

## **Miami: From Stone Circles to High Rises: Tracking Miami's Growth Using Aerial Photography**

*(Grade 6-8)*

This unit discusses the evolution of Miami from the stone circles of the Tequesta to modern high rises. An introduction to aerial photos shows students how to track city growth.

### **Tracking Miami's Growth Using Aerial Photography**



Tequesta Indians lived close to Biscayne Bay and the Miami River near what is present day Miami. They were mainly hunters and gathers living off the coastal fish and shellfish and gathering wild plants, nuts, and berries. The Tequesta all but vanished due to war and disease following the arrival of the Europeans in the 1500s.

In 1998 during excavations for a new high rise, a stone circle was found on the bank of the Miami River. Scientists believe that the circle was created by Tequesta Indians and site artifacts indicate that humans lived on both sides of the river for some 2,000 years.



Read more about the Tequesta Indians at the online exhibit ["First Arrivals"](#) at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.



Ponce de Leon was the first to encounter the Miami River Tequesta during his 1513 expedition to "La Florida." In 1566, Pedro Menendez de Aviles and his men attempted to build a mission and establish a garrison near the site. The mission was abandoned after fighting broke out with the Indians. In 1743, the Spanish again attempted to establish a mission. It too failed.

For many years, very few people lived in the area of south-eastern Florida. Although the weather and climate were generally mild, much of the land just beyond the coast was swampy. Mosquitoes spread disease to people and cattle alike.

It wasn't until the late 1830's that a plantation/trading post was established on the banks of the Miami River at Fort Dallas. Fort Dallas became the first permanent settlement of a non-native community in this area.

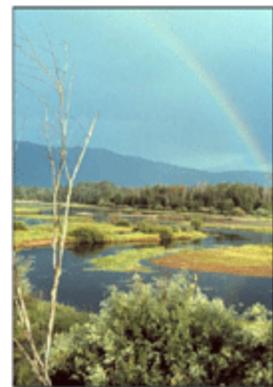


Photo courtesy of the Florida Photo Archives.

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Viewed from the air, the entire Miami area now appears to be one huge city, but in the early 1900's it was a very different place. Back then, like most cities, it was surrounded by farmland and open space. Now it is a megalopolis: an urban area where cities run into one another.

Beginning in the late 1930s, the U.S Department of Agriculture started to take aerial photographs of the terrestrial lands of the United States. Originally intended to help with soil conservation, land valuation, etc., these images give us a pictorial history of land use and city development. The image below shows the Hialeah part of Miami in 1938.

In the northwest part of Miami, you can see Hialeah Racetrack. It is the oval to the left of the picture. Surrounding the track is open land. There are some houses to the north, and on the right side of the photo you can see many streets that were just being built.

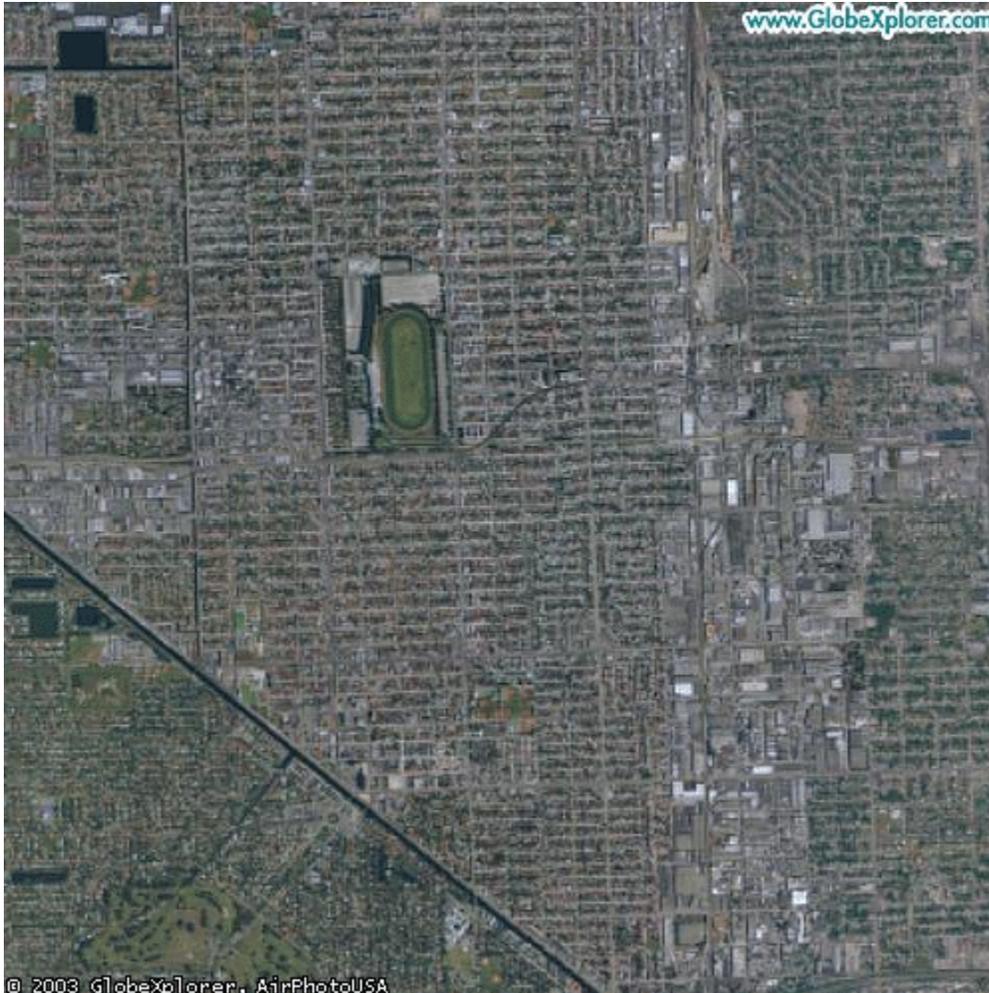


Cities grow for many reasons, and once there are roads and businesses established, more and more people come to visit, to live and to work. The track brought many jobs and the city was

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growing rapidly in the 1930s as the tourism business grew. New hotels were being built and many people were needed to work at the hotels and other tourist attractions.

Compare the 1938 photograph with one from 1999. Locate Hialeah Race Track and see how the city has grown. In the newer picture, the racetrack is totally surrounded by developed land. Even the old roads seem to have disappeared. If you look carefully, or maybe print out both images, you will be able to see the development with curved streets in the upper right hand corner of the old photo. That area is visible as an area of curved streets amid the straight street grid on the 1999 image. So some of the old city remains, but the modern city has taken over all the open space and former farm land.



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## **Tracking Miami's Growth Using Aerial Photography: Activities**

### **Activity 1**

If you look at a map of this area, you will see that Route 27, The Okeechobee Road, runs south west of the track. That is the dark line on the modern photo. Can you find that road on the 1938 photos of the area?

### **Activity 2**

Follow the steps below to create a photomosaic index from 1938 aerials captured by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and compare it to current U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps.

1. Go to the University of Florida's ["From the Air" Website](#) Select Dade County, select the year 1938, Flight 1.

You will be printing out tiles number 8, 10, 34, 32, 50 and 52. View each one at 25% zoom and then print each. Go back to Flight 2, also 1938, and print out tiles 13 and 11.

2. Once the images are printed, you can cut them out and tape them together.

3. Using a modern road map (or a U.S. Geological Survey quad sheet), locate and mark current locations of the transportation centers that serve modern Miami including the Amtrack station, Miami International Airport, and Interstate highways.

### **Teacher-led Activity**

Discuss with your class how transportation needs have changed in the last 65 years. How have these changes affected the land and the people of Dade County? What part of the transportation system in Miami is not shown in these pictures? Hint: It's the location that many immigrants from Cuba headed for when they came to the U.S. in the 1980's.

### **Additional Web references:**

For additional information on Miami, search the [Florida Heritage Project Collection](#), [Floridiana on the Web](#), and the [Florida Memory Project](#).