

## CHAPTER VIII

### PIONEER MERCHANTS

IN no class of Miami's vocational subdivisions is the result of time so manifest as in that of the merchant class. In the past quarter of a century great changes have taken place in this important group of Miami's citizenship. Of the very earliest pioneer merchants only two are still engaged in their original business, namely, Sewell Brothers and F. T. Budge. (The firm of John Sewell & Brother enjoys the distinction of opening the first store on the north side of the river.)

Among the earliest pioneer merchants who have retired from their original occupations are the following: E. L. Brady, J. E. Lummus, John W. Watson, Townley Brothers, Harry C. Budge (now manager of E. B. Douglas Co.'s Department store) and the writer.

Among the later pioneers who have changed their vocations or have retired from active business are the following: D. R. Knight, W. H. and J. F. Chaille, Eugene Romfh, Geo. B. Romfh, Frank H. Wharton, J. D. Girtman, J. I. Wilson,

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H. T. Whaler, A. J. Kolb, John Tompkins, Dr. W. C. Maynard, R. W. Rhodes, J. H. Cheatham and J. M. Burdine. Of the foregoing class who are still engaged in their original occupations are the following: E. B. Douglas, W. M. Burdine's Sons and W. D. Hughes & Co.

Of the still later entrants into the mercantile field that are still operating their original establishments are the following: Oscar Maynard, Railey-Milam Hardware Co., H. E. Overstreet, Miami Grocery Co., C. J. Ericson, C. H. Gautier, W. H. Peeples and C. W. Hill (the Burdine & Quarterman establishment, belonging to this class, is being operated under new management). Of this class who have retired in the past few years are the following: C. M. Brown, Sr., Will Gautier, C. D. Leffler, J. C. Wilcox, F. A. P. Jones, T. A. Bogue, Bush & Safford, Walter Harris and L. E. Edwards.

"The material condition of a town's merchants is its prosperity barometer," is an aphorism that is peculiarly applicable to Miami. Miami's prosperity is easily discernible by an inspection of its leading mercantile establishments, particularly the highly developed four oldest establishments, namely, W. M. Burdine's Sons,

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E. B. Douglas, John Sewell & Brother, F. T. Budge Company and the two younger ones, namely, Burdine & Quarterman Company and The New York Department Store. Every one of these prominent stores had a most humble beginning — their growth is symbolic of the general growth of the city that made their remarkable progress and success possible.

Among the retired pioneer merchants none has given the city and county more consistent and more valuable service than John W. Watson. Mr. Watson established his former hardware store in 1896. When not engaged in representing his constituency in the legislature, or in serving the city as mayor, he attended to his store. Our citizenship is immeasurably profiting by his accumulated legislative and administrative experiences. Mr. Watson may aptly be called the "Watch Dog" of the municipality of Miami.

Other faithful public servants of the merchant class are: E. L. Brady, J. E. Lummus, John Sewell, J. I. Wilson, Frank H. Wharton and Joseph Chaille (the latter is responsible for the change in Miami's street-naming system). This group of patriotic citizens has devoted much of its valuable time to the welfare of the com-

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munity. Their service on the former city councils, in spite of having been hampered by that primitive form of municipal government, has been in the main of a highly commendable character.

Among others who served the community as councilmen are: F. W. Hahn, R. J. Mathers, W. B. Moore, the late F. G. Erfert, the late T. N. Gautier, C. W. Hill, Ben Hunter, E. C. Romfh, Med Kellum, the late Chas. F. Filer, the late J. C. Tucker, T. L. Cheatham, J. G. Crossland, W. M. Brown, C. H. Raulerson, J. A. Conrad, L. Granger, the late Mike J. McDonald, Robert McLendon, L. T. Highleyman, Henry R. Chase, Kingsley Fink, and L. R. Blackmon. (The late S. Rodmond Smith, P. A. Henderson and the late William Pruden Smith served terms as mayor.)

