

~~Time~~

The man most responsible for the early growth of Miami Beach came to the city because of a narrow railroad bridge on the line between Mobile and Jacksonville.

Carl G. Fisher was born in Greensburg, Ind., in 1874. He quit school at the age of 12 to work in a grocery. It took him five years to save \$100, and with this capital and two brothers he opened a bicycle shop.

Not long afterward he joined a team of professional racing cyclists. The team soon branched into trick riding and Carl rode a bicycle on a rope stretched between the two tallest buildings in Indianapolis. Another member of the team was Barney Oldfield.

Both ~~branched into~~ ^{turned} into automobile racing when that sport, and ^{the} automobile, were in their infancy. Fisher's career as a race driver ended with a spectacular crash in 1906 at Zanesville, Ohio, and he went into the automobile business as a retailer.

Fisher was never at a loss for an idea to promote business. One of his earliest was a flight in an automobile/~~powered~~ ^{powered} by balloon from Indianapolis. The balloon lifted his seven-passenger Stoddard-Dayton and carried it several miles into the country. Fisher drove the big car back to town to meet a hero's reception.

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He forgot to tell the people the engine had been removed from the car to lighten it for the balloon ride, and that it was a different machine he drove back to town. At any rate, the stunt was a great success, and Fisher's automobile agency soon was one of the largest in the country.

When a friend approached Fisher with an idea of using acetylene gas for automobile headlights, instead of kerosene, Fisher branched into manufacturing. That was the start of his Prest-O-Lite Co. The profits rolled in. Fisher built the Indianapolis Speedway, a venture entirely in keeping with his personality.

He was married in 1909 and for a honeymoon started a cruise to Florida on his yacht. The craft got safely down the Mississippi River, but ran into a ~~storm~~ storm in the Gulf and was blown ashore. For more than a week the yacht and its passengers were given up for lost. Mr. and Mrs. Fisher continued to Florida by train and left the boat with John Levi, a long-time friend and marine engineer, to bring around the peninsula when it was found a bridge on the Mobile to Jacksonville rail line would not give the craft clearance.

Levi had a rather difficult voyage down the Gulf and when he finally arrived in Miami, telegraphed Fisher to meet him there, instead of Jacksonville. Fisher did, liked Miami and bought a winter home there. Three years later he decided to "retire" in Miami, liquidated all his holdings except the speedway and moved south with \$6,000,000.

As related by J. N. Lummus, one of the first real estate developers in Miami Beach, Fisher walked into Lummus' ^{Miami} office one day early in 1913, introduced himself, and asked what Lummus was doing "clearing a great deal of land on the peninsula."

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It so happened that Lummus was building a city. It also happened that Lummus was short of money. Within six weeks Lummus had borrowed \$150,000 from Fisher. The loan drew eight per cent interest and as a bonus, Fisher took 105 acres at the north end of the Lummus property — land for which Lummus had paid \$150 an acre.

That deal put Fisher into Miami Beach, and back into business. He poured more money into the development, aquired more land and did not spare his flair for showmanship in promoting the town. For more than 10 years Fisher and Miami Beach were synonemous. His foresight and his capital provided an overall development of a planned community. It has been this that has enabled Miami Beach to gain, and hold, its dominant place as a vacation resort.

Some confusion existed on the name of Miami Beach for several years after the community was incorporated. It was caused by subdivisions of the initial developers. Fisher called his subdivision Alton Beach. The Lummus brothers called theirs Ocean Beach. Only the Collins-Pancoast area was known as Miami Beach.