

CHAPTER XIV

MIAMI IN THE YEAR 1925

THE city has expanded and developed within an area of two miles north, south and west of its original boundary lines and many miles in each direction beyond the extended city limits. The bay, in an easterly direction, is crossed by a causeway and a wooden bridge. The former has been constructed by the county and city jointly, and the latter by John S. Collins, the original owner of the major part of the peninsula across Biscayne Bay, opposite the city of Miami. This peninsula is highly developed and is universally regarded as one of the most attractive ocean-beach resorts in America. The initiators of this gigantic development and creators of one of the nation's foremost playgrounds consisted of a group of Miami's citizens headed by John S. Collins. The expansion of this great achievement is carried on by Carl G. Fisher. Part of the peninsula is an incorporated city, governed by a mayor and board of councilmen. Its westerly boundary line extends to half way over the causeway.

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North of the causeway and west of the eastern shore of the bay there are several enchanting artificial islands upon which palatial residences are located and which connect with the causeway and bridge. Its first mayor, J. N. Lummus, played a prominent part in the early development of the peninsula which is now known as the City of Miami Beach. Its development began in 1912.

The Miami River is spanned by three modern bridges. The trail south of the river underwent transformation into a grand boulevard extending to the town of Coconut Grove (now incorporated). The territory west of the river is densely populated. Its main artery of traffic is Flagler Street. Most of the beautiful grapefruit groves north and south of Flagler Street have been subdivided in building lots. The territory west of the terminus of Flagler Street, beyond the Tamiami drainage canal, encompasses the region of the Everglades, the land of which has been sold by the state at \$2.00 per acre (as related in a preceding chapter of this book), and leads to a new town called "Hialeah," where the Miami Jockey Club racetrack is located, which was operated for the first time this season, and where building lots which have been subdivided from

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contiguous tracts are sold at \$1,000 to \$3,000 each. Through this territory in a westerly direction runs the Tamiami trail which will eventually connect the cities of Tampa and Miami. In the territory south of Flagler Street extension, about six miles west of the city, bounded by Coconut Grove and Larkins, nestles Miami's famous suburb, the town of Coral Gables. South of Larkins to Florida City (the southern boundary line of Dade County), for a distance of about thirty miles, passing through the heart of the red land and homestead region, there are innumerable thriving towns and newly laid-out subdivisions.

The territory north of the city has been subdivided and partly improved with beautiful homes and business blocks. This embraces Buena Vista, Lemon City, Little River, Arch Creek, Fulford, and Ojus (the north boundary line of Dade County). East of Fulford there is a highway leading to the ocean where several developments are being promoted by local and outside operators. About seventeen miles north of Miami, between the Dixie Highway and the ocean, is located the widely advertised town of Hollywood-by-the-Sea.

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The intervening areas, between the points mentioned above, abound in subdivisions which are in the process of development. All of these developments are tributary to the city of Miami and are important factors in its marvelous growth and prosperity. On the other hand, the city of Miami is responsible for their creation and future welfare.

The physical aspect of Miami has undergone a miraculous change. Instead of glaring white streets there are macadamized thoroughfares. In place of frame shacks there are towering concrete and brick modern structures. In place of bicycle and hack transportation there are trolley cars, modern busses and countless privately owned automobiles. The city is dotted with beautiful parks, the principal one of which is "Bay Park." This park consists of a forty-acre fill on the west shore of Biscayne Bay, between Southeast Second and Northeast Fifth streets, and is in process of creation. The city has countless attractive homes, magnificent hotels and apartment houses, modern schoolhouses and beautifully designed churches. The latter represent all of the Christian denominations. There are also two Jewish houses of worship, namely,

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the pioneer synagogue (Congregation Beth David) and Temple Israel.

Of the religious organizations engaged in practical endeavors none exercises greater and more far-reaching benevolence than the Salvation Army. Under the guidance of Mr. and Mrs. John Bouterse, captains of the local organization, this unique society stands preëminent in social-welfare pursuits and reclamation of those fallen from grace. Prior to its becoming a community-chest unit it was generously supported by non-sectarian contributions. In its former drives for funds it was ably assisted by a non-member, R. M. Erdmans, who had successfully conducted several of its campaigns.