Another group of public-spirited merchants, composed of E. B. Douglas, E. G. Sewell, C. D. Leffler and R. B. ("Roddy") Burdine, has always proven responsive to the call of civic duty.

E. B. Douglas is not only a successful merchant, but also a successful philanthropist. His success in business may be ascribed to the sympathetic relationship that has always existed between himself, his employees and the patrons

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of his mercantile establishment. In the cultivation of this enviable relationship, Mrs. Douglas, who is the personification of the ideal helpmate, has played as important a part as she did in the gradual accretion of their material substance. Since her withdrawal from active team work in the Douglas store she became the mainspring of her team-partner's civic activity. This place she occupies as creditably as when plying her magic needle in the construction of the Douglas fortune.

Mr. Douglas arrived in Miami on the first day of March, 1898. Shortly after his arrival he opened a dry-goods store for a Pensacola firm which he managed until it was destroyed by Miami's second disastrous fire about a year later. This fire originated in the adjoining building.

In settlement with his firm after the fire, Mr. Douglas accepted a quantity of salvaged merchandise as compensation for his and Mrs. Douglas' services. With this humble beginning Mr. and Mrs. Douglas built up one of the largest department stores in the state.

In recent years Mr. Douglas has devoted considerable of his time and funds to philanthropic enterprises. The Y.W.C.A. and the Red Cross organizations are his favorite benefactions. Dur-

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ing the World War he devoted his entire time to the supervision of the Red Cross activities. Since then he has been concentrating his efforts on the fostering of the former institutions, the City Hospital, and on the Boy Scout organization. He is also devoting much of his time and energy to Miami's Community Chest organization of which he is the chairman. Mr. Douglas stands out as an example of the results of diligent application to business, frugality, hard work and honorable dealing. (Mr. Douglas retired from active business after this was written.)

Of the pioneer merchants who soon after starting discontinued their original business none has had a more checkered career than Harry C. Budge. Mr. Budge, who was the leading dry-goods merchant of Titusville, sold his store and settled in this city early in 1896. After retiring from his own business, he managed his brother Frank's hardware store. He later became Miami's postmaster, in which office he served for a number of years. He finally accepted the responsible position of manager of one of Miami's biggest and most modern department stores, in which in the course of time he secured a financial interest.

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Harry Budge has the distinction of having conducted the first community drive for funds, which he collected for the purpose of improving the trail that meandered through Brickell's hammock to the village of Coconut Grove in order to give the settlers of that region access to Miami.

John Sewell has been identified with the progress of this city from its very inception. Prior to joining his brother Ev Sewell in the mercantile field he had been employed by the Flagler interests as road construction superintendent. Under his able direction the site upon which the Royal Palm Hotel stands, and which was dotted with Indian mounds, has been levelled and made ready for the rapid erection of what was then the last link of Henry M. Flagler's chain of famous hotels. Mr. Sewell constructed countless miles of roadways and streets in the city of Miami. Although the busiest man among the pioneers, he took a prominent part in the incorporation of the city and in other civic activities. It was due to his political sagacity and exuberant enthusiasm that the required number of voters had been mustered to dignify Miami with the title of "City" at the very outset of its existence, thus conferring upon it the distinction of not having

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passed through the process of hamlet, village or town. John Sewell has served the city and county as Councilman, Mayor and Commissioner, and in many other ways has contributed, in a large measure, to the welfare of the community.

E. G. Sewell ("Ev"), one of Miami's first merchants, has taken a prominent part in community activities, and has contributed liberally from his means toward the upbuilding of the city and is still intensely active in all important community movements. Since attaining the presidency of the Chamber of Commerce, to which office he is repeatedly elected, often without opposition, he is giving the community highly constructive service. His ceaseless activity and assiduous application in pushing Miami and Dade County into the limelight, and in safeguarding the interests of the city, make him an outstanding figure among the public-spirited citizens of Miami. His marked initiative and aggressive leadership in all important enterprises sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce are responsible for many developments tending toward a greater and more prosperous Miami, one of the most important of which is the making



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of Miami Harbor a port of entry by the Clyde Steamship Company, which at this writing is an assured fact.

