

THE GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORIAN

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OJUS A COMMUNITY ON THE MOVE

“OJUS A HOLE IN THE ROAD”

The above title “Ojus a Hole in the Road” and “sometimes “Hole in the Ground” was a play on words in the late nineteen-thirties and early forties. Ojus, however, was a small community of folks that had been around Dade County almost as long as the folks down on the Miami River and some say maybe a little longer. I, however, would not want to get into that argument. It is said that the name Ojus is of Indian origin and means “plenty.” The name Ojus has taken a beating of puns and jokes over the years. There was a tale, once told, about a lady living in the north. North could have been New York, New Jersey, or even Ohio. It could have been Jacksonville or Orlando; most places or north of Ojus. The tale goes that a hurricane had just swept over Dade County and there was great concern among the up-north relatives of those living in Dade County. The lady, in this case was a worried wife who went out to send a telegram to her husband to see if he was OK. After she penciled in the address and the message, the clerk hesitated to send it out. He then verbally informed her, “ Madame we cannot accept a telegram to Oh just, Florida. We have to have the name of a town at least.”¹

The early settlers in Ojus, like the ones to the south in Arch Creek and Fulford were primarily tomato farmers. They came before the Florida East Coast Railway and relied on the waterways to move out their crops as well as bringing in the supplies that they needed. The intra-coastal waterway has long been a commercial transportation corridor, probably more so in those days than now. Today it is more of a marine recreational corridor than it is of freight and passenger services. The tomato crop went out of Ojus for the most part in boats. Farming, however, was not the only industry in the area.

The Ojus Rock Company was there in the beginning “With Plenty of Rock.” The company was a major influence in the community and also in Dade County. The olithic rock found in Ojus and in many other areas of Dade County is one of finest rock to be found for road building. The company flourished when the Florida East Coast Railway came. The company mined a great portion of the area of Ojus and also had another big mining operation going on in Naranja, Florida, another small community lying on the railroad between Miami and Homestead. Millions of cubic yards of rock came out of the ground around Ojus and Naranja at a time when the roadways of Florida and of America were commencing with the automobile hitting the road in mass for the first time. With the railroad on site at both operations the rock mines were booming operations. With the advent of the real estate boom in the early twenties the rock for the streets of the new subdivisions was in demand. It has been said that the demand for rock kept the rock mines of Dade County open 24 hours a day. In 1926, however, this would all come to a halt with the end of the real estate boom that became what we know as the “Big Bust” or the “Great American depression”. This national misfortune was compounded in Dade County by a monstrous hurricane and tidal surge.

The railway construction was completed and terminated in Miami in 1896 but in 1895 the railway construction was completed through the Ojus community on its way south to the Miami terminus. It is said that the depot did not come about until 1899 but the freight and the tomatoes were flowing north before the depot was a reality.² The community at the turn of the century was as most Florida farm communities, close knit, family tied and friendly. One of the first needs was a school and with the school came a monthly Circuit Presbyterian Minister who used the school as a meeting place. By 1905 the Ojus Baptist Church was built.³ The Community incorporated in 1925 and was dissolved in 1935. The great depression took its toll on small cities where people had home mortgages and taxes and no money. Homes were lost and taxes went unpaid and many small towns collapsed or dissolved as the tax base was inadequate to meet service needs.

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¹ Holland Beeber, Miami Daily News, 5 October 1950

² Gilbert Totten, Railway Stories oral history, 1882-1945

³ Short History of Ojus, Lowell family Collection,

FROM OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

In reviewing the latest additions to the collection of memorabilia and documents added in the archival room we now find the following items and donors. Louse Duck one of our dedicated City of North Miami Employees encouraged a donation from her friend Lois Newland. We thank Ms. Newland for a paper on the Ojus/Fulford area (North Miami Beach and surrounding area) that included information on the Fulford Raceway (See photo below), a list of the first settlers and a biography of the Lowell family. Lee Feldman the City Manager of North Miami picked up another historical North Miami post card from E-Bay. Gabe Colon in the City of North Miami Planning Department gave us an excellent photo the old City Hall with the new one (side by side, under construction) in 1964. Patricia Loffredo donated her enormous document file relative to the organization, implementation, and presentation of the events and activities of the United States Bicentennial celebration (1976) in the City of North Miami.

We now have 18"X30" display (Table of Organization) of the City North Miami from 1985. Along with the chart and from the City Personnel Department we have copies of "The Grapevine – 1957-1972) and "The Pipeline 1976 – 1979" both forerunners of the "Progress Line" the now City voice.

We now have a copy of Frank Scanlon's photo of his mother and 5 sisters (1940's) sitting on the wall of the natural bridge over Arch Creek. This was through Burnham and Mildred Niel's scanning and computer skills. We need some more family histories and photos for our old North Miami families' collection. It would not hurt if some of the later move-ins started their family collection for a donation in the future. We all get old. John and Zela Mae Shellhorse gave us their copies of the old local newspaper the now defunct North Dade Journal. The Bew family, the owners, of "Atlantic Photo" in Little River that once served the entire north end after World War II donated some more photos as well as a sustaining merchants and citizen's directory published by the North Miami Police Department.