Miami is enjoying an unprecedented degree of prosperity. Its population is increasing more rapidly than in any period of its history. The local bank deposits show astounding gains as evidenced by monthly statements in the press. Its building record exceeds those of cities of much greater population. Its constantly increasing post-office receipts warrants the Federal Government to establish additional sub-stations in various sections of the city.

In 1921 Miami had emerged from its anti-

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quoted form of municipal government and adopted the more modern one, namely, the Commission-Manager form. This, however, has not been accomplished without almost insuperable difficulties owing to the formidable opposition the movement engendered. The advocates of the new régime finally won and elected the following group of citizens to draft a new city charter: the late Judge J. Emmett Wolfe, T. V. Moore, Isidor Cohen, L. R. Railey, W. H. Peeples, J. T. Weathers, J. W. Claussen, H. G. Ralston, J. E. Junkin, Sr., Francis M. Brown, G. Duncan Brossier, R. V. Waters, Mrs. William Mark Brown, Mrs. J. M. Gross and John C. Knight.

For the benefit of readers who settled here subsequent to the inauguration of the new form of municipal government the writer herewith reproduces one of his campaign articles. This will illustrate the nature of the opposition met by those favoring a change. After having been defeated on the first issue, that of making the change, and on the second issue, that of choosing its advocates as members of the proposed charter board, the opponents vainly exerted their efforts to defeat the banker-candidates for commissioners. The campaign article follows:

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The opponents of the bankers' ticket, which has the whole-hearted support of the framers of Miami's new charter, are trying to prevent a fair test of its operation by the injection of propaganda in this campaign, the following of which are samples: "S. Bobo Dean (then editor of the *Miami Metropolis*) is attempting selfishly to gain political power through the operation of his political machine." "The newspapers have always been on opposite sides, but they are now united in their support of the bankers' ticket." "Romfh and Gilman were common bookkeepers, Lummus kept a grocery store, Leffler was an oil agent and Wilson a fish dealer." "The promotion of the bankers' ticket is an attempt at class legislation and an arrayment of capital against labor." "The bankers were put on the ticket after it was found that nobody else would run."

S. Bobo Dean is not a candidate for office. However, for the information of the many new settlers in this city I state without fear of contradiction that instead of S. Bobo Dean being a political machine builder he has proven to be a political machine wrecker. His aggressive newspaper has destroyed the most powerful political machine in the history of Dade County — the strongly organized partisans of the Florida East Coast Railway Corporation.

It is indeed very fortunate for our city to have both of its newspapers united in the present movement for a better municipal government. This is strong proof that the candidates whose election they advocate are better qualified, by virtue of their intensive training as financiers, to serve our community than those opposing them. If the situation were not so serious I would prefer to see the *Herald* and the *Metropolis* remain true to their traditional antagonism. Newspaper rivalry is as beneficial to a community as religious sectarianism is to religion — no progress could be made without it. An attack against the cardinal principles of religion brings all sects to its defense. In

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like manner an attack against the common welfare of our community brings both of our enterprising newspapers to its defense.

The fact that common bookkeepers, a grocer, an oil agent and a fish dealer have attained their present distinguished positions as heads of our leading banking institutions is sufficient proof that they are capable of successfully administering the affairs of our municipality. With due respect to their opponents and detractors, I cannot conceive of any other group of our citizens under whose guardianship we could place the destiny of our city with a greater degree of safety than the group composing the bankers' ticket. In addition to their professional fitness for the positions of city commissioners they are large taxpayers and are the custodians of big enterprises, which are more sensitive to municipal mismanagement than any other business. Their prestige as bankers will exercise a more beneficial influence upon the administration of our future city manager than that of men in other occupations.

I cannot conceive of any other group of our citizenry who are less likely to favor an arrayment of capital against labor or to foster strife and contentions of any kind in our community. Why, the success of our banks more than that of any other business depends upon a mutual satisfactory adjustment between the two forces. This applies with equal force to the permanent prosperity of our laboring classes. Nothing is more timid than capital. The banishment of confidence from a locality is immediately followed by a withdrawal of capital — and the results are unemployment and general depression.

