

History

August 16, 1961

Mr. W. K. De Young
Preiss and Brown Advertising, Inc.
660 Madison Avenue
New York 21, New York

Dear Mr. De Young:

Your request of June 10 to Mayor Oka for Miami Beach historical data was today referred to this office. While we do not have anything resembling a complete history of the city, there probably is enough information to meet your needs.

The earliest reference we have to Miami Beach is about 1870, when Henry B. Lum and his son, Charles, of Red Bank, N. J., conceived the idea of growing coconuts along the southeast Florida coast and bought a considerable acreage of ocean-front. My reference says they paid 75 cents an acre for it to the United States government, but I suspect they purchased from the state of Florida, not the Federal government.

Miami Beach was included in this acreage. The coconut venture was not a success because the price of copra fell disastrously.

J. N. and J. E. Lummus acquired considerable acreage in what is now the southern and central portion of Miami Beach around 1912 and began the first resort-type development. The Lummus brothers paid \$160 an acre for much of their first holdings, but still had to expend substantial sums for dredging and filling the land, which which was mostly swamp.

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Carl G. Fisher of Indianapolis, who made a fortune in the early automobile accessory business, is considered the father of Miami Beach. He loaned money to the Lummus brothers, bought additional land for himself and really developed the town. He appeared on the scene in 1914. Fisher paid from about \$150 an acre up for his properties.

Land values here today of course vary considerably with location. Oceanfront sells for \$4,000 to \$5,000 a front foot for tracts perhaps 200 feet deep. Residential lots of normal size, 75 x 125 feet, may cost \$10,000 to \$20,000.

I trust this information is complete enough for your purposes. If you need additional data, I will be glad to try to supply it.

Very truly yours,

S. W. Matthews

SWM:RJR