were a good source of weather data, as the weather bureau had not reached a level of communication or study as to be entirely trusted. The great 1926 hurricane struck as the Indians predicted and most of Dade County lay in ruins. The Partee home survived the disaster with very little damage and life went on for them. With the move to Biscayne Park Mrs. Partee had less than a mile to go to school and if need be one could walk to school easily.

In 1927 the new Pink School was no more. When Ida Perdue Myers, another pioneer teacher arrived at for work on the train from Ojus, which was her daily routine, she got the shock of her life.⁴ The Arch Creek School was a smoldering ruin. The pink stucco only looked fireproof.

³ Greater North Miami Historical Society Archives, Document file

⁴ Thelma Peters, Biscayne Country 1875-1925 P 213



Early teachers at William Jennings Bryan Elementary and jr. High School: Back L/R Mildred Mahood, Marion Conner, Willie Partee Front: Ida Myers, Nettie Jones, Florence Cadwallader

The pupils and teachers were moved back to the old school building now known as the KP Hall (Knights of Pythias). A new school was built on the site of the ruins and it was done quickly. The Miami area had regular winter visitor the “The Great Orator” as he was called, William Jennings Bryan. He was a famous preacher and was a presidential candidate and the principal lawyer in the “Scopes Monkey Trials” and thus the arguments on Evolution. The new School was named William Jennings Bryan School. The school was designed and built with longevity built into its future. Concrete and steel was used instead of the wood frame and stucco as before. It was a two-story building with an east/west base or front structure and two north/south wings on each end of the base, with a beautiful landscaped patio between the wings that gave an air of beauty to the inner connected hallways that faced on the patio.

In the beginning grades 1-4 were located down stairs in the east wing with grades 5-8 upstairs in the base structure. The west wing was to house the Home Economics classes, the Manual Training classes and the Physical Education classes. For the first few years the new building had a live in janitorial apartment at end of the east wing. The building stills stands as a hood example of architectural excellence and even with several major renovations and additions has retained that architectural integrity.

As Mrs. Partee went on and in the late 1930’s the Dade County Board of Public education decided that all full-time teachers in the system should have or acquire a 4-year degree. So many experienced and good teachers like Mrs. Partee and her associate Ida Perdue Myers found it necessary to return to college. Mrs. Partee began summer trips to the Kentucky College where she had attended for her previous teachers training and like many of her previous endeavors she was successful in obtaining that needed degree. In 1947 Willie Ross Partee retired from the school system after a lifetime of teaching the children of greater North Miami. In addition to the teaching she also had many years of community service. Many of the older folks that attended Bryan School can thank her for a good foundation in reading, writing and arithmetic.

By Glenn O’Hearn – March 2001

WHAT'S NEW IN THE BASEMENT

The basement room is the archive room in City Hall and it is almost reached capacity. Actually we have slopped over into some vacant space that some one loaned us for a limited time. Well even if the space is short we never say no to donations. This past quarter the items that came into the archives are listed below.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Jim and Madeline Watt | An original copy of the 50 th Anniversary Issue of the North Dade Journal |
| Christine Moreno | North Miami Monopoly Game |
| Erin Barber | An original and Official Copy of the City Map of 1960 |
| Jeff Levine | Plastic sleeves for photo storage in Archives |
| John Bew | 1960 Lions Lion's Club Memorabilia |
| Juanita Wilson | 1976 North Miami Jr. High yearbook |
| Carol Mears | Original plaque from an Interama presentation |
| Ric Fererr | Photo copy of 1948 Life Magazine of the Keystone Point's Hangar House |
| Charlotte Biedron Meggs | Copies of the 1941-1943 Bryan Jr. High Year Book where she was a teacher, along with Meggs family photo of their Arch Creek family |
| Mitch "Flash" Green | 1969 People First National Bank, Bank check |
| Gabe Colon | Series of Photos along NE 125 th Street and an original logo of the "Diamond Jubilee" Celebration |

MEMBERSHIP TAKES A LEAP AFTER THE CITY'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Howard Premer a former Mayor was up front in the membership line after his speech at the 75th Anniversary celebration at Bryan school. Not far behind was Troy Hill a recent City Commission Candidate in the last election. Hill had previously visited the Archive Room and a Board of Directors meeting of the GNMHS meeting. Premer and Hill along with following people were sustained as members in the June meeting of the Board. On the list and along with the above the following people were sustained as members: Gordon and Rosalind Schaffer , Karen DeLong, Jeff Levine, Jack Knapp, Richard Cook, Floyd Hinkley, Norma Jay, Paola Palma, David Roman, Christian Pastner, Eileen Cubillias, Julie Washington, Gabe Colon, and Inez Couch.

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PHOTOS AT THE BISCAVNE SHORES PARK OF RECENT DAYS

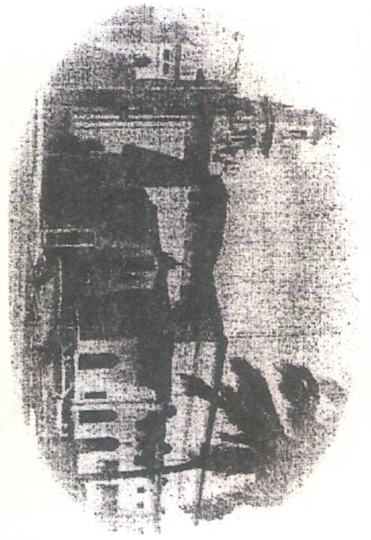


PHOTO NUMBER 1 is the 100-year old (plus) cistern that was constructed to catch the rainwater and later used by the Perrine family for decorative purposes when water became available through public water systems. It is no more. It was plowed up and under.

PHOTO NUMBER 2 is a filled in roadway that runs through the park area

PHOTO NUMBER 3 is the sapodilla or Sapota tree that is considered a classic A-Number 1 specimen. It still stands but has been seriously trimmed (mutilated some say)

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**

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MEMBERSHIP DUES \$10.00 ANNUAL