The supporters of the bankers' ticket are absolutely opposed to raising a "labor and capital" issue in this campaign. Should this be forced upon them by the so-called friends of labor, our people will be driven into a political alignment which will prove decidedly disadvanta-

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geous to organized labor. There is no other issue in this campaign than the issue of saving our city from economic retrogression.

Why prate of class legislation, or capital against labor? One of these praters uttered a sensible remark when he stated that this city needs an "honest-to-God non-political administration." The framers of the new charter had such an administration in view when they initiated the successful movement for a change in the fundamental principle of our municipal government. They also had this in view when they considered the qualifications of possible candidates, including the one who now decries the fostering of class rule in Miami. After careful consideration in which they were guided by the sound direction of a large number of Miami's leading business and professional men, they wisely selected the presidents of the city's five leading banking institutions, not only as "an honest-to-God non-political" aggregation, but as the logical candidates who, if elected, will render the commission-manager form of government in Miami eminently successful.

The opposition candidates seem to be fond of platforms. They criticize the bankers, who have been drafted into this campaign, for their omission to compare platforms with them. Every intelligent voter is familiar with the bankers' platform without hearing it shouted at public meetings. Their platform can be summarized in two words, namely: **PROGRESSIVE ADMINISTRATION**. This includes an improved water system, extension of gas service, parks and playgrounds, municipal hospitals and everything else that may contribute to the happiness and prosperity of our community (all of the above public utilities have been greatly enhanced and increased during the bankers' administration).

Some of the supporters of the opposition ticket are circulating most fantastic rumors in order to prejudice the

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minds of the voters against the bankers' ticket. Those who have been thus imposed upon were told that in the event of the bankers' election they (the bankers) would all resign and appoint Mr. Ralstone and four ministers in their places in order to subject our community to some imaginary blue-laws. They were told that Romfh and Gilman have wrecked the Fidelity Bank. They were told that there is a secret agreement between the bankers not to serve unless all of their group are elected. They were told that in the event of the bankers' election all mortgages held by their respective banks will immediately be foreclosed. These rumor mongers evidently have little respect for the intelligence of their friends and fellow-townsmen. The opposition must be desperate indeed to resort to such ridiculous tactics in order to defeat the men who are best qualified to save the city from imminent danger of bankruptcy.

One of the opposition candidates is quoted as saying that our bankers are pessimists, and that optimism is highly essential to a community's progress. If optimism is the mainspring of our progress, then Miami's future could not possibly be entrusted into better hands than those of the bankers. Miami's bankers have proved their optimism by their financial backing of many of their present detractors under conditions which required the highest order of optimism to risk their money. Having watched the conduct of Miami's bankers for the past twenty-five years, I do not hesitate to state that our city's marvelous growth and the growing affluence of many of our citizens are largely due to our bankers' temperate optimism and profound faith in our city and its citizenry.

The quotation of the foregoing article will give the reader an idea of the local political situation during the transition period of Miami's

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political progress, and of the present advanced method of political campaigning over that of the early stages in the city's history.

The bankers' ticket won by a handsome majority. Two years later the same ticket was re-elected by an overwhelming majority against similar opposition. Judge A. J. Rose was the first City Attorney under the new régime and served until his elevation to the Circuit Court judgeship. T. E. ("Tubby") Price, the first Municipal Judge; Col. C. S. Coe, the first City Manager, and C. D. Leffler the first Mayor-Commissioner. The latter was succeeded by E. C. Romfh, president of the First National Bank. Earnest Cotton is Director of Public Service; C. L. Huddlestone, Director of Finance; F. B. Stoneman, Municipal Judge and F. H. Wharton, City Manager. (The entire Board of Commissioners, with the exception of Mayor E. C. Romfh, have consented to stand for re-election in the next June Primaries, without opposition, for a third term. P. A. Henderson succeeded Mr. Romfh.)

