

From Tom F. Smith, Director
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MIAMI BEACH, FLA.---This resort city of white buildings and green palms was a coconut plantation less than 50 years ago.

Now host to 1,000,000 visitors a year, Miami Beach first caught the eye of a developer in 1882. But this developer, a man from New Jersey, was thinking in terms of copra, not people. He hardly could be blamed for lack of foresight, however, as Miami Beach then was little more than a mangrove-lined strip of sand, accessible only by boat.

There was then no railroad in South Florida, the roads of that day merely were sandy trails fit only for foot travel. Mail, when there was mail, was brought southward by postmen who walked along the coastline, where the wave-washed sand was firmer and made better footing.

So Henry B. Lum, of Red Bank, N. J., thought only of coconuts and the high price of copra. He formed a syndicate among New Jersey friends and before the turn of the century Miami Beach had thousands of coconut trees. Lum and his friends were too optimistic, however, for the price of copra fell and their venture failed.

With the southward push of rails and roads, southern Florida in the early part of this century was attracting many new residents. The coconut plantation, with its clean beach, became more and more to be used for week-end picnics and swimming parties. By 1910 there was regular ferry service to Miami Beach on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Development of homesights and sale of building lots started a year or two later, and by 1914 a dozen or so homes had been erected. In 1915 the town of Miami Beach was formed by a 30 to 0 vote of the freeholders. Two years later the growing community was incorporated as a city.

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Swift growth has marked Miami Beach since its incorporation. Northern residents came here for the winter first by the hundreds, then by thousands. Now they arrive by the hundreds of thousands. Many built permanent homes here. Miami Beach's year-'round population now is 40,000. The fresh, salt-washed air; the warm, sunny days; the fishing, golf and swimming which may be enjoyed every month of the year have proved attractions that are unexcelled anywhere.

Miami Beach now has 350 hotels and approximately 1,300 apartment buildings to serve its visitors. Many of the hotels, even those along the ocean front, have swimming pools and cabanas where lazy hours may be whiled away in the water and sun.

Nearly all the buildings are light in color as there is no smoke or dust to soil them. The impression of brightness and freshness is the first that visitors acquire. This cleanliness, with the green palms and bright flowers in January or June, leaves memories which bring back visitors year after year for their vacations, winter or summer, spring or fall.

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