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Tequesta:

Newspapers of America's Last Frontier

By JEANNE BELLAMY

Pistol in hand, the first newspaper editor of Florida's Gold Coast leaped toward the office of his rival. The editor of the second newspaper met him at the head of the stairs and hit him on the head with a printer's mallet. (3)*

Little more than half a century later, in 1950, the hamlet which was the scene of that encounter had become a bustling city—one of two dozen clustered together along the Florida shore of the Gulf Stream.

A motorist, journeying after sunset in the fall of 1950 from West Palm Beach to Homestead, could tell only by signposts where one town ended and the next began. Among cars, trucks and buses streaming along that highway, he would have passed through a few stretches with no buildings along the roadside, but nowhere in those 100 miles would he have been out of sight of an electric light gleaming somewhere in the darkness. Much of his way would have been neon-lighted.

Yet he would have seen only a fraction of the dwellings housing 700,000 men, women and children (20) in that 100-mile strip, the only sub-tropical corner of continental United States.

Who could believe that all this came into being in half a century?

Scores of men and women living and working in this place in 1950 remembered how it looked in the year 1900, with only 5,000 inhabitants. (20) These pioneers watched towns and cities spring up in the wilderness as people rushed to America's last frontier.

The story of its newspapers is the story of the frontier itself.

In the autumn of 1950, this region had seven year-round daily newspapers of general circulation, an eighth published daily each winter, and more than two dozen other journals, mostly weeklies.

* The numerals in parentheses indicate a numbered and alphabetized list of references at the end of the paper.

The combined circulation of the dailies in 1950 was more than 350,000. Heading them in circulation was *The Miami Herald.* Its 1950 circulation of 193,011 daily and 222,310 Sunday—more than half the total of the whole group—reached out into the entire region and far beyond. So did, to a lesser extent, *The Miami Daily News,* with a circulation of 94,031 daily and 88,228 Sunday. (9)

The oldest newspaper of the region still alive in 1950 was *The Palm Beach Sun,* published each Friday at West Palm Beach. It dates back to 1887. (9)

In its youth, *The Sun* was what you might call a migratory newspaper—a phenomenon of gold rushes, oil booms and the like. Started in Melbourne, Fla., as *The Indian River News,* it moved to Juno, changing its name to *The Tropical Sun,* then moved south again in 1895 to West Palm Beach. (19)

The migration of this newspaper paralleled the southward march of Henry M. Flagler's railroad empire, which started the Gold Coast's first boom just before the turn of the century.

Remember that Dade county in 1900 covered the whole region we are discussing, and more. Its north boundary was the St. Lucie River. It arched south along the coast nearly 150 miles to Card Sound, at the head of the Florida Keys, and reached about 50 miles inland to Lake Okeechobee.

In those days, Key West, in Monroe county, adjoining Dade on the south, was Florida's largest city with around 18,000 population. (20) It had nearly 75 years of newspaper history before the first weekly moved into the north end of Dade county.

Key West's first newspaper, *The Register and Commercial Advertiser,* was born in 1829 and died in infancy. (11) From that year until 1894, Key West had 11 different newspapers and a 12th which appeared briefly four times between 1845 and 1899. (2)

The Key West Citizen, a daily in 1950, received that name in 1904 but can trace its origin through two consolidations to 1894 when a group of citizens raised $3,000 to start a newspaper. (2)

Remember, too, that in 1890 the population of the vast territory called Dade county was 861 souls. (20) Came Flagler with his railroad and by 1900 the population had leaped almost 500 percent to 4,955. (20)

Flagler brought more than two steel rails and wood-burning locomotives. At Palm Beach he built what was then the world's largest tourist resort hotel

—the seven-story Royal Poinciana, opened Feb. 11, 1894. To house carpenters and other workmen, Flagler bought land on the west shore of Lake Worth. (19) The workmen's settlement, then mostly tents and shacks, was incorporated Nov. 5, 1894, by a vote of 74 to one, as the town of West Palm Beach. (19)

In that same year, West Palm Beach got its first newspaper, *The Gazeteer*, which by 1950 had become *The Palm Beach Daily News*, second oldest newspaper along the Gold Coast.

The Gazeteer was consistently late in publication, and Editor C. M. Gardner always explained his failure to make edition time as "having had trouble with a drunken printer." Since he was the lone worker in his printing plant, everyone knew the identity of "the drunken printer" and he became a bit of a joke around town. (3)

The county seat of Dade county from 1889 to 1899 was at Juno, 12 miles north of Palm Beach at the head of Lake Worth. Juno was the southern terminus of a seven-mile narrow-gauge railroad which linked steamboats on the Indian River with other boats plying south to Lemon City on Biscayne Bay. (17)

Those familiar with small weekly newspapers will realize the advantge of a county seat site, with its easy access to the legal advertising which often is the financial backbone of such journals. Despite this, *The Tropical Sun* moved from Juno to booming West Palm Beach in 1895.

So the fledgling town found itself with two newspapers—C. M. Gardner's *Gazeteer* and Guy Metcalf's *Tropical Sun.* The warmth of their rivalry may be measured by the fact that Gardner was the pistol-toter who was knocked cold by a printer's mallet in the hands of Metcalf.

In 1896, *The Gazeteer* changed hands after a fire which destroyed its plant. (3) It was bought by S. Bobo Dean, who had been associated with Metcalf in Juno, and his brother, Joel S. Dean. They changed the name in 1897 to *The Lake Worth News.* (3)

Ex-Editor Gardner's disposition worsened after his plant burned, and proved his undoing. (3) Families named Frank and Shrebnick ran adjoining stores on Narcissus street, West Palm Beach, and were constantly bickering with each other. One day, Gardner stood on the sidewalk outside the Frank store and taunted Mrs. Frank. Her 17-year-old son, Marcus, drew a line across the sidewalk and dared Gardner to cross it. Gardner did. Marcus Frank shot and killed him. (3)

Mr. Shrebnick was the first to help young Frank, arranging bond to get him out of jail, and the Franks and Shrebnicks became great friends. (3) As for Marcus Frank, he expanded in business, became the owner of a large department store in Ocala, Florida, and represented Marion county in the Florida legislature for several sessions. (3)

In 1895-96, Flagler was pushing his railroad south from West Palm Beach through palmettoes, forests of towering Caribbean pines and across meandering water courses. He laid out the towns of Boynton, Delray, Deerfield, Fort Lauderdale, Dania, Hallandale, Ojus and Miami. (8) At the mouth of the Miami River, he built another big resort hotel—the Royal Palm.

For townsites, Flagler used chiefly lands given him by the State of Florida under laws authorizing such grants to encourage the building of railroads and canals. Millions of acres were granted thus to Flagler and others.

Railroads, which had made fortunes for men who flung them across the continent, were a popular target in those days. Government control of railroads was among the topics debated often in the 1890's in Congress and in state legislature. (14)

During those years around 1900, in the Flagler-built boom town of West Palm Beach, Editor Metcalf of *The Tropical Sun* was lambasting South Florida's own railroad magnate. Metcalf's rival, Editor Dean of *The Lake Worth News*, stood up for Flagler. (7)

Their clash grew loudest after the Florida legislature in 1901 enacted the "Flagler divorce law," which added incurable insanity to Florida's list of grounds for divorce until the law was repealed four years later. (7)

As soon as the law took effect, Flagler divorced his second wife, inmate of an insane asylum in New York. Within a month, he married Miss Mary Lily Kenan, for whom he built the palatial Whitehall at Palm Beach. (7)

Editor Metcalf of *The Sun* had plenty to say about this—all bad. In reply, Editor Dean of *The News* hinted that Metcalf's motive was to make his sheet such a nuisance that Flagler would buy it. (7)

"Flagler always believed that Metcalf's antagonism arose over a debt the latter owed and did not wish to pay," recorded two Florida historians. (7) "Flagler disliked him so intensely that he decided against being buried in Palm Beach when Metcalf's father was elected to municipal office in the town across Lake Worth.

"Editor Dean of *The Lake Worth News* supported Flagler not only on the divorce issue but on the general practices of the (railroad) system. It has

been alleged on good evidence that the paper was indebted to Flagler, who was 'pressing Dean rather hard.' . . . In 1905, Dean sold *The Lake Worth News* to the Flagler interests and moved to Miami . . . He bought *The Metropolis* and, as editor-owner, became the inveterate critic of the Flagler corporations." (7)

This brings us to what was, in 1950, our region's third oldest newspaper, *The Miami Metropolis,* which became *The Miami Daily News.*

But first let's wind up the story of the second oldest. The purchaser of Bobo Dean's *Lake Worth News* was Richard Overend Davies of Cleveland. (13)

The News became the scene of one of Florida's longest careers in journalism—that of Miss Ruby Edna Pierce. She became its cashier in 1907, then business manager on March 17, 1908. In 1910, she was made editor and general manager, which post she still occupied in 1950. (13)

Not long after Miss Pierce took the helm, *The News* moved across Lake Worth to the oceanfront resort. That was in 1913. *The Palm Beach Daily News* was published every year from the middle of December to the middle of April to give the winter colony its own daily newspaper. (13)

One month to the day after the first train chugged into Miami, *The Miami Metropolis* published its first edition on May 15, 1896. (17) The six-column, full-size weekly was named by Flagler, and its two pioneer editors might be classed as Flagler partisans.

The owner and publisher was Dr. Walter S. Graham, who had left the practice of medicine for law and was a member of the law firm of Robbins, Graham & Chillingworth, with offices at Titusville, West Palm Beach and Miami. The editor was Wesley M. Featherly, who came from Michigan. (17)

The first edition advertised bargains unbelievable to Miamians of 1950, such as "fine business lots" on the south bank of the river at $300. The newspaper also called for immediate incorporation of Miami, predicting that "there will be 1,500 people before the first of July." (17)

Work on the Royal Palm Hotel was being rushed for the formal opening on New Year's Day, 1897. People poured in on the Florida East Coast Railway Company's new trains. "All kinds of eating places and sleeping places opened up, some in tents, some in shacks and some in cheap houses," wrote John Sewell, who arrived in Miami March 3, 1896. "Some of them would be built in a day."