The Commission-Manager form of government has been fully vindicated, and its successful administration by five competent business men,

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...serving without compensation, has given a tremendous impetus to Miami's progress. Under their administration many of the city's narrow streets have been widened and paved, sewer system greatly improved, street-car lines extended and the service vastly improved, ample docking facilities to meet the increasing demands of the port of Miami have been provided, a new water system installed providing wholesome drinking water for the growing population, a municipal golf course, a modern hospital, additional bridges, an improved garbage-disposal plant and countless minor municipal improvements contributing to the safety and comfort of the public have been effected in a, comparatively speaking, very short time. The city's credit stands higher than in any period of its existence. Miami municipal bonds sell at a premium and there is a constant influx of foreign capital, not only for municipal expansion but also for private enterprises. Several bond issues have recently been floated by the S. W. Straus Company and the G. L. Miller Company which have been taken up by the investing public with marked celerity. Highly capitalized mortgage companies are establishing branch offices and are vastly

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profiting by the intensive realty trading and building operations which are going on in the city, county and entire east coast section of Florida.

Miami's fraternal orders, philanthropic organizations and civic clubs are also evidencing great progress — spiritual as well as material. The Rotary, Kiwanis, Civitan, Lions, Exchange and Ad clubs are most potent agencies in the advancement of the moral, intellectual and commercial welfare of Dade County's citizenry. All of the above organizations came into being in the last five years.

Miami's latest philanthropic organization, a branch of the Children's Home Society of Florida, won the enthusiastic support of its citizens immediately upon Administrator Marcus Fagg's appeal to the people in behalf of this humane institution. Through the commendable efforts of a group of public-spirited citizens, whose names will follow, a substantial fund has been raised for the acquisition and maintenance of a suitable home. The main headquarters of this institution, which for the past decade has been administered by Marcus Fagg, who is known throughout the state as "Daddy" Fagg, is located

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in Jacksonville. In this noble institution the unfortunate child is not only given proper care and wholesome environment of which it has been deprived through poverty, cruelty, ignorance or criminality, but it is restored to its natural function, that of bringing joy into cheerless homes and contentment and happiness in the hearts of childless people.

This undertaking has been initiated by the Lions Club which had the moral support of all the other civic organizations. The actual work entailed in raising a fund of \$30,000 has been performed by George K. Palmer and Thos. S. Davenport who were assisted by the following workers: Jesse L. Murrell, Carl T. Hoffman, Judge J. L. Billingsley, J. M. Butts, Milo Coffrin, E. M. Crawford, Chas. D. Neider, John H. St. John, Grover C. Zaring, Fred C. High, Vernon N. Hawthorn, W. A. Riddle, L. C. Richardson and H. G. Weidenfeller.

The board of officers of this institution is composed of the following citizens: President F. M. Hudson; Vice-Presidents Thos. S. Davenport, W. N. Urmey and Fred H. Rand; Secretary Ross A. Reeder; Treasurer Grover C. Zaring; Counselor J. L. Billingsley.

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The Scottish Rite Masons and Shriners have recently erected a magnificent temple which would be regarded as a highly creditable achievement for a city with a population of three hundred thousand. This imposing edifice is located in the northwestern section of the city and is overlooking the Miami River. It is of Moorish design and of impressive proportions. The walls of its spacious auditorium are adorned with replicas of ancient Egyptian sculpture which conform to the exterior architectural model of the structure and impart a feeling of awe upon those who enter. The moving spirits in this important enterprise were: John B. Orr, Frank B. Stoneman, Henry Pridgen, Alexander Orr, Jr., George Okell, Fred. W. DeLaney, James Donn, William Atwater, Don C. Cadagan, W. E. Brown, A. O. Moore, W. J. Strahn and John Seybold. (The several Blue Lodges, comprising approximately thirty-five hundred members, are about to erect a Masonic temple in the northeastern section of the city, at a cost of half a million dollars.)

Old landmarks are fast disappearing and old-timers can hardly realize that this is the city of Miami. One striking landmark, however, is still extant, namely, the Royal Palm Hotel. This old

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hostelry is the most notable hotel in the city and is well patronized by people of affluence and refinement. Its location, at the mouth of the Miami River and Biscayne Bay, is ideal; its surroundings are highly ornate. Its continued success, despite the innumerable new and fashionable hotels so much in evidence throughout the city and at the beach, is largely due to its affable and highly efficient manager, Joseph P. Greaves, who has been connected with this fashionable resort for over a decade.

New mercantile establishments and banks have recently been opened, among them the Commercial Bank & Trust Company and the Ta-Miami Bank, whose future is very promising from a financial standpoint. Then, too, their founders are free from the hardships and vicissitudes to which the pioneers in these lines had been subjected, as related in the opening chapters of this book.