The Assistant Director of the North Miami Symphony, Kenneth Bennoit, presented us with his original score of the music for 75th Anniversary Celebration of the City of North Miami. From an unknown donor we have a book "Pictorial History of Florida."

NEW MEMBERS THIS QUARTER

The membership rolls have edged up a little this quarter. Arva Moore Parks McCabe was the first new addition to the rolls this time. As most of you know Arva is a renowned South Florida Historian and we are happy she has joined our group and hope to hear from her in the future. Ron Welsandt the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the North Miami Chamber of Commerce along with his First Vice Chairman were next two new enrollees. We were also happy to have Simone Chin a Historical Preservationist on staff with the City of Coral Gables join our group. John Gorman a local journalist also came on board and we hope we might be able to put John's pen to work sometimes. David Mahon, an award winning Senior at North Miami High is our newest member. David wrote an award winning paper on "Integration." He probably will miss most of our meetings this year as he is now attending school at Cornell University.



PHOTO STATE OF FLORIDA ARCHIVES

FULFORD RACEWAY - 1926

The years between 1935 and World War II was a struggle for all, but the war brought a new energy and money to the community and a few small businesses began to flourish. The businesses by 1950 were growing but the merchants were finding that the folks to south were ignoring them and that the businessmen of Miami were not cooperative. No one knew where Ojus was and it had become a nameless community. The folks across the county line were more aligned to them than the ones in their own county. One merchant liked to say he was in South Hallandale. Today, some of the original families are still in the community but many are gone. The Community is now being Aventuraized, traffic controlled, over populated, some say, and it's still nameless. Why not call the area in our new programs and forthcoming community design strategies the Ojus-Aventura District, "An Area of Plenty" or "A Community of Plenty."

MASONS RECEIVE DISPENSATION

The long anticipated Lodge of Masons in Miami Shores is now a fact. On Tuesday the local group received from the Grand Secretary of Florida a Dispensation signed by the Grand Master, Benjamin E. Dyson of Jacksonville, authorizing the establishment of a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Miami Shores, and naming the following officers: Worshipful Master, Don G. Henshaw; Senior Warden, Lea H. Browning; and Junior Warden, Archie W. Ritter.

The lodge will hold its first meeting Under Dispensation on next Tuesday evening at 7:50 o'clock. Visiting brothers are invited to attend this meeting which will be held in the lodge room in the Potts Building.

SERVICES TO BE HELD NIGHTLY

Mr. and Mrs. Gus Steding, assisted by a group of helpers will hold a series of meetings in the old Sweet Shoppe Building on the Dixie Highway near the Town Hall beginning Tuesday night next, at 8 o'clock. Everyone is earnestly invited to attend regardless of creed. Young people are especially urged to attend. These meetings will be held on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of each week for a time.

Mr. John Bennett, one of the oldest residents of Arch Creek, passed away at his home on the Federal Highway last Saturday, after a long illness. The funeral was held Tuesday afternoon from the Coombs funeral parlors.

Mrs. Talley, formerly a resident of Miami Shores, received a number of visitors from our community Thursday at her home in Lemon City.

Dr. and Mrs. H. Vincent Easley of Knoxville and Burrville, Tennessee, have arrived in Miami Shores to spend the winter with their daughter Mrs. Violet Henshaw.

Mrs. Walter MacElwie has returned to Miami Shores.

The Rialto Theatre is making a special offer to Miami Shores people this week and next in the form of a coupon to be found elsewhere in this issue, equivalent to a paid adult admission.

NOTES

The column on the right is an excerpt from the "Miami Shores Bulletin" of November 17th 1927.

Masons please note, in the right column that this is a first for Masonry in North Miami.

GNMHS

**DUES ARE DUE FOR 2002
JUST \$10.00 (TEN)
DOLLARS TO YOU**

Gus Steddings mentioned in the right column was a lay Methodist Minister. It is said the "Olde Sweet Shoppe" was located at 715 NE 125th Street. It met the wrecking ball a couple months back.

Hey Ernie and Richard Bennett this is your Great Grand Father. You now may have a good date for his passing over.

Mrs. Talley should not have moved to Lemon City. North Miami (Miami Shores) had more to offer.

Joan Henshaw on the GNMHS Board of Directors may remember her Grand mother's visit.

Mrs. Walter Mac Elwie once more is remembered.

The Rialto's roof was ripped up and off in the 1926. Hurricane. The theater was later named the Edison in the Thirties After the 1926 storm it was a roofless open air theater and continued operation, rain or shine until the maybe sixties. I was there in 1944 - 46, (the Editor).

2001

On November 8th 2001 The Greater North Miami Chamber put on a great show, called "The Expo". The members were out in big numbers with displays of their wares and services. Thanks to Penny and Bill Valentine the GNMHS now has a super flood- light for like shows that have dark corners.

We Carry a complete line of electric supplies and appliances. Plan some thing "electric" for Xmas Gifts.
KEEN - TERRELL ELECTRIC CO.

BISCAYNE CENTER REPAIR SHOP
We "stand back" of our work - No experimenting at the customer's expense - No "slip shod" methods on small jobs - Large or small jobs, they all make friends for us.
GUST. LUNDGREN P.O.P.

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