Liquor was forbidden inside the town limits, so saloons mushroomed at the north edge of the settlement. "The night after payday there were great

times, the workmen spending their money getting drunk, fighting, shooting and killing," Sewell recalled. "I have known as high as three or four dead men there after one night's jamboree. They had a number of dance halls, and you could hear the dancing and music for half a mile around until the dead hours of night." (17)

Miami was incorporated as a city on July 28, 1896, and in 1899 regained the courthouse from Juno. "The rough element was cleaned out and conditions bettered," Sewell reported. (17)

In that year, the three-year-old *Metropolis* was bought by B. B. Tatum, former sawmill operator who had controlled a newspaper in Bartow, Florida, in 1887, then four newspapers successively in Rome, Ga. (21)

The Metropolis flourished. By 1903 it had a circulation of 1,500, and Tatum changed it from a weekly to an eight-page daily. (21)

It was also in 1903 that Frank B. Stoneman and A. L. LaSalle, Sr., carted machinery from their printing shop in Orlando to Miami and started *The Miami Evening Record.* A few years later it became *The Morning News-Record.* (21)

Tatum's real estate interests demanded increasing quantities of his time, so he organized the Miami Printing Company to run *The Metropolis.* Secretary-treasurer of the company was S. Bobo Dean, who came from West Palm Beach and acquired a half-interest in 1905. (21)

During those years, Flagler had extended his railroad south to Homestead and started surveys to a deep-water port somewhere in southernmost Florida. (8) A preliminary survey in 1902-04 through swamps and forests to Cape Sable produced an adverse report on that route. Late in 1904, Flagler gave the order that the extension should go to Key West. The result was the fabled "Railroad That Goes To Sea" over the Florida Keys, finished January 22, 1912, at a cost of $20,000,000. (8)

The thriving town of West Palm Beach wanted to take the county seat from Miami, and it is to this era that *The Palm Beach Post* traces its origin in 1908. (9) D. H. Conkling established a weekly named *The Palm Beach County,* which later became the daily *Palm Beach Post.* The rivals for county honors took their case to the state legislature. "There was no way out of these dissensions except to divide Dade county," a writer of that era noted, "so, in 1909, its northern part was lopped off with West Palm Beach as the county seat, leaving Fort Lauderdale and Miami in the new Dade county." (8)

Talk of draining the Everglades had been snowballing for several years, and by the end of 1905, one dredge was being assembled at Fort Lauderdale

and headed northwest from New River toward Lake Okeechobee. Large tracts of public land were sold to finance the digging. High-pressure sales increased the number of owners of Everglades land from about a dozen in 1909 to upward of 15,000 in July, 1911. (16) "The transformation of the entire region from inaction to hopeful and confident activity was magical." (8) At the height of the drainage boom, *The Fort Lauderdale News* was founded in 1910. (9)

Meantime, Miami's only bank had trouble. As its receiver, Washington officials selected an Indiana attorney named Frank B. Shutts, who arrived about 1907. In carrying out his assignment, Shutts met Flagler, who hired him as his Miami attorney. (12)

The Stoneman-LaSalle newspaper experienced financial difficulties, and Shutts bought it for $29,000, borrowed from Flagler. The newspaper emerged Dec. 10, 1910, as *The Miami Herald*, a morning daily, with Stoneman as editor and Shutts as publisher. (12)

Shutts had obtained the $29,000 loan from Flagler by the argument that Miami needed a newspaper which would present Flagler's side of public questions as well as the anti-Flagler side. (12)

This last was rip-snortingly represented by Editor Dean of *The Metropolis*, who had transformed that newspaper from pro-Flagler to anti-Flagler.

Miami merchants expressed disapproval of Dean's views in a petition intended for the eyes of the Flagler interests. Before delivering it, they showed it to Dean. He told them he wanted to have the signatures checked and would return the original. Next day, the petition appeared on Page One of *The Metropolis*. (7)

This occurred at the height of a fight in which *The Metropolis* was championing the demands of growers for lower freight rates. The merchants were chagrined at seeing their pro-Flagler petition displayed to their customers. Some recanted. Those who didn't stopped advertising in *The Metropolis*. (7)

It was shortly thereafter that *The Miami Herald* made its debut. The $29,000 loan to Publisher Shutts did not remain outstanding long. An accountant, checking The Herald's records for Flagler, noted that a large automobile and the wages of a chauffeur were among the expenses of the business. Flagler remonstrated, and Shutts promptly paid off the balance of the loan, refusing to budge from his stand that a chauffeured car for the publisher was a proper expense of the newspaper. (12)

As part of the drainage boom, a Colorado corporation acquired state lands south of West Palm Beach, dug a canal and laid out the townsite which became Lake Worth. The sales agents, Bryant & Greenwood, established *The Lake Worth Herald* in 1912 as part of their promotion program. (18)

Something similar was going on at Florida City, just south of Homestead, where settlers included men who worked on the railroad to Key West. Florida City was laid out by the Tatum Brothers Investment Company. *The Homestead Leader-Enterprise* traces its history to this period. It was founded in 1912 as *The Homestead Enterprise* by J. A. Kahl, a Methodist minister, who sold his interest in 1915 to A. C. Graw, former Philadelphia publisher. (6)

Aboard his yacht on the way to California, Graw and his family were halted in Florida by the outbreak of World War I. Tatum Brothers induced Graw to go to Florida City, and the yacht entered the Florida City canal on February 16, 1915. Graw several years later started the first newspaper in Hialeah at the instance of its developers, James H. Bright and Glenn Curtiss. (6)

The year 1915 saw the creation of Broward county, named for Gov. Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, whose drainage program touched off the boom there. The new county's 720 square miles were taken about half and half from Dade county on the south and Palm Beach county on the north. Fort Lauderdale became the county seat. (8)

"It shares with Miami and West Palm Beach the expanding productiveness of the districts being steadily reclaimed. Large power boats operate between Fort Lauderdale, the canals and Lake Okeechobee, taking supplies and passengers westward, and returning with the products of the Everglades, which are chiefly shipped northward over the Florida East Coast Line. Pleasure boats also pass back and forth." (8)

It was also in 1915 that A. J. Bendle, who had bought Tatum's interest in *The Miami Metropolis*, sold out to Bobo Dean, already half-owner. (21)

Not one of the newspapers, daily or weekly, published in this region in 1950 dates its establishment to the decade between 1912 and 1922. (9) It was a lull between booms.

Interest in Florida properties had been stimulated in the first ten years of the century when lumber and turpentine barons began selling vast acreages from which they had made fortunes in naval stores and lumber. (1) Railroad-building brought a new wave of immigrants.

Fast-talking salesmen peddled Florida swamplands all over the country on the strength of drainage work in the Everglades. Doubts began to rise

in 1911. Despite the clank of ditch-diggers, the black muck and peat soil remained wet or under water, and vegetables which grew rankly at first mysteriously wilted and died.

The result is recorded by J. E. Dovell in the appendix to Volume IV-A of the Proceedings of the Soil Science Society of Florida:

> "The enterprise became a subject of national agitation. A resulting panic among purchasers of lands saw many payments on sales contracts lapse . . . Several dealers in Glades lands were indicted for using the mails to defraud. Accounts of these indictments were published throughout the United States, especially in cities from which much money and many settlers had come."

Still, the Land Where Summer Spends The Winter drew people from afar. By 1922, subdivisions were springing up in rapid succession. That year saw the start of four newspapers which still were being published in 1950—*Lake Worth Leader* and *Palm Beach Times;* the weekly *Miami Beach Times* and *Hialeah Review.* (9)

The Delray Beach News dates from 1923, (9) dawn of the great Florida real estate boom. The year also marked Bobo Dean's sale of *The Miami Metropolis* to James M. Cox, former governor of Ohio, who renamed it *The Miami Daily News.* (21) In 1924, Cox bought a site on Biscayne Boulevard for the 26-story, million-dollar News Tower. (21)

The same year saw the beginning of *The Everglades News,* founded at Canal Point in March, 1924, by Howard Sharp, who had edited *The South Florida Developer* as a weekly edition of D. H. Conkling's *Palm Beach Post.* (15) Sharp's weekly was edited after 1934 by Paul Rardin, who became the owner in 1937. (15)

The 20th anniversary edition of *The Everglades News* explained that several publications had used the same name as early as 1912. The edition also told of a novel premium given in the early days with each $2 subscription to *The East Beach News.* (4)

The East Beach News was just a column of booster material inserted in copies of *The Moore Haven Times* sent to Pahokee. The material was gathered by Guy Stovall, who sold home-lighting equipment; Boas Levins, who ran a meat market, and Paul Mansfield, who got a room for the project in the same building with Levins' meat market.

"There was a sliding panel connection in the partition between Boas' and Guy's rooms. Guy or Paul would knock on the wall, the panel would open, a 25-cent piece would be laid on the ledge and from the other side of the wall a two-handled jug would appear and the 25-cent piece would disappear.

"The subscriber would grasp the jug by the two handles, tip it to his mouth, and when he gurgled twice, the jug would be snatched away and the panel closed."

Conkling paid Stovall $500 for *The East Beach News,* but offered no premiums for subscriptions. (4)

"There being no drink of shine as a premium," *The Everglades News* related, "*The East Beach News* dried up and blew away."

The South Florida Developer—Conkling's weekly edition of *The Palm Beach Post*—was bought by Edwin A. Menninger, who moved it to Stuart on the coastline. Menninger continued *The Developer,* serving subscribers at Lake Okeechobee from Stuart, until he brought out *The Stuart News.* (4)

At the height of the real estate boom, on July 26, 1925, *The Miami Daily News* celebrated its 29th anniversary and the opening of its new plant with a 504-page edition weighing 7½ pounds. It was the "world's largest single edition of a standard-size newspaper." (5)

The Miami Herald set a world's record in 1925 with 42,500,000 lines of advertising—12,000,000 lines more than any newspaper ever had carried in a year's time. (1)

The News Tower was the northernmost of 16 tall hotels and office buildings completed along Miami's bayfront in July and August, 1925. They gave the city its skyscraper skyline almost overnight. Steel skeletons of 14 more rose at the same time in the city. (1)

The fateful year of 1926 saw the establishment of *The Coral Gables Riviera.* (9) It was by no means the only newspaper started in the region during the great land boom. None of the rest survived in 1950.

An afternoon daily, *The Miami Tribune,* was founded in 1924 with N. B. T. Roney as its first backer. The editor was scholarly Clayton Sedgwick Cooper. (1)

On January 12, 1925, appeared the 40-page first edition of *The Illustrated Daily Tab,* a venture of Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. At 26, he was publishing two tabloids in California. He breezed into Miami in October, 1924, lined up some backing and awarded $1,000 to the winner of a contest to name his Miami tabloid. (1)

The splashy *Tab* had its plant in the old home of *The Metropolis,* just east of the Central Fire Station on W. Flagler Street. The offices faced north toward the old three-story Dade county courthouse. (1)

On the opposite side of the courthouse stood *The Tribune's* plant in a two-story building on N. W. First Street. (1)

Between these two newspaper plants a lurid incident occurred. Clatter of air drills and riveters at work on skyscrapers nearly drowned the sound of gunshots which burst from the courthouse on the morning of September 27, 1925. The shooting foiled a jail break led by the notorious Heywood Register of the Ashley-Mobley gang of bandits and bank-robbers. Two prisoners were killed, but Register played possum and was not hurt. (1)

You will gather from this that newspaper work in Miami in the 1925 boom—like the city itself—was far from dull.

Journalists poured into town along with men from all other walks of life. They found jobs quickly on Miami newspapers, bulging with more ads than they could print.

The real estate fever infected newsmen, too. Many would work a few days or weeks, then vanish into the maelstrom to buy and sell.

So fast was the turnover that managing editors didn't know the names or even the faces of all their employes, or how many would be likely to show up for work on any given day. (12)

At the peak of the confusion, *The Miami Herald* newsroom was on the second floor of its old building, approached by stairs from Miami Avenue.

One night, a chubby man wearing a derby appeared at the top of the stairway, facing the bustling rim of the copy desk. He singled out a copyreader and asked: "Can you direct me to Colonel Shutts?"

"Shutts?" asked the copyreader absently. Then he addressed his coworkers: "Anybody know a fellow named Shutts?"

None replied.

"Sorry we can't help you," the copyreader said.

With a look of wonder, the visitor asked permission to use a telephone, put in a call and beckoned one of the staff to speak to the party on the other end of the wire. Through the receiver, the staffer heard:

"This is Frank Shutts, publisher of *The Herald.* Can't someone in the office bring that man out to my house? He's Herbert Hoover." (12)

The News Tower provided a vantage point for watching the 1926 hurricane. The story was told by Jessee O. Irvin, a *Herald* copyreader at the time of his death in 1950, who was working on *The News* in 1926:

> "Wives of two *News* executives came to the office when the wind got bad. After a big chunk of concrete hurtled down from the tower, we put the women under the press. I wasn't scared until I happened to glance out a window and saw tank cars on the railroad siding topple and roll before the wind."