The city is filled with real-estate brokers and operators, some of whom are making great fortunes. Their boosting spirit is infectious. Winter visitors who have never made real-estate investments in their respective home towns are making local investments involving big sums of money.

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There are very few local people who do not own some Miami realty. The prevailing price of Flagler Street inside lots is \$6,000 per front foot, and corners at a proportionate increase. North Miami Avenue lots, close in, bring \$2,000 per front foot. North First Avenue, near Flagler Street, \$4,000 per front foot. Second Avenue and North Bayshore Drive, similarly situated, \$3,000 per front foot — this compares rather favorably with the prices quoted in the opening chapter of this book. (Prices have soared since first edition was printed.)

The beautiful homes, imposing office buildings and palatial hotels which have recently been erected in the city and its environs, reflect the skill of their builders and the esthetic taste of their architects. The pioneers in this field are: Walter C. DeGarmo, George Pfeiffer, Harold H. Mundy and August Geiger. These masters of the craft have contributed in a large measure to the present metropolitan appearance of the "Magic City."

The Seminole Indians who had been very much in evidence in the early days of Miami are now rarely seen on the streets of the city except during the tourist season when they appear in

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groups composed of gaudily dressed men, women and children and receive much attention from the winter visitors. They also derive considerable revenue from visitors to their villages, which are located in the northwestern section of the city at Musa Isle, overlooking the north fork of the Miami River, and at Hialeah, to whom they sell Indian souvenirs. This traffic is conducted under the supervision of their educated leaders who reveal a high order of business acumen. Their number, however, is fast diminishing. They are a peaceable people and were always great favorites with Miami's pioneers. An intoxicated Indian is an extremely rare sight, whereas in the early days a sober one was just as rare. The partial drainage of the Everglades and its penetration by the whites have deprived the red man of his heritage, namely, the game which that vast territory harbored in great abundance. Despite their precarious existence they stubbornly resist Uncle Sam's efforts to remove them to a western Indian reservation where they would become the wards of the government. They evidently love their independence too well to exchange it for ease and comfort.

Many of Miami's pioneers who have been

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identified with its progress have passed out of this life. Their survivors are little noticeable on the streets and are seldom seen at public assemblies. This is not due to the infirmities of age in all cases, but rather to the substitution of the one-hour luncheon meetings of the present civic clubs for the nightly open forums of the past at which they were wont to demonstrate their forensic prowess for the glory of Miami their beloved "Magic City."

Miami has undergone an indescribable change, not only in its physical aspect but also in the manners, habits and pursuits of its citizens. The pioneers loved leisure and thrilling amusement, and were fond of discussing politics, theology, evolution and philosophy, and at opportune times abusing the railroad corporation; whereas the new settlers are absorbed, almost exclusively, in real-estate deals and building operations. It should be noted, however, that the former were not averse to acquiring Miami realty when obtainable. In this connection it should be remarked that some of the living pioneers have amassed large fortunes which they are enjoying in their mature years, and some of the departed ones have left still greater fortunes

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to their surviving families. All of them, with few exceptions, came here penniless.

In spite of the sharp contrasts pointed out in these pages, the surviving pioneers are as deeply attached to Miami at this period as they were in the early stages of its development, when its inhabitants knew one another intimately.

The metamorphosis of Miami also extends to its climatic conditions as well as to its fauna. The first few years after its settlement the month of November brought chilling breezes, and as the fall advanced this section was visited by freezing weather which continued intermittently until the end of March. During these cold spells vegetable crops were destroyed and the growing grapefruit were saved by burning "smudges" in the groves. The inhabitants were obliged to use oil heaters in their homes and places of business in order to maintain a comfortable temperature. The months of August, September and October were unbearably sultry and were the harbingers of gales of, in some instances, hurricane intensity.

There was an abundance of snakes and wild cats, and the rivers and creeks harbored alligators. These have disappeared as the town and country developed; as did the flying roaches,

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red ants, horseflies and other insects which plagued the early pioneers — even the pesky mosquito is gradually disappearing. This section, however, is still visited by torrential and continuous rains and occasionally by a West Indian gale whose violence is dissipated before reaching this section. These occur during the latter part of September and the first part of October. The months of August, September and October constitute the rainy season, providing the necessary degree of moisture for the soil and tempering the tropical effect of the summer season.