Mr. Sewell's indefatigable efforts to make Miami the most-talked-of city in the country, resulted in inestimable free publicity in the leading newspapers and magazines of the nation. Ev Sewell is noted for his devotion to the community without counting the cost to his private business. This characteristic in his makeup is largely responsible for his ability to surround himself with influential allies in the prosecution of the work of the Chamber of Commerce. Among his notable coworkers are included W. N. Urmey, Crate D. Bowen, H. H. Mase, Frank J. Pepper, B. B. Tatum, Judge Frank Smathers, John C. Gramling, M. O. Fullam, Norman Graves, John B. Orr, I. E. Schilling, Lorrain G. Smith and a host of other prominent citizens. With the coöperation of Miami's representative business and professional men Mr. Sewell has succeeded in making the Chamber of Commerce the mainspring of Dade County's marvelous progress. To make Miami the foremost tourist resort in the country is his great desideratum. However, he is in accord with the industrial

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bureau of the Chamber of Commerce in its efforts to secure manufacturing industries of a character that will not detract from Miami as a tourist resort.

In this connection it should be noted that the auspicious inauguration of the Clyde passenger and freight service between New York and Miami, which is the culmination of years of persistent effort by the Miami Chamber of Commerce, and its predecessor the Board of Trade, under the able direction, during the last decade, of President Sewell, will doubtless prove the most important factor in the approaching realization of the dreams of Miami's pioneers. In this historic achievement Miami and Dade County are greatly indebted to Duncan U. Fletcher, Florida's senior representative in the U. S. Senate. Senator Fletcher has for a number of years exerted himself in not only obtaining Miami harbor appropriations, but in interesting the Federal government in the agricultural and industrial development of the entire state of Florida. In this endeavor Senator Fletcher has the hearty coöperation of his colleague, Senator Park Trammell, and Congressman W. J. Sears. (The arrival of the Clyde S.S. *Apache* in the port of

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Miami, on Sunday, November 23, 1924, with a full cargo of miscellaneous freight and about two hundred passengers, marks the creation of Miami's "Aristocracy of the first great Ship," as the arrival of the first passenger train into incipient Miami, in the month of April, 1896, had created the fast-vanishing "Aristocracy of the first Train.")

Mr. Sewell leaves nothing undone in providing high-class entertainment for the ever-increasing influx of winter visitors in Miami. The most popular and best appreciated features of the entertaining program are: Arthur Pryor's Band, which gives afternoon and evening concerts during the entire tourists' season, and the noted singer, Miss Rachel Jane Hamilton, who delights the thousands of music lovers who gather daily in the Royal Palm Park to attend Arthur Pryor's concerts. Mr. Pryor and his family own a beautiful home in one of Miami's attractive suburbs.

C. D. Leffler, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Industrial Bureau, is another of Miami's prominent boosters. Mr. Leffler is noted for his erstwhile vigorous opposition against discriminative freight rates. His militancy in this direction and keen interest in local politics gave

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him considerable following and influence in the community. He has been Chairman of the Dade County Democratic Executive Committee, he also served a term as Mayor-Commissioner and is now a member of the City Commission. Mr. Leffler is also president of the Miami Bank and Trust Company.

J. I. Wilson is another public-spirited citizen who took part in the upbuilding of Miami. He devoted much of his time and energy to the welfare of the community. He served the public as Councilman for several terms and is now a member of the City Commission. Mr. Wilson is also the present head of The Dade County Security Company.

Frank H. Wharton, the present City Manager, has contributed liberally toward the upbuilding of Miami. He was very active in the city's early civic organizations and was tireless in his efforts to accelerate Miami's progress. He served the city as Councilman and Mayor, and with the change of the municipal government into a commission-manager form he was called upon by the Board of Commissioners, after a short tenure in this office by his predecessor, to assume the responsible position of City Manager.