Irvin, staring in frightened fascination, saw a huge schooner bearing down on the building. It veered off and careened out into the bay, then back inland farther north, where it went hard aground.

"After the storm," Irvin recalled, "cars moved along Biscayne Boulevard right under its prow."

On June 16, 1926, Vanderbilt's *Tab* vanished with the announcement that E. A. Inglis had been appointed receiver. (1)

The next November, *The Miami Tribune* withered to tabloid size. In February, 1927, it shrank to a weekly, and ceased publication in August, 1927. (1)

Eight lean years ensued. Banks failed along the Gold Coast and elsewhere in Florida. As late as Christmas of 1934, you could buy a full meal—meat, potatoes, a vegetable, dessert and coffee—at several downtown Miami cafeterias for the flat sum of 10 cents. A deluxe eatery charged 15 cents.

This was the era of the world-wide depression, yet new settlers continued to move into Southeast Florida's 100-mil nd. Its population climbed from 214,830 in 1930 (17) to 257,23 e state census of 1935 and 387,522 in 1940. (17)

More newspapers were born in this period—*The Hollywood Herald* in 1929 and *The Hollywood Sun-Tatler* in 1932. (9)

The year 1932 also saw the debut of *The Florida Sun,* (9) which by 1950 had become a daily at Miami Beach under the ownership of George B. Storer, proprietor of a chain of radio and television stations, who also had bought *The Coral Gables Riviera.*

In 1934 *The Redland District News* made its bow in Homestead, capital of a thriving agricultural district of tropical fruit groves and winter vegetable farms.

It was a time of newspaper deaths and consolidations in many parts of the country. In West Palm Beach, *The Palm Beach Post,* owned by D. H. Conkling, joined forces with the *Palm Beach Times,* then owned by Sheriff Robert Baker. Conkling and Baker each had borrowed about $100,000 from E. R. Bradley, longtime operator of Bradley's Casino at Palm Beach, where only rich visitors were allowed to gamble. Bradley took over the two newspapers in February, 1934. (18)

The winter of 1933-34 brought out *The Miami Beach Tribune,* published daily during that tourist season. It was backed by M. L. Annenberg, who had made a fortune from racing news.

The tabloid *Tribune* resumed on November 15, 1934, as a year-round daily. It set Miamians agog with such scare headline as: COSSACKS BEAT BOY, 500 DIE IN KEYS HURRICANE, GRAND JURY PROBES CITY GRAFT. (10)

A three-cornered war, replete with name-calling, ensued among *The Miami Herald, The Miami Daily News* and *The Tribune,* which on January 1, 1936, became *The Miami Tribune.* It was the first newspaper in the region to pass the 100,000 circulation mark.

The Tribune's guiding genius, Paul G. Jeans, gave Miami a movie-like version of a tabloid in action. He often wrote of "the city hall gang" and once quipped that the ideal tabloid headline would be: "Sex Fiend Slays Six In Penthouse Orgy."

Jeans's impish humor came out in such tales as the story of the time he sent investigators to track down rumors of jury tampering.

Criminal Court Judge E. C. Collins had been indicted January 17, 1935, on a charge of accepting a bribe. Six jurors deadlocked four to two, and *The Tribune* reported the outcome thus: "Four Fixed Jurors Save Collins From Chains." (10)

Criminal libel charges were filed against Jeans and the reporter who wrote the story. Jeans sent two hirelings to Ojus to look for a man named by a tipster as the jury-fixer. Jeans' men found him, got him drunk and heard him boast that he was "more evil in Broward than I am in Dade." (10)

That was the phrase which delighted Jeans, who died in the spring of 1937 in a highway accident.

On December 1, 1937, *The Tribune* ceased publication. It had been bought by John S. Knight of Akron, Ohio, who had purchased *The Miami Herald* from Shutts on October 15, 1937.

Tribune support had helped elect three Miami city commissioners—a majority of the board—in the spring of 1937. *The Herald* and *The News* called attention to their faults loudly and often.

The News coined the title of "the termites" for the three, who were removed from office in a recall election 15 months after *The Tribune* folded.

For its role in the recall campaign, *The Miami Daily News* won the 1938 Pulitzer Prize for "distinguished and meritorious service to the community."

By this time the Gold Coast had entered a boom linked with the Federal Housing Authority's guarantees of loans for home-building. This period saw the birth of three more weeklies still published in 1950: *The Fort Lauderdale Record* in 1935, *The Dania Press* in 1939 and *The Belle Glade Herald* in 1940. (9)

An even bigger building boom began toward the end of World War II. New weeklies sprang up in communities suddenly dense with homes. The list included *The Pahokee News, The Boynton Beach News, The Riviera Beach News* and several in Greater Miami—*The Hialeah Home News, Allapattah News, Little River Shopper* and *North Miami Sentinel.*

Early in 1947, *The Palm Beach Post* and *Times* were purchased for $1,050,000 by John H. Perry, who then owned six dailies and 15 weeklies in Florida. The West Palm Beach dailies had come on the market because of the successive deaths of Bradley and Barry Shannon, to whom Bradley had left them. Perry also acquired *The Palm Beach Daily News.*

Before Bradley and Shannon died, *The Palm Beach Post-Times* figured in an incident which received national publicity. It began on New Year's Eve in the darkest days of World War II. (3)

Donald Whitehurst, who substituted in the slot of the copy desk when the regular news editor was away, wrote a story contrasting the honor roll of soldiers in downtown West Palm Beach with New Year's Eve cocktail parties, dining and dancing in Palm Beach. (3)

The story appeared on New Year's Day, and Shannon, who had gone to the horse races at Miami, was buttonholed there by several Palm Beach friends. When he returned, he spoke severly to Don Morris, *Post-Times* editor, who not only fired Whitehurst on the spot but ran a Page One apology, saying Whitehurst was a mere substitute desk man and had no authority to publish such material without consulting the editor. The apology praised Palm Beach for its war effort. (3)

While this may have mollified the resort-dwellers, it had the reverse effect on readers with sons or relatives overseas. The story was reported in newspapers throughout the country, and by a broadcaster on a nationwide radio network. (3)

Probably the shortest-lived metropolitan daily in journalistic history was *The Daily Mail,* a tabloid published at Miami Beach from January 11 to February 28, 1950. It lasted exactly 49 days.

Nearly a month before he started the newspaper, Publisher Harry O. Voiler sued *The Miami Daily News* for $300,000 damages for saying Voiler was acting as a "front" for "criminals, racketeers and hoodlums." Voiler insisted that he and his wife, Louise, who was listed as "founder," owned all the assets of *The Daily Mail.*

On January 25, 1950, while Frank Costello, New York racket bigshot, was registered at a swank Miami Beach hotel, *The Mail's* leading editorial

remarked: "As for Frank Costello, *The Herald's* and *The News'* bogeyman, we hope that while he is a guest at Miami Beach he enjoys our sunshine, our flowers, our myriad attractions."

On the same date, *The Pathfinder*, a national newsmagazine, said: "For the first time in many months, the Florida Gold Coast's $100,000,000 gambling syndicates thought they had a friend" in *The Mail.*

It ceased publication with Voiler's explanation that "we have run out of money."

You will gather from this that *The Mail* bloomed and died at a time when *The Herald* and *The News* were hammering hard against the activities of gamblers and racketeers in the community.

Not all the region's newspapers agreed on the desirability of stamping out illegal gambling. For example, Editor Knight of *The Herald* quoted Editor Charles Francis Coe of *The Palm Beach Post* on January 28, 1950, as writing: "Nice people will gamble. And so long as betting on a horse at a race track is legal, while betting the same amount on the same horse away from the track is illegal, nice people will gamble more than ever."

Knight's editorial comment was: "Editor Coe, meet Editor Voiler. Nice people should get together."

Disclosures in testimony before a United States Senate committee investigating interstate crime led to the suspension from office of the sheriffs of Dade and Broward counties. As the 1950-51 winter tourist season began, illegal gambling in both these counties was on a "sneak" basis.

This was a topic *The Herald* had been pursuing for more than 10 years. "For disinterested and meritorious public service in 1950," *The Herald* was awarded the Pulitzer prize for its "tireless campaign against crime and official corruption and in behalf of good government."

The big daily also was an early and persistent supporter of plans for building the Tamiami Trail, control of floods and droughts in the Everglades, and the Everglades National Park, which was created in 1947 after intensive efforts spearheaded by Associate Editor John D. Pennekamp.

The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Gold Coast in 1950 was reflected in the presence of a dozen journals addressed to special groups of the population.

Among these were *The Florida Echo* for citizens of German ancestry, established in 1925, and *The Jewish Floridian*, founded in 1928. (9)

Negro residents had a choice of four weeklies printed in Miami—*The Tropical Dispatch, The Call, The Times* and *The Whip.*

Organized labor had two weeklies—*The Miami Labor Citizen* and *The Union Labor News* in West Palm Beach.

The growing volume of legal news and advertising gave rise in 1926 to *The Miami Review.* In 1950, it was being published five days a week. (9)

During the racing season, a Miami printing plant published an edition of *The Daily Racing News,* the "bible" of race fans.

Miami also had a weekly named *Miami Life,* whose role is difficult to describe. A nightclub owner once boasted to me that, by judicious use of folding money, in the days when gambling casinos ran wide-open in Miami, he arranged to have hawkers for this publication stand in front of crowded Miami Beach hotels and bellow: "Gambling running wide open at Such-and-such club," using the name of his establishment. There was nothing about that in the papers they carried, but the stunt filled his gambling rooms, he said.

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We Choose the Sub-Tropics

By F. PAGE WILSON

The story of a last frontier, seen through the eyes of a young man from a northern business office, who, deciding such a career would never satisfy, sought with his family a freer, more natural life in the Farthest South. This was in early '95.

Ever southward! Our trim little sloop danced over the greenish-blue between South Florida and the indigo blue of the Gulf Stream. Then she turned sharply west and into a channel which divided two protecting islands. A few minutes and we were in the smoother, crystal-clear waters of what looked like an inland sea. It was Biscayne Bay.

We glanced across at the mainland shore, some three miles ahead. North and South it stretched as far as eye could reach, an unbroken, curving, low-lying mass of green. It was the "Bay Biscayne country" of old Spanish maps, the "empty, island-bordered coast" of Ponce de Leon—"that great domain of sun and sea and wondrous vital air." And now, nearly four centuries later, thus it appeared to us.

Our captain blew three blasts on a huge conch shell. On closer approach we discerned a little sailboat; the mouth of a river; some white trousers hanging on a tree to dry; then the roof of a building. But what made us tingle with excitement was to recognize those wide-plumed trees towering at curious angles above the rest. Coconut palms, sure symbol of the tropic shore we sought!

Too absorbed for words, we gazed upon this place, the one which looked most likely after months of seeking and comparing. A far-down, isolated little spot whose very name was in doubt, some sources giving Fort Dallas, some Miami, others leaving it a blank! What after all did we know beyond a few bare facts of its healthfulness and climate, its arresting position on the map? . . . Now such thoughts vanished. This was some other world, new and alluring and very different; but one which spoke in silent sureness of outstanding things to come.

THE NEW LAND

We landed at the south point of the river's mouth; my wife, our small daughter(always called Bee) and myself. There to meet us was a smiling, bare-headed, sun-tanned man in blue jeans and a shirt open-throated to the February breeze. He was Hon. Frederick S. Morse, recently in the State Legislature, with whom I had had some correspondence. Originally from Boston but living here "because his health liked it", he was agent for lands of the embryo Florida East Coast Canal Company.