At the termination of the rainy season there is, with rare exceptions, a long period, ending in the month of June, of mild, dry and sunshiny weather which renders Miami's winter climate superior to that of any other part of the world, and which warrants its claim, in midwinter, of "It is always June in Miami."

The city of Miami is approaching the point when something besides enthusiasm, optimism and heightened predictions must be set in motion to fulfill its destiny. The conversion of miles of grapefruit groves and farming land into building lots which the public confidently buys will not

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make Miami the kind of city we want her to be. Nor will the multiplication of winter visitors and the continuous building of large hotels to accommodate them for three or four months in the year render Miami capable of supporting a dense population twelve months in the year.

Miami must have industries employing large numbers of operatives that will not only sustain the ever-increasing number of merchants and professional men throughout the year, but will create a demand for dwellings which should cover the countless building lots referred to above.

I am inclined to believe that Miami's land subdivision phenomenon which fills visitors as well as natives with amazement will in itself bring about a realization of the destiny we bespeak for this marvelous little city. It is only a matter of time when the large subdivision promoters will find it expedient to set aside a certain percentage of their receipts to be applied to the payment of attractive bonuses to operators of manufacturing and other industries as an inducement to locate in the vicinity of their respective holdings.

Miami has always had ambitions to become

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an important commercial center. Due mainly to the delay in securing deep water for its harbor and to the strong desire of certain interests to preserve Miami exclusively for tourists, its ambitious pioneers were obliged to abandon their efforts in this direction. At one time in the history of this city its pioneers had approached realization of their cherished dreams so closely that it had been taken for granted that the solution of Miami's problems had finally been effected, as shown by the following incident which took place about seventeen years ago.

The Brickell family, the largest landowners in this section of Florida, had conveyed two hundred building lots and a square block of land situated in its center to the Miami Board of Trade under the following conditions, namely, that the said organization sell the lots and apply the proceeds to a fund to be used for the exclusive purpose of securing cigar factories for Miami; the square block of land to be reserved for the erection of factory buildings, and after a certain term of years their sites to be conveyed to the factory owners. The purchasers of the lots were to erect dwellings thereon for the operatives of the proposed factories, thus insuring their invest-

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ments. Unfortunately, the scheme proved abortive, because of lack of adequate transportation facilities and the difficulty apprehended by manufacturers in keeping Cuban labor in as small a town as Miami was then. What had prompted the Brickell family to make an effort to secure industries will eventually actuate Miami's present subdivision promoters to engage in similar activities. When this is accomplished Miami will come into its own.

The location of factories in Miami will not affect its tourist business as some are inclined to believe. Winter visitors will continue to come to Miami in constantly increasing numbers as long as winter follows summer in their respective home towns. If cigar factories are undesirable there are other industries which could successfully be operated here on a large scale. The eventual double-tracking of the Florida East Coast Railway, the forthcoming extension of the Seaboard Railroad, which has already reached West Palm Beach, to Miami, and the recent inauguration of steamship freight and passenger service between New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Miami have removed the difficulties experienced by Miami's pioneers in this direction.

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Hotel and apartment-house keepers, merchants and professional men who are fortunate enough to have secured strategic locations for seasonal business are making enough profits during the winter season to render them indifferent to the need of payrolls, but a great majority of small tradesmen, rooming-house-keepers, and those engaged in other occupations depending upon public patronage, including property owners, in outlying districts in which the intensified realty activity prevailing in the center of the city has induced extensive developments, as well as the large emporiums and other important mercantile establishments which are operated throughout the year, must have a large permanent population to support them.

As a winter resort, Miami has no peer. Its geographical location with reference to the most densely populated sections of the United States, its situation along the majestic Bay of Biscayne and the romantic Miami River, its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, its matchless winter climate which knows no extreme variation of temperature between day and night, its exotic plant-life and perennial verdure, coupled with a citizenry that includes

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men of unbounded ambition, tremendous energy, and incomparable daring, combine in insuring the permanency of its growing fame as the most enchanting winter resort in America.

THE END