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Another pioneer mercantile firm that participated in the progress of the city and county is Anthony Brothers. This firm whose headquarters had been located at West Palm Beach, entered the local field early in the history of the city. In 1900 the firm changed its name to the "Anthony-Romfh Company," which new firm was successfully operated for a number of years under the management of its junior partner, Eugene B. Romfh. In 1906 the latter bought the Anthony interests in that establishment and continued the business until about 1915, when he sold out his haberdashery to Burdine & Tucker, who converted it into a shoe store.

The Anthonys have played an important part in the progress of Miami as well as in that of West Palm Beach. J. R. and A. P. (Gus) Anthony are numbered among the first of Dade County's pioneer promoters of financial and commercial enterprises. J. R. Anthony who had entered the realms of finance when scarcely out of his 'teens had been, for a number of years, connected with a prominent financial institution, with offices at Pittsburgh, Penn., whose specialty was the promotion of public-utility enterprises and banks.

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The Anthony Brothers took a leading part in the organization of the First National Bank of Miami in which, with their non-resident associates, they held the controlling interest until 1905, when they sold their holdings in this institution to Edward C. Romfh, E. A. Waddell and W. H. Spitzer. Following this successful venture the Anthonys entered into the organization of a system of chain-stores. Subsequently the older of the brothers, J. R. Anthony, withdrew from this field, leaving the chain-store business to his younger brothers, Gus and Emil, who until recently have been successfully operating stores in Florida and other states.

J. R. Anthony concentrated his energy upon the organization and administration of a system of chain-banks, numerous branches of which are located throughout Florida and Georgia, one of the most prominent of which is the Miami Bank & Trust Company. Mr. Anthony is now a resident of Miami while his brother Gus has made Jacksonville his home since 1914, when he purchased "The Peoples Bank" of that city.

Of Miami's pioneer boys, who stand out as examples to the youth of this section of the country, none is more eminently qualified for an

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honorable place in the history of Miami than R. B. (Roddy) Burdine, whose success as a merchant is only exceeded by his achievement as a financier. Roddy arrived in this city with his parents in 1898, when ten years of age. His father, the late William M. Burdine, had removed from Bartow, Florida, to Miami and opened a small mercantile establishment on South Miami Avenue, between Flagler and First streets.

Upon graduation from Miami high school the youngster entered his father's establishment and quickly mastered the business of a dry-goods merchant. Upon the demise of his generally lamented father, he took charge of the store for the benefit of the surviving family. In 1912, at the age of twenty-four, he consummated the remarkable undertaking of the erection and stocking of what was then the biggest building south of Jacksonville, "The Burdine" building, on Flagler Street between Miami and First avenues. Within a few years Burdine's Sons' business had expanded to an extent that an annex much larger than the original structure was required to house the greatly enlarged department store, which, under Roddy Burdine's direction, has attained

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its present prominent position in the mercantile world.

The Burdine building as it now stands is five stories high and extends through the block from Flagler Street to Southeast First Street, with a frontage of 50 feet on Flagler Street, 250 feet on First Street and 240 feet on Miami Avenue. Its combined floor space aggregates 151,000 square feet. This colossal structure houses a modern emporium, which compares favorably in magnitude and variety of departments with those of the most notable in the important cities of the country, and is a revelation to visitors from the metropolises of the nation.

This mammoth department store has added materially to the prestige of Miami in its important contribution to making this city the shopping center of innumerable towns and agricultural communities within an extensive and rapidly settling territory.

"Roddy" Burdine never fails to respond to the call of civic duty. He has been prominently identified with diverse community movements, especially in that of the inauguration of Miami's new municipal government and in the launching and successful consummation of the recent Com-



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munity Chest enterprise; in both of which important movements he has rendered distinguished service.

In the financing of his tremendous department store project he was ably assisted by his brother, R. F. ("Freeman") Burdine, who is another Miami pioneer product. "Freeman" has succeeded in defying the law of heredity by choosing the career of a lawyer instead of following his father's vocation.