"Just in time for breakfast" was his genial greeting . . . "Ever taste a good ripe papaya?" He led us to his little "bachelor shack" close by. "After that, we'll say how-do to the people around here, then take a little sail down the Bay to a place for you to stay."

We had just sat down when, with a quizzical glance at our city faces, he said, "There come some of the people now." Through the open door behind us we saw a group of Seminole Indians, in brightly colored dress but of stolid mien, landing from canoes with bundles of skins. "In from the Everglades to sell their stuff at Brickell's," he told us, pointing to a substantial two-story frame building near by.

William B. Brickell was a man of the sturdy, adventurous type who had traveled widely and made money in the Australian gold fields. Arriving in 1871, he had bought land, established this Indian Trading Post and lived here with his family ever since, adding to his acreage from time to time. They gave us a warm welcome coupled with curiosity. Visitors from the North did not usually include women and children.

Next, we sailed (or paddled) across the river to the north shore. Here was old Fort Dallas, a structure of native rock built in its original form as an army post following the Seminole war of 1836-40. This, with the surrounding land, had been purchased by Mrs. Julia D. Tuttle of Cleveland, Ohio. Partly remodeled, it had been her permanent home since 1891. That lady impressed us as a thoroughly capable business woman, one too who knew how to be happy in the wilderness. Evidently glad to see new faces, she was an almost unbelievable optimist as to the future of this chosen spot.

These two, old Fort Dallas on the north side of the river and the Indian Trading Post on the other, were Miami's only two buildings. Each stood in a fair-sized clearing with a few flowers and fruit trees and, of course, the coconuts. Beyond that was dense jungle, merging further back into pine forest almost as wild.

Morse wanted me to see some large tropical fruit trees at an old settler's place up the Miami river. The trip promised rough walking, however, and the Tuttle ladies persuaded my wife to remain with them until our return. Later when I saw the terrain, I was glad. It gave my wife a chance, too, to hear about the country from the woman's point of view.

Miami (and the river) are said to have derived their name from the Calusa Indian word "Mayaimi" meaning, some say "sweet water", others say "Big Lake". Whatever the exact meaning of the name, the abundance of fresh water at this point must have proved a boon to many a mariner wrecked on the coral reef off-shore. It was to be found also in springs on shore and even in the middle of the salty Bay if one knew where to look. The river's width and volume made it quite imposing. It was a surprise then to learn that its sources, barely traceable in the vast expanse of Everglades grass and water, were only half a dozen miles or so from its mouth. Running toward the Bay in a south-easterly direction, the river reached the coast ridge in two channels, the North and the South Fork. In the latter, a stretch of protruding rock and boulders, partially damning the flow, was known as the Miami Rapids.

The whole population of six was at the boat landing to see us off. That was the last little oasis of human life before the void. The river, quickly losing width, stretched before us like a curling, silver-grey ribbon between green walls; an outer fringe of mangroves, then live-oak, gumbo limbo, a lone mahogany. Occasionally we had a peep at some long-legged bird, but this was not their time of day. We saw an alligator sleeping like a log on shore and I thought I saw the snout of another unpleasantly near our boat. We also saw that great cumbrous amphibian, the manatee or sea-cow. But that was all.

The house at which we stopped, grey from sun and rain and half-hidden in vines, was of the long, low type, mostly porch. The owner, whose name, I think, was McNeill, was a tall lean man, brown as a nut but strong and quick-stepping for his years. He led us over a very dubious "trail". We edged in between clumps of tall palmetto, scrambled through lianas and prickly vines, tore our shoes on jutting rock. But to see those trees was worth it: mangos avocados, and two or three fruits still more tropical. The mangos especially were a noble sight in full bloom. I thought of that Garden of the Hesperides . . . "with tree following tree, flowering or in fruit throughout the livelong year".

The old man, proud of his little grove, was full of plans for enlarging it. Knowing the high value given these fruits by those familiar with them,

I asked if he had ever tried them in northern markets. "Shipping them?" he laughed. "Many times. Trouble is to get them there before they rot . . . Oh well, transportation will come—some day".

Primarily, of course, our search was for the place and the climate approaching most nearly our own desires. Still, wherever that might be, it had to offer some fair promise for a living. I had always loved working with trees. Hence the idea of some all-year outdoor land where, with small stuff for immediate profit, we could make fruit trees the basis of a self-supporting home. This poor looking soil of sand and rock could certainly produce good trees. Many things had yet to be considered but I was almost ready to believe that tropical fruit culture was the answer. A new industry for the United States—and practically untried! But South Florida was different—almost the only place in which it could even be tried.

Mrs. Trapp's boarding house was beautifully situated on a silvery-rock bluff overlooking the Bay just above Coconut Grove. "Rough but we'll try and make you feel at home," she said cheerily as she showed us to a room. Her husband told us how, well past 70 and scarcely able to stand, he had come here "just to die in the sunshine." Now, with his own hands he was helping build a larger, two-story home of native rock. It was this family, with the son Harlan, who developed and gave their name to a well-known variety of avocado.

Morse was guiding us around outside when Mrs. Trapp emerged with a tray of long, juicy drinks. We sat down under a big banyan. My wife gave a little laugh as she said, "I'm trying to realize the change from what we left a week ago. This sunshine and the blue, sparkling sea! And sitting on a bench outdoors! I can hardly believe it even now."

Meantime, I'd been thinking. To "learn" this peculiar country in the way it should be learned would take a lot of exploring. Better go slow about settling on anything. I said as much to Morse.

He nodded vigorously. "That's the idea. You want to be dead sure this is the place you really want. You know," he went on with the Morse twinkle in his eye, "I'm glad to answer all those questions of yours—when I can. But I can help best by helping you find answers for yourself. By seeing places, hearing what people say on both sides. Isn't that so, Mrs. Trapp?"

"I guess so," she agreed. "Each one must do his own deciding. This is a country you've got to like for itself. It can be pretty tough if you don't."

"What about you, Mrs. Trapp?" asked my wife with her woman's instinct for concrete cases, "Do you really like it here?"

"Like it!" she answered a little testily. "I love it . . . tho I couldn't tell why. Certainly not for the money in it," she laughed.

On our way to see Morse off in his boat, a man turned from the road toward Trapp's. "Hi! Colonel," cried Morse, "I'd like you to meet some new arrivals anxious to size up what we've got here." Valentine, he explained, was a surveyor and could tell us more about it than anybody.

"Great boy for the blarney, isn't he?" laughed the new-comer, as we shook hands. "Well, any time you feel like roughing it, glad to take you along." This, no doubt, was what Morse had in mind about meeting people. I accompanied Valentine on several of his surveying trips. A couple of times I held the chain when his assistant could not come. Searching for a badly needed corner post could teach many things about a strange terrain.

The incident illustrates the friendly informality of the country. Everybody I met was glad to help and my wife had the same experience with the ladies. However, this was distinctly a "man's country". At the house, for days together Mrs. Trapp was the only woman she saw.

The road referred to, between the bluff and the Bay, was the Indian Trail through the jungle from Miami River to Coconut Grove. It was the nearest approach to a real road in the entire region. In low spots, it was the favored parade ground for regiments of the voracious, multi-colored, pop-eyed land crab in search of a nice, newly planted tomato. Little Bee loved them if nobody else did.

Another visitor at the house was introduced to us as the Duke of Dade. A picturesque and not unfitting title for the stalwart J. W. Ewan. He had been superintendent of the Biscayne Bay Co's lands on Miami River up to the time of their purchase by Mrs. Tuttle.

COCONUT GROVE

Morse drove up for us next morning in a sort of wide-wheel buggy cart to take us over the Coconut Grove section. To reach the village, we ascended —rare phenomenon in South Florida—a little hill. On the road along the crest were some nice looking homes with a sweeping view of the Bay. Several were of two stories and ornamented with the cupolas and scrolls favored at that day. As to material, some were of mahogany or other wood found afloat or on the beach; others of native Caribbean Pine heavy and hard to work but astonishingly durable.

Among Grove buildings, I remember the Congregational Church, the School, the Shone and Charles Peacock stores, and the Peacock Inn. It was

a little startling to note the enthusiasm with which the people here had gone to work to get their great desire, a Public Library. But what stood out in our minds was that this tiny settlement, a mere dot in hundreds of miles of wilderness, without transportation, without what are called the necessaries of life, should have drawn to itself so many noteworthy, or say, interesting people.

We came upon Ralph D. Munroe—the Commodore, as he was always called, his blue eyes busy with a telescope in his beloved boathouse. A naval architect from Staten Island, he had made this his permanent home since 1888. His development of a light-weight, shoal-draft yet highly seaworthy vessel almost revolutionized sailboat design. Drawn to the Biscayne Bay region by its ideal sailing conditions, he became interested also in pineapple canning, sponge fishing, mahogany from the Keys. But he loved it too much to stand for any speculative over-painting of its advantages.

Long associated with the Commodore was Capt. Dick Carney, originally one of an expedition to plant coconuts on the Beach. Also among the seafarers were Capt. Frow and Capt. Bravo. This reminds me of several other sea captains living up or down the coast. Perhaps under the spell of voyages in tropic seas, they could think of no better spot for retirement than this near approach in their own country. Of the people in general, many were from various parts of Florida but other states were well represented. We also noted a good many English. Some were up-State orange growers migrating further south: some, like the Peacocks, direct from the old country; others from the Bahamas or Keys and locally known as Conchs.

Coconut Grove had its attraction, too for authors and artists. Kirk Munroe, famous author of tales about the Coral Reef, the Everglades and Keys, lived here many years. His wife was a daughter of Amelia Barr, the well known novelist, and she too, I think, was a sometime resident. We heard of more than one noted painter roughing it in the attempt to snatch the brilliant coloring of local skies and waters. Earlier history tells of geologists like Agassiz, of the bird lover Audubon, studying nature here in phases seen nowhere else.

After lunch at the Peacock Inn (shall we ever forget that delicious green-turtle soup?), we made for the piney woods. The "road" soon petered out into a sandy, bumpy trail over palmettoes, rock and roots. Now and then we would come to the dwelling of some lone homesteader with its little clearing and a few trees.

It was easy to see why those clearings were mostly small. First, the pine trees had to be cut down and burned; then a tough, interlacing mat of

palmettoes hacked out, one by one. This still left a mass of scrub oak, myrtle and other stuff to be rooted out from a rocky bed. It was inch-by-inch, hard work and all with hand tools. What a difference, I thought, between the homesteader here and his brother on the western plains. There, in little more time than it took to break one acre here, he could plow a hundred; then look forward in three or four months to a bonanza crop. Something more subtle must have been the incentive here.

In places, the monotony of the dull-green pine and palmetto was broken by a spur of low glade or prairie. Here the soil, instead of sand and rock, was of marl or sometimes sandy loam. It looked moister and more fertile, though I saw none of it in use.

Ahead of us now we saw a large clearing with a nice bungalow and thrifty young grapefruit trees. "John Ellis's homestead," Morse told us. "He wants me to look over some hammock land with him in next section. You'll like to see it, too."

Ellis, an experienced grower from Orange county, looked more like a city business executive than a farmer. My wife was soon deep in talk with Mrs. Ellis about homestead housekeeping, the insect plague in summer and so forth. She agreed to stay with her and the children while we men tackled the hammock. That, they told us, was the Florida name for jungle and a pretty stiff proposition.

Jungle it was; an almost impenetrable wall of many kinds of hardwood trees peculiar to the tropics. With axe and machete we cut a little path toward the center. Here the trees grew larger, the soil more full of humus from cycles of decaying leaves, nature ever more demanding. For every space was filled; the ground with ferns and diverse shrubs; the trunks of trees with epithytic ferns; the branches with orchids and a hundred air-plants. A sort of three-story garden!

The hammock opened on one side to the Everglades. Ellis cast a thoughtful eye over that vast expanse of watery saw-grass dotted in the distance with little tree-embowered islands. Then he said, "It isn't just the mystery, it's the immensity. And that long neck of land across the Bay, the miles and miles of solitary Keys! To say nothing of the piney woods! This country will surely have a host of how's and why's to settle for itself."

LEMON CITY AND NORTH

Our next long trip with Morse was northward. After a mile or so we stopped to see William Oxer, an old-timer who had several kinds of citrus and tropical fruit trees. He had such an abiding love for a certain spot under

a group of cocopalms overlooking Biscayne Bay that it was there he wanted, very insistently, to be buried when he died.

As in other instances, I noted here that orange trees looked less thrifty than either grapefruit or limes. My own preference, however, was still for the more tropical fruits. Not only did they seem to be well adapted to this soil, but climatic needs restricted them to a much smaller area in the entire country than was the case with citrus.

Oxer had a little patch of tomatoes, green beans and other tender stuff. Here, as elsewhere, I looked carefully for any sign of the great freeze which had devastated most of Florida so recently. I saw none. However, had crops then been planted on low land far back from the Bay, the story might have been different.

Buena Vista, facing the Bay some two miles further up, was the site of one of the more commodious homes, that of the Merritts—Pete and Z. T. and their sisters Ada and Nan. Ada was principal of Lemon City School and Z. T. county school superintendent for years.

Lemon City was our next stop. About as far north of Miami River as Coconut Grove was south, it was the only other settlement of any size this side of Palm Beach. The name is said to have been derived from proximity to the Filer lemon grove, though this was really nearer Buena Vista. Among the buildings were the Methodist Church, the School, Connolly's Hotel and a number of residences.

There was also a Post Office. Until quite recently, mail for points on Biscayne Bay had been brought by a carrier walking barefoot down the Beach from Lake Worth, sixty-odd miles North. Some in Coconut Grove still had their mail dropped by passing steamship.

Lemon City's main street contained D. R. Knight's general store, two or three smaller ones, a barber shop and a saloon. It continued to the Bay where there was a warehouse operated by L. W. Pierce, also a long wharf. A small schooner ran between here and Key West. There, if tomato shippers were lucky, it connected with the Mallory steamers for New York.

We sat on a sunny, breeze-cooled rail to watch the pelicans on top of some sea-bitten old piles. Little Bee wanted to know why they looked so sad. Why indeed, when each one enjoyed a throne to itself and, only a splash below, all the fish it could catch? From a boat just in from the Bahamas came laughter and the soft, broad accents of the colored sailors. They unloaded a few baskets of early pineapples and the captain picked out for us a couple of full ripes.

As we sat and ate, James L. Nugent and Count Jean d'Hédouville stepped up from their boat and Morse made us acquainted. Of these two, a good story is told. Belonging to highly placed families in Europe, cultured and widely traveled, they had been close friends over there for years. Then Nugent, on a supposedly brief visit to America, had—so far as his family knew—become lost in the wilds of South Florida. To appease anxiety, d'Hédouville came in search. He found him but, by this time, both liked it here so well that they decided to stay. Nugent made several trips to Central America looking for finer types of mango. He was now, with Charles F. Siebold, planting a grove at Snapper Creek. D'Hédouville acquired a large tract on the Bay at Buena Vista.

Away from the dock, signs of town soon dwindled. A couple of miles north, we came to a sizeable stream called Little River and turned inland. Among the scattered settlers, I remember George and R. F. Potter, the Soar Brothers and Bill Mattair; all with nice little homes and fruit trees.

A REVOLUTIONARY CROP

"Now," said Morse, "we're coming to a crop of tomatoes I want you to see. If it isn't a fluke—and I don't see how it can be—it's going to change this whole country. Notice the soil. Marl prairie. No rock. Easy to plow. Dozens of attempts to farm these prairies have failed—until this." A spare, thoughtful looking man now joined us and Morse, when he had introduced us, said, "Freeman, it's just too wonderful to be true. How're you coming out, if I may ask?"

"Not too bad. Lost some on the way North, but prices are away up and plenty more to pick." I was wondering why this prairie experience should be so different from the others when Freeman explained, "Just dropped a bit of wet stable manure on the roots at planting. Not for fertilizer, only to get them started. These prairies, you know, are under water all summer. Takes the life out of them."

That was it, I supposed, and the manure re-started the bacterial action. Be this as it might, word of that prairie crop and the mid-winter prices—together with the freeze in the orange belt—was already bringing new-comers to see this safer region. It was the beginning of the first little boom-agricultural!

SOME MORE EXPLORING

In between these excursions with Morse, I made some alone or with others. A man whom I met casually in Coconut Grove took me in his sailboat two or three miles north of Lemon City to see George Ihle. A retired Navy

man, he was a veritable wizard in making things grow in white sand. Quite early he had discovered that farming here was like farming nowhere else. Many a good hint he gave me.

Among explorations which I made alone was one which nearly had an unpleasant ending. It was in the wild area a few miles south of Coconut Grove, known to the Indians as the Big Hunting Grounds.

It was here the U. S. Government had granted Dr. Henry Perrine a township on which to carry out his long thought out plans for a tropical farming colony. He had already introduced several plants and trees from Yucatan and other countries, descendants of which still exist. Because of the Seminole War, however, he made temporary headquarters on Indian Key and established there a large nursery. Then came the Indian attack on that island, not by the Seminoles but by a remnant of the Calusas, former inhabitants of the lower peninsula. The Doctor was killed, the house burned and his family escaped only by hiding in a turtle crawl beneath the wharf.

Thus ended in tragedy a cherished dream which, placing less emphasis on high-priced perishables, might have changed the whole course of South Florida farming.

My opportunity to see this district had come through a fellow-boarder. He invited me to take a sail down the Bay to visit his old friend John Addison at a spot recently re-named Cutler. After admiring the famous Addison mangos, I had left the friends together and wandered off into the back-country, arranging to return in time for dinner at 1 o'clock.

It was typical good-class piney woods. Here and there was a tongue of low wet land which I either crossed or rounded. After a couple of hours of hard but pleasant tramping in the crisp bright air, I turned back. Traveling at least as far in the new direction, I came to an unfamiliar glade. That is, from its size and shape, I was sure I had not seen it on the way out. The water was deep, I saw moccasins and tried to get around it. But the further I walked, the bigger it looked.

Meantime, the sunshine had given place to heavy overcast and I had failed to bring my compass. Addison and the coast lay somewhere to the East, but where was East? Really worried now, I could only continue walking—on feet becoming sorer every moment from wet shoes.

Hungry, thirsty, I was wondering how it would feel to spend the night in these woods when I saw a wisp of smoke. Hurrying, I came to a tent and, two or three yards away, a man who was stirring something in a pot over a makeshift fire-place. "Lucky you ran into me," he said, when I told of my

plight. "Addison isn't far"—he pointed sideways—"but that way you were going, there isn't a living soul this side of the jumping-off place. I'll see you get to your friends all right. First, though, let's eat. You must be famished."

But I was not too famished to wonder a little about my rescuer. After telling me his name was Sheldon, "You see," he explained, "I've been a shut-in all my life. School teacher, up in Iowa. Just doing now what I've always longed to do. Get out into the open, live with nature, be man enough to feed myself. Well, it works all right. These sweet potatoes are from my little patch yonder. And this tail of young alligator—well, I caught him in the glade last night."

Another time, I looked over the homesteads northwest of Miami. Here the S. A. Belcher family had two or three adjoining claims, later the site of one of the largest groves. Here, too, near the river, was the Wagner place with its two acres of orange grove, probably the largest in the region. In 1855, when the first William Wagner settled on that land, the Seminoles were again on the war-path. A pioneer indeed!

Reaching home, I found visitors—John Ellis, whom I had met at his homestead, and H. Price-Williams. They were two of a small group buying a tract on the Miami River, and it had occurred to Ellis that we might like to join. The offer was tempting, as I found on looking it over a day or two later. However, the group or colony idea never did appeal to me. Besides, land at $100 per acre looked rather steep for that place and age—certainly too steep for my pocket. Later it became a millionaire's estate and, after that, a subdivision built up with high-class homes.

WE SETTLE DOWN

Our purchase of a 25-acre tract was prompted by three facts: the soil looked good and was of more than one type, including muck and hammock; it lay prettily with a high spot for the house and a gentle slope back to the Glades; there were several settlers, some with families, within a few miles.

It was west of Little River, near a spot later given a Post Office under the name of Biscayne. Here, Mrs. Tuttle's father, E. T. Sturtevant, long acquainted with the country, and his son Wheeler, had taken up homesteads. Her daughter Fanny had another not far off, part in oranges under the care of Jack Toms, a young English planter from up-State. These 160-acre "toss-ups" with Uncle Sam were evidently considered good enough by some.

Faced now with the problem of building a house, I realized how little I knew about it. The plan would need be of the simplest: just a living room,

bedroom, kitchen with out-door extension for pump, washing, etc. and, of course, a porch. Lumber presented no difficulty. A saw-mill near Lemon City was selling native pine at $10 per thousand. For foundation, I would cut 2 ft. pine logs. Glass being unobtainable, the windows would need shutters.

As helper, I was lucky in getting a sturdy young fellow named Charlie, of the sort able and willing to turn his hand to anything. We arranged, for the building period, to sleep in a neighbor's shack, my wife and Bee staying at Trapp's.

The house was half up when we had two very pleasant visitors, Mr. and Mrs. Fino Soop, who lived two miles west. "Just to get acquainted and see if there's anything we can do," he told me. Noticing his rather intent look on the walls, I instantly felt foolish. We had nailed the sheathing on the inside instead of outside of the frame. But he only murmured, "Kind of Swiss chalet effect, eh!" and turned away. So I said nothing, though I did confess later. Tolerance, I found, was quite a trait of these pioneers. Relying on their own ideas, they did not question another's right to do the same.

When they had gone, I asked Charlie what he thought about that way of putting on the sheathing. "Oh," said he, "I thought where you came from, maybe they did it that way." I laughed and asked him where he was from. "Born in Marion County, Florida" he told me, "but when father died, I went north with mother . . . The snow was real pretty. But—well, the trees had no leaves. I could never get used to that." Further prompting brought out that he had come down here because his father had always wanted to. He managed to make a living by 'gator hunting, trapping and odd jobs.

Bright and early next morning, Soop came again, with a friend. "Thought you could do with extra hands on that roof," he explained. They put in a long day's work and, at the end, I said something about payment. But they wouldn't hear of it. "Some day," laughed Soop, "one of us may need a new roof."

The water problem was solved with surprising ease. All we had to do was to file teeth at the end of a 15 ft. length of galvanized pipe, jerk it up and down thru the porous rock with occasional shaking to empty, then attach to the top a kitchen pump. A few minutes of hard pumping and the water issued clear and sparkling.

Digging at the edge of the Glades, I unearthed a pocket of yellow-brown, powdery stuff which looked and felt like ochre. Most houses in these parts seemed to get along without paint, but the garishly new look of ours was a

constant irritant. So, mixing the ochre with the most likely looking oil I could get and with kerosene for turpentine, I started to paint the house. The front was nearly finished when the ochre ran out and I hurried to the "mine" for more. But alas! though I dug in several places, all I could find was barely enough to cover the front wall.

The building was now finished and I drove to town to meet my wife and get furniture. The shock came when we learned that nobody had any. At last, rather than face the vague delays of shipment from the North, we decided to make our own. So we loaded up with such things as we could get: coal-oil stove, pots and pans, some sheeting and sail-cloth, a whole bolt of netting for mosquito bars and screens, also some old barrels and boxes. That night we slept on sheets and under bars, but on the floor.

In the morning, all hands turned to furniture making. Nice round hardwood branches from the jungle made legs for chairs and tables. Mattresses we stuffed with shredded palmetto leaves, pillows with pine straw. Sugar-barrels, cut down and covered with sail-cloth, dyed with tea, became easy chairs; and the same stuff, corded at the four corners, made tempting hammocks. Last, to relieve the backwoods bareness, my wife fixed up the windows with pretty colored curtains.

Then she joined me and we gave an appraising look around; at the house and "furnishings;" at the enfolding forest in which our clearing was such a tiny gash; next, a little dubiously, at one another. The simple life. Well, this was what we had come for—even if a little on the rugged side!

We had been in the house three weeks. On a couple of acres Charlie and I had felled and burned the heavy timber. Now, with him gone, I settled down with my trusty mattock to tackle the rock, palmettoes and other wild growth.

Some believe that the highest civilizations are apt to rise upon a lime foundation. If so, this region should be near the top; practically all parts underlaid, at verying depths, with a porous, coral-like limestone rock. So far as could be seen, it had but little bad effect on properly planted trees. The roots made their way thru and it helped to retain moisture.

At or near the surface, however, it had to be grubbed out, adding greatly to the labor of clearing. There was also the question of its disposal. Still, I confess to a kindly feeling for this distinctive native rock. A boundary wall which I had seen in Coconut Grove, its shell-pocked, oddly shaped pieces weathered into mellow colorings, had reminded me of historic spots in Italy. I would make similar use of ours.

OUR PIONEER NEIGHBORS

Coming from the city, we found the helpfulness of neighbors almost startling. A woman walked two miles through the woods to bring my wife a handy sort of cornbread; brought the ingredients, too, and taught her how to make it. Many offered plants and cuttings so soon as we were ready. Occasionally, one would come some distance with a mess of fish to share the reward of his day's sport.

Among these neighbors were the Soops, mentioned before; he tall and rugged, she the reverse, but both good sports with a ready smile. His father, owning large hotels in Michigan, had expected him as a young man to stay in the business. Craving something less humdrum, however, he had joined in the Cripple Creek silver rush. Finally, after many ups and downs, he had settled here as a planter and enthusiast for the South Florida way of life.

Others were the Douthits: the strong, agile old man, tobacco planter from the Tarheel State and veteran of the redoubtable Stonewall Jackson brigade; his three sons and two comely daughters; all real pioneers with roots deep-planted in this old new land. The younger girl, just as graceful with a gun as in a dance, opened the door one morning to spy a startled, fleeing deer. She got it.

Then came Mrs. Pomeroy, a lone widow so wise with trees and chickens, the legend said, that they answered to her call. She spied books; without a word, pounced on them for a closer look. Then, out of dark, hawk-like eyes in a deeply lined, leathery face, she searched my inmost being.

To break the spell, I murmured, "If there are any you'd like to read—"

"Thanks. I've got 'em," she replied, pointing to a little heap. Enigma. Beyond that, she loved snuff and analytic novels, made an exquisite wine from papayas, could talk deep wisdom in fine English but usually chose the worst.

Later, by a turn in this lady's family fortunes, the chance was given her to return north and live in comparative luxury. Hers was a hard and lonely life and everybody wondered what her choice would be. After weeks, a friend asked her. "What!" she snapped. "Did you think I'd give up all this and go back there?"

An irregular visitor at pioneer homes was one who carried the gospel throughout that hundred miles of sparsely settled coast. Constantly on the go but stopping off here and there wherever there was promise of half-a-dozen for a church service, he was called the Peripatetic Parson. An earnest, normally good-tempered young man, he was apt to fume into hot argument at any

reference to Darwin or his theories. Some of us, I am afraid, used to mention them just for a little excitement.

One dark side of pioneer life was the food. It was terrible. No fresh milk, no meat except "embalmed" beef out of cans or the atrocity they called sow belly. Now and then when something happened to the schooner, even these were missing and we had no coal-oil for light or fuel. A welcome change from store food was when we caught a gopher, a small burrowing land turtle. Or, occasionally, Indians stopped by with venison, always giving twice as much as called for by the price. Later on, of course, with chickens, garden produce and a little time for hunting and fishing, we fared better.

The absence of mocking birds was a disappointment. Then somebody told us they liked human company and would come when they knew about us. They surely did, sometimes singing us awake in the small hours. This reminds me of the old saying: that Florida birds don't sing; its flowers have no scent; its bees, having no incentive to store honey, are too lazy to gather it. Over-generalizing seems to come quite easy to critics in this State.

Like other places, Florida has birds that sing and some that do not. And so with flowers. Among the more odoriferous are the fragipanni, the oleander and, among a dozen jasmines, one which throws scent enough to fill a forty-acre field. As to the charge of laziness against its bees, this proved to be as baseless as the others. We saw them working on orange and palmetto just as hard as they ever did on apple. Then, in cutting down an old tree, I found a large cavity brimful of wild honey. If further proof were needed, it came later from a nationally known apiculturist. So persistent, he declared, was the Florida insect through a long and busy season that it was apt to wear out its wings and die!

THE GOLDEN STRAND

We had long wanted to see the Beach. Now we seized the chance for a camping trip with the Soops, crossing the Bay in Capt. Fulford's boat. The latter, keeper of the House of Refuge for wrecked mariners, the only building there, had a homestead a few miles north in a place called Fulford from that fact.

It was a perfect day for a sail. We caught a few fish and, to Bee's great joy, one jumped on to her feet in the boat. On the eastern shore was a forbidding barrier, fortunately at this point of no great width. Mangroves. Not the straight tall trees of 60 to 75 feet like those at Little River, but a variety whose roots and branches—one knew not which was which—crossed and criss-

crossed in and out of a black oozy mire. With luck and the aid of planks thoughtfully pre-placed by Fulford, we got safely over.

Then over a waste of deep sand and palmettoes, we caught sight of the ocean. One glimpse was enough to thrill. It was the same ocean as that a thousand miles north, yet how different! "Aye," said the Captain, his sea-blue eyes beaming as he saw our rapt look. "Some day we Americans will realize what we possess in this little corner of the tropics. Even if it IS a long way from what New Yorkers like to call the center."

"But nearer by that much to South America," I reminded him. "Some day, that may be the part that's important."

The rest of the morning we spent in and out of the ocean. After lunch and another swim, Soop and I walked down the Beach. He told me of a place called Crocodile Pool from the number of those animals there. This was part of the waterway afterwards developed into Indian Creek, Miami Beach.

"More likely 'gators, aren't they?" I asked skeptically. These were an old story. We had seen them in the river, heard them bellowing in the Glade at night.

"Not from what they say," returned Soop, "and I've a good notion where it is." So we continued south along the water's edge until, on the right, we saw trees and thick bush. There we turned and at last scrambled through to the Pool.

It was a sinister, rather ghostly looking spot, dark with palms and oak in a tangle of lianas. And there, sure enough, were the greenish, narrow-snouted crocodiles, one lying on the bank, several just visible in the water.

A short look was enough, but we received a shock as we turned to go. A terrific scream as of a woman in mortal agony, a sudden sound of rushing and we caught a glimpse within a few feet of us, of a big, tawny, fierce looking creature as it leaped from branch to branch. It was a panther.

That evening the moon was near to full and we joined two young men from the mainland in a hunt for turtle. Provided with long poles, we searched the Beach for tracks. Our first find was a nest containing well over a hundred of the round, soft-shelled eggs and we stole a couple of dozen. Then we had real luck: a loggerhead which must have weighed well over 300 pounds. After plenty of excitement, we turned her over and our friends were kind enough (to us) to do the killing.

THE TROPIC SUMMER

The rainy season had now started. Not that it rained all the time or even every day; but that, when it did, it was apt to fall in torrents. A day

typical of many might start with sunshine and a clear or partially clear sky; followed in the afternoon by a banking of dark clouds, a strong, cool puff of wind, then a grey curtain of downpour as it came marching through the woods. In an hour, perhaps a few minutes, the sun again would be shining. There might be two or three such days of rain, then two or three with little or none.

And then came the mosquitoes! These had been worrisome enough for weeks, but chiefly at night. Now they came in millions, day and night, and many in the house. Venture out and, in an instant, hands and face would be black and stinging. I tried to work outdoors, my hands in gloves, head and shoulders sheathed in netting. They got me just the same. The only protection was to light a smudge to windward. This first real blitz lasted into the fourth day when a stiff blow from the East brought relief.

Other summer foes were the horse-and deer-flies. Horses or mules, unless smeared with a compound of tar and axle grease, would be covered with little blotches of blood. Nor were these flies averse to human prey. Ants and roaches, too, were a constant trouble until my wife learned ways to control them. Snakes? Yes, plenty of them, but not more so, I suppose, than in other places equally wild. One learned automatically to avoid them.

How did pioneers like the summer? The answer calls for a sharp line drawn between summer and the insect scourge which accompanied it. Toward the season's end, most of us, I think, felt it had been more than long enough. However, I liked the constant warmth, as free from extremes of heat as from sudden change. After all, temperatures in the three hottest months averaged barely 13 deg. F. higher than in the three coolest months of winter. I even liked the way of the rain in quick and heavy showers that meant something. Above all, I loved that inimitable cooling touch of the trade-wind on a sun-scorched cheek.

As to the mosquitoes, they could have turned Heaven itself into the other place. With ironical smiles we talked of our ideal outdoor land. However, like our fellow pioneers, we learned to stress the future. Some day, with the country filled with people, the swamps would be drained and the mosquitoes vanish. Between blitzes, we tried to forget them—and nearly did.

Neither blazing sun nor tropic downpour had for us the terrors we had read about. Never in my life had I felt so super-well nor so able to endure long hours of the hardest kind of work. Little Bee was growing big and strong, without any of the usual child disorders. My wife's only real complaint was at the way we all perspired.

The prevailing good health was fortunate for there was no doctor within miles. Even malaria, that common scourge of the tropics (and elsewhere), was unknown. All this had given rise to a sort of superstition that people here did not die, but simply dried up with age and blew away.

However, there was one funeral, simple yet so impressive that it will always be remembered. A young man, visiting relatives at their homestead, died of tuberculosis. The burial was to take place on the property in the evening, and neighbors from miles around had gathered at the spot. Word passed that an uncle would be quite late in arriving. And then, as we waited under a full moon, in silence except for little creatures in the pine trees, there fell the solemn notes of a cornet with "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

AN EARLY DESPERADO

Here and there in that scattered community were a few "undesirables." Even so and with doors seldom locked, petty thievery was rare and crime practically unknown. A notable exception was the case of Sam Lewis, a man of violent temper who had drifted in from a western state. Quarreling with two men in a Lemon City drinking place, he had gone home for his gun, waylaid and killed them both, then skipped to the Bahamas.

One morning when I was working back of the hammock and had brought my gun on chance of quail, Deputy Sheriff Jim Hubell called at the house. Telling my wife that Lewis had returned and was supposed to be in that neighborhood, he casually asked for me. Instantly she divined his purpose. More loyal to me, I am afraid, than to the community, she replied. "Well, he went out to get something for dinner but he's such a poor shot"—Jim left to pick up his posse elsewhere.

Lewis, was located and, refusing to surrender, was shot in the leg. He fell, groaning, and a young fellow on the posse—the one who had wounded him—stepped over to lift him to a less painful position. But, in that very act, the injured man pulled a gun and shot him dead. The Sheriff's men lodged the desperado in the little jail at Juno, then county seat, north of Palm Beach. Fearful of his escape, however, another group quickly followed, took him out, hanged him on a pole and riddled the body with bullets.

The summer passed, with but little of the monotony which might have been expected. There were too many things to do, too many to find out. The mosquitoes continued on and off. But in September, it was one blitz after another and the rains more continuous. To make up for lost time, by grace of breeze and moon-light I worked sometimes at night. Once, I remember,

my hoe unearthed a strange bundle. Nothing historic, but simply some disgracefully old work-clothes which my wife, tired of admonishing me, had tried to put out of sight forever.

New settlers continued to straggle in. Some had children and began to worry over lack of school facilities. Meetings were held, petitions signed and sent. There may have been a little stretching of ages to include the right number of pupils, but our district did get its school and the writer was appointed Supervisor.

Among the newcomers was a good old Floridian family from Sumter County named Peters. I remember their arrival in a covered wagon like a prairie schooner of the old West, along with a barrel of flour, a bag or two of fertilizer and miscellaneous farm and household goods. I remember too, how Will Peters, in his kindly way, volunteered to teach me how to plow a "comparatively rockless" bit of pineland. I learned in a way, he doing most of the work. But that kind of land was newer to him even than to me. I rather think that, inwardly, he agreed with my own feeling that a good grub-hoe is sometimes better than a bull-tongue.

The Peters boys were wonderful farmers. Moreover, they were quick to overcome the difficulties peculiar to this section. From a small start the following winter, increasing their crops year by year, they soon became known as the largest growers of mid-winter tomatoes the world had ever known.

THE TROPIC WINTER

Winter stole upon us so gradually we scarcely realized it had arrived. The days were mostly bright and dry and my work made good progress. An occasional dip of the thermometer into the 40's overnight would leave a chilly feeling in the house next day. We learned how quickly it could be warmed by wide opening of doors and windows to the outside air.

By this time we had settled down to our new mode of life. Hard in some ways, it had compensating joys. My wife, lacking facilities for good housekeeping, yet delighted in certain features of it. There was no dust, no soot, no mud even after heavy rain; clothes and curtains remained clean so long. We enjoyed the escape from furnaces and heavy clothing; the glorious sense of freedom which this brought.

Sometimes we compared the people of this wilderness with those typical of cities. We agreed on the high percentage of real "individuals" here, even among the less educated. Naturally, we had had to make some mental readjustments—but not all to the debit of the pioneers. There were some amusing incidents.

One Sunday afternoon we had gone for a tramp through the woods. Little Bee, as usual when she was not trying to climb a tree, was ahead and now we saw her stop. A man, kneeling on the ground, was showing her a flower he had just dug up. He looked rather rough, untidy with an embryo beard, yet had a pleasant, highly intelligent, Irish sort of voice. I said, "You must be the Harvard professor we've heard about."

He laughed, shook his head in modest disclaimer. "I did graduate there but that was twenty years ago. My only professorship was at a small Ohio college. Natural history. Come up to the house. I'd love to show you what I've got."

The house was a log cabin thatched with palmetto and scrupulously neat and clean. In a corner were several plants but his main record was evidently through photographs; they covered the walls. On a shelf were some fine specimens of the beautiful tree-snail. "Had no idea they existed this side of the West Indies. That's enough in itself to prove what I've always said about staying in a rut. There I was, in a dusty class-room, talking and teaching what we've known for a hundred years. Here, with thousands of varieties, hardly anyone knows a thing about them. What a chance to work in the open, in a new fascinating field." He stopped, then finished quickly, "Well, that's why I'm here."

We were about to leave when he said, "No, no, this is tea-time. Always have it myself and I'd love to play host to the lady—to you people." Apart from his beloved specimens, he seemed quite shy. In a minute, he had the table laid with nice, white cover, cups and saucers from no local store. Suddenly he looked troubled but, after a little hesitation, slipped over to a trunk in the corner. We heard a subdued sound of tearing cloth. Another moment and he had added to the tea-table four snow-white, even if unhemmed "napkins."

THE MYSTERIOUS GLADES

So far our only knowledge of the Everglades had been of the edge. Now we joined a party to penetrate into its nearer vastness in Indian dug-outs. Made of cypress and propelled by poling, one belonged to Soop who, living at the edge of the Glades, near a water trail which led to Miami river, thus had transportation to the Bay. The other was the prized possession of Tommy Harp, reputed to be the one and only white man who knew the Everglades as the Indians did. Besides him and the Soops, we had with us a Dr. Nichols, a retired but very active-minded ship doctor from Connecticut. He was visiting Coconut Grove in a friend's yacht, on a search for palms, his hobby.

It was a world of sun and sky and infinite distance; of keen-teethed sawgrass 2 to 4 or even 6 feet tall; of clear, sparkling, breeze-rippled water in slow but constant motion toward the sea. Nothing more unlike the miasmic swamp of popular fancy could be imagined.

I cannot tell where we went or even the direction. It was like trying to follow the intricate paths of a spider's web. Often we would glide over open water lined by giant bullrushes and full of fish and lilies. A dozen times, poling our way through tortuous trails in the sawgrass, we would come to what seemed to be the end. Then a sudden twist and the way would be clear for another spell.

We stopped at a little hammock island in the sawgrass. Here, surrounded by old cornstalks, pumpkin vines and bananas, was a temporarily abandoned chickee, the palm-thatched, open-wall house of the Indians. Harp had induced them to let us use it for the night. In an hour we caught fish enough for twice the crowd, cooked and ate it, then sat around the lingering fire.

Dr. Nicols, who had been telling us of his travels in tropic waters, broke off to say, "You'll be having me for a neighbor soon. I'm buying that little Williams place near Little River. You know—that old fellow who's always grouching against the country?" At our reminiscent smile, he went on, "What's the good of raising palms inside when you can do it so much better in the open? . . . Or humans either? Climate is something which goes far deeper than mere warmth."

"Yes indeed," observed Mrs. Soop, "but I wish we could get our friends up North to believe it." She laughed as at some recollection.

"Oh, they will," put in the Doctor. "More and more they'll get sick of all the wasted effort involved in that long dead season. They'll come trooping by the thousands to the tropics or, at least, the sunnier portions of their own country. That idea of theirs about the health and vigor of zero weather is a joke. Notice how they rush to light their fires at the slightest cold?"

Tommy Harp, a man of about 50, spare but strong and lissom as the wild creatures he hunted, joined in with a quiet chuckle. "Always thought those old actinic rays would get Doc to Florida for keeps some day. Joking aside, what he says is all so. At least, it's what I acted on myself thirty years ago. Couldn't stand that shut-in feeling." Then he told us of his grove at Fulford, of wild adventures in the farthest Everglades in search of plume birds. Until, as he reminded us, it was time to get some sleep in readiness for a long, roundabout journey home tomorrow.

But, as we retired to the chickee and our mosquito bars, I was thinking more of certain traits in the man himself. Something similar I had noted in other old-timers in long close touch with nature in the raw. From a bubble in the water, the color or the bendings of the blades of grass, from signs unnoted except by him, he would draw the right conclusion. The soundness of his judgment was apt to be equally striking in other matters. Like nature herself, he refused to be side-tracked by the merely plausible but, reaching for the crucial point, decided then and thus.

The above rough sketch of the Everglades applied to some two million acres of it. Further North, toward Lake Okeechobee, the deep black soil grew a thick bush of custard apples. Away South and toward the Gulf, the picture merged into something more like those in the old geographies: the great buttressed trees of the hammocks; giant birds; mangrove swamps, saw-grass swamps, cypress swamps; all in a confusing maze of winding tidal creeks; a chaos of land and water so involved that one knew not where each began or ended. Like a world in veritable process of creation.

Christmas drew near. Some of the pioneers, those born amidst ice and snow, were naive (or forgetful!) enough to imagine something lacking in any celebration of the great day in a land of sun and palms. Two great-hearted neighbors, Captain and Mrs. Felix C. Brossier did their best to make them forget all that. They invited one and all to a real old-fashioned Xmas dinner with wild turkey and all the fixings.

The guests, as a return surprise, arranged to turn out for once in "civilized" garb. Many an old mothballed trunk was opened for the first time in years. The ladies, instead of cotton blouses and wide-brim palmetto hats, wore silks and bows and funny looking pieces on their heads. The men threw aside their jeans and leggings and appeared in city suits. One even sported a silk top hat. It was a great party!

Through Morse, I met Joe Higgins who grew pineapples on Elliott Key. As I planned to set out a good-sized patch and would need plants, I arranged a trip with him. It would have been worthwhile if only for the incredibly beautfiul colors of the waters through which we passed. The Keys themselves were largely in dense tropical forest. I saw mahogany trees up to 3 ft. through. Clearings were a revelation in rough and rocky agriculture. The scanty soil, most of it in crevices between the rocks, must have been fertile, for pineapples, tomatoes, even lime and sapadillo trees, all looked flourishing.

Until now, the only Key I had seen was Biscayne, with its historic lighthouse at Cape Florida, across the Bay from Coconut Grove. This visit and others further South enlarged my outlook on the region as a whole. I had seen something of all its main divisions: the piney woods, the ocean beach, the Everglades, and now the Keys. It was like an immense empty scroll of parchment, open for the writing sure to come.

We had to admit, despite some advantages in the country's flatness, that we missed the scenic variety of hill and dale. True, there was the expansive beauty of the Everglades, of the tropic ocean. There were also entrancing spots: grouped cocopalms overlooking water under the full light of moon; a hedge of pink oleanders against the blue of a sunlit Bay; a creek passing through a fern-clad, rocky gorge under a canopy of leaning trees. Even in the piney woods, longer observation brought a wealth of flowers and other plants, interesting if not always showy. And often toward sundown, the mellow, golden light permeating every stick and crevice made even the forest mass look lovely.

Still, if we wanted a little Garden of Eden to live in we would have to make it for ourselves. And nature was wonderfully responsive to man's efforts. It was this quick response, I suppose, which lured the pioneers on, despite a rough, poor soil. But, while nature was so helpful, the wise ones discovered it was just as well to let her have the final say.

Our farming experience here, though short, had included many trials and tribulations. Now, however, we began to see reward for our work in the fine growth of vines and ornamentals around the house. Fruit trees in the grove were also doing well. Thanks to a climate which allowed transplanting at almost any size or time, we already had a mango and a guava at near fruiting stage. Our papayas were loaded with swelling fruit. More and more I sensed the soil potentials of this ultra-southern land. Plants and trees common in the tropics were doing well; a thousand more waited only to be introduced and tested. No wonder James Nugent, like Dr. Perrine before him, loved to explore with this in mind.

Of my little crop of eggplants between the tree rows, not much need be said. Planted early on that light pineland soil to take advantage of fall rains, it had done well for a time. Now, with dry weather, the yield was falling off even with plenty of the fertilizer so necessary on most Florida soils.

Nobody, so far as known, had ever planted anything in Everglades muck. The moist, dark brown soil—result of decomposition through the ages of saw-

grass and aquatic weeds—looked so invitingly rich that I had to try. Digging two wide and shallow ditches 8 feet apart, I threw the dirt between them, making a high bed for drainage. On this, without too much expectation, I planted a dozen kinds of vegetables and grain. Most of them grew more or less luxuriantly—for awhile, then turned yellow and stopped. Perhaps in time somebody would hit on the right method as had happened on the prairie.

Meantime, I had no good moist land for a late crop. The hammock was good soil, but my only use of it so far had been for seedbeds and as a source of humus for pineland plantings. The truth is, it was one of those distinctive spots we both hated to disturb; the very epitome of nature's intense vitality in these latitudes. We could see this in the speed with which she covered up a trail; produced new leaves or fruit when the first had been destroyed; in the way a fallen tree refused to die but grew new roots and started over. Maybe the same influence was at work on men and women. We vowed to cut nothing in that hammock except for access to its beauties.

Despite South Florida's heavy vegetation, the warm tropic sun and heavy showers do much to keep down its store of humus. However, could its poor sandy pinelands be kept free from fires, many believe they would in time become one immense hammock. Fire in the dry season was indeed a deadly menace as I realized one memorable afternoon.

On the way back from a trip to town, I saw smoke, then a big blaze which a strong breeze was blowing towards our clearing. Hurrying on, I met a grim picture of frontier life; great clouds of suffocating smoke; the roar of flames; the staccato notes of palmetto leaves just catching; and—off at the far edge—my poor wife and a woman neighbor, dressed in men's overalls, blackened from head to foot, and almost exhausted in desperate efforts to stamp out, with wetted sacks and pine switches, the fire's stealthy, steady advance.

Finally, by burning against the wind and making a fire-guard, we managed to save our place. But the fire swept on through the night. Finding tinder in the outer bark, it had crept into the tallest tree tops. These overhead blazes and the showers of sparks; the burning stumps and logs in all directions; the noise of crashing branches; the pall of ruddied smoke lending to even well-known objects a weirdly foreign shape; all made a scene of terrifying grandeur like some great Vulcanian city in a strange environment of trees.

MAKING STARCH

Growing wild in these woods and practically nowhere else was a pretty, fern-like little plant called comptie or koonti. From it could be extracted a starch, good either for food or laundry. The Indians had made use of this "gift from Heaven" for ages and several pioneers followed their example. Alone among tuber plants, it gathered nitrogen from the air, the by-products thus being an excellent fertilizer. Because of this, plus the promise of a small but regular income, we became part-time comptie makers.

The crux of our equipment (home-made, Indian pattern) consisted of a smooth, cylindrical pine log some 18 in. long and 12 in. through, its circumference studded throughout with shoe-brads beveled to a cutting edge. This was set in a hopper and rotated by an old-fashioned cog-and-gear machine drawn by horse or mule. The tubers, chopped and water-soaked over-night, were dropped in the hopper, cut up by the revolving cylinder and, now a pulp, channeled into a sieve-bottom box. Here it was washed in several waters which, now called "red water" from its color, fell into a tank below. After an hour it was drawn off, leaving the starch to be taken out and dried on canvas trays. It realized about $5 per hundred pounds in Key West.

This starch made such a delicious blanc-mange that I was prompted to seek a wider market. Food interests up North to whom I sent samples acknowledged its similarity to arrow-root. However, they pointed also to its inability to compete with other starches costing less to produce. This was no doubt a sound opinion, especially as the tubers were by no means inexhaustible and did not take kindly to cultivation. So the Biscayne Bay region had to regard koonti starch as one of those things peculiar to itself.

BIG THINGS COMING

Spring is the season which many say Florida does not have. It does, of course, even if the new-comer be apt to miss its subtler signs. Spring of 1896 was to show the region under a man-made change more drastic than that of nature. It was the culmination of plans made by Henry M. Flagler in preceding months to extend his railroad from Palm Beach south to the Miami river and there establish a town-site and a great hotel.

Mrs. Tuttle, the lady of Fort Dallas with an unquenchable vision of the future, for years had been urging this idea on Flagler. As an inducement, she had offered him one-half of her land holdings. Later, the Brickells joined in a somewhat similar arrangement.

Not until after the Great Freeze and Mrs. Tuttle renewed her proposal did Flagler consider the extension seriously. He visited the region and

agreed on the basis of her donating 100 acres of land on bay or river and (except for a few acres in her home-site) one half of the rest of her holdings in alternate lots. Thus the escape from disastrous cold, Freeman's phenomenal crop, focused a vivid light on this unique but little known land. Agriculture, new and rare products of the soil, loomed large in Flagler's eyes, just as did his plans for winter guests. But, as he often said, these were only two of the many activities for which his railroad would pave the way.

Transportation, the one thing needed through the years, at last assured! It would mean the taming of our sub-tropic frontier, the building of a segment of America quite different from the rest. Many a hard problem would these differences bring—but also many a great new opening peculiar to itself.

For a time, the attitude of many an old-timer was one of wait and see. Too often had their hopes for a railroad been raised only to be blasted. Flagler's New York associates thought him crazy and were trying to dissuade him. The normal reasons for a railroad and a city were lacking and they could imagine no other. A right-of-way survey showed only one habitation in a stretch of fifty miles. Later, Flagler confessed that, though he had expected "little or no return for a few years," he did foresee the time when this railroad would be "one of the most profitable in the country."

Our own doubts, if any, were dispelled when Morse drove up with the suggestion that I, with two or three others, should go with him to meet Flagler. He explained that it had been almost decided to locate a flag-station at Biscayne, a couple of miles away, and Flagler liked to talk with settlers along the line. Aside from his outstanding position in the business world, he impressed me as a pleasant, quietly observant man with a bent for shrewd questioning.

"Well, young man," he said to me with a smile. "I suppose you're another in this new country in search of a fortune."

"Not so much that" I began . . . But before I could find words for something more adequate, another of the party was speaking.

Soon, near "town," everything began to hum. On a hastily cleared space just north of the river, the many tents and frame structures gave the appearance of a military encampment. Big, burly John Sewell, Flagler's right-hand man in construction work, had arrived. He was now busy leveling the Indian mound (built, not by the Seminoles, but by the Tequestas, the Indian tribe which inhabited this section at the coming of the Spaniards) on the site of the Royal Palm Hotel and gardens. The building itself was to be in charge of J. A. Macdonald. Roads in the townsite were made by cutting down the trees and slicing off the rock, leaving the sidewalks a few inches

higher. It made a good solid roadway but the glaring white under the blazing sun was quite trying.

This native rock ("Miami oolite" to the geologist) was to prove one of the country's most useful resources as a road base and building material.

Meantime, building sites were placed on the market, prices ranging down from $800 and $900 for choice corners on Twelfth Street. Frank T. Budge built a hardware store, the first of brick in town. Isador Cohen opened a clothing store, temporarily south of the river. The Sewells (John and E. G.) were getting ready to start one on 12th Street. For a time it was to be in charge of E. G., tall like his brother but lean and wiry. Our good friend Morse established a real estate office specializing in railroad and canal lands. The METROPOLIS newspaper was issued by Graham and Featherly before there was a town. Holes were cut in the jungle to make room for Flagler houses. Some lumber came in by boat. But most of the actual building awaited the coming of the railroad.

On its completion late in April came crowds in search of work, adventure, fortune in a new land. But so, in good time, did the mosquitoes and many of the faint-hearted or the merely curious rushed to take the first train home.

But population was building up. By midsummer, the usual municipal needs—jail, firehall and so forth—had been erected, and arrangements made with the Flagler interests for light and water. It was felt the time had arrived to establish local government. On news that the railroad favored certain men for councilmen, the political-minded took exception and a warm campaign ensued. This fight between the pro- and anti-railroad factions lasted many years. The election, in which 380 voted, resulted in the incorporation of the city; the choice of Miami as a name rather than "Flagler" or "Fort Dallas;" and the seating of the pro-railroad slate for Council with John B. Reilly as the first Mayor.

Thus, on July 28th, 1896, full fledged from the jungle, without preliminary step of town or village, was born the

CITY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA

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Starch Making: A Pioneer Florida Industry

By MRS. HENRY J. BURKHARDT

Today when Chambers of Commerce are looking about for industries to attract to Florida it is interesting to recall that long before Miami and the Palm Beaches became renowned as playgrounds the section was widely known for its manufacturing. Arrowroot was the product made from a native plant known as coontie.

In 1870 as many as eight persons were known to be engaged commercially in the manufacture of starch from coontie. The industry was spread over the southeastern part of the state wherever the coontie plant thrived, but activity centered in the section now known as Greater Miami, where the coontie flourished underneath the pines and in flat open fields.

Today coontie is a tradition and the eight manufacturers of 1870 are but names in a record, interesting as proving the extent to which the product was known.

An article in the 60th anniversary edition of the *Palm Beach Sun* of March 1947 quotes from the United States census of 1870 in which eight men listed their occupation as manufacturers of arrowroot. The *Sun* reports that George Lewis and William A. Johnson were Floridians, but that Thomas Brissett came from Connecticut, William Wagner from Baden and Nicholas Akis from Darmstadt, Germany, Francis L. Hammon was from Ireland, and Michael and Georges Chairs were from France.

The Hannas mention in *Florida's Golden Sands* that there was a George Lewis and a William Johnson who engaged in blockade running for The Confederacy during the War Between the States, their headquarters being Miami. Did they stay on to become the arrowroot manufacturers mentioned in the 1870 census? Or were they already engaged in that work, interrupting it to aid The Confederacy and themselves by indulging in a little blockade running on the side?

Did the other six from faraway places come because they had heard of the arrowroot business? Perhaps we shall never know, but we do know from other records that there was a thriving business in this section as early as 1835. That is the date given in the Report of the Secretary of the Treasury, on the State of Finances, *Senate Document 2*, 29th Congress, 1st session, p. 664.

This document quotes a statement made by Senator Stephen R. Mallory in 1845, who said: "The section of the country on the coast south of Jupiter inlet, and east of Cape Sable, produces a native arrowroot, commonly called 'coontee,' which is manufactured by the settlers to some extent, not to exceed 20,000 lbs., per annum. This commanded in northern markets in 1835-40, 8 cents per lb.; and is now, 1845, in the same markets, worth 5 cents."

From questioning the settlers of the Lake Worth region it seems to be definitely established that while there was sufficient quantity of the plant to provide starch for home use, it was never manufactured commercially in what is now Palm Beach County. Its growth was most prolific from Hallandale on the north through the Cutler section at the south.

From a Florida Supreme Court record we learn that George W. Ferguson was engaged in manufacturing and shipping arrowroot to Key West from Miami in 1845. His agent was Joseph Y. Porter, a merchant and broker, who agreed to ship the product to New Orleans applying the sale against Mr. Ferguson's purchases from him, and remitting any remaining cash to Mr. Ferguson, provided that Ferguson would buy his goods from Porter.

This is brought out in a suit at law by Ferguson against Mary Ann Porter, executrix of her husband's estate. The original judgement in the lower court was found for the appellee, but the Supreme Court reversed the decision of the lower court allowing Mr. Ferguson his claim of $140 for the 1,725 pounds of arrowroot lost at sea.

Florida Reports, Vol. 3, p. 27, shows the case as having come before the Supreme Court in January 1850, and that it was based on an alleged "breach of duty by the said Joseph Y. Porter as bailee and factor of the plaintiff in this suit."

Testimony reviewed by the higher court showed that the original agreement had been entered into in January 1846 and that several times Mr. Ferguson had made such shipments from Miami (the name given in the court record) and that Mr. Porter had carried out the agreement in full, until, convinced that he could get higher prices in Charleston, in October 1846, he sent a shipment of arrowroot, uninsured, in the mail boat to that city, and that the shipment was lost at sea in the hurricane of that month.

One of the witnesses, unidentified in the *Florida Reports* examined, called at Mr. Porter's store to inquire about the arrowroot and was told that it had been shipped to Charleston. A few days later word having come of the loss of the boat, the witness stated he had called again on Mr. Porter at which time Mr. Porter said "it would be the plaintiff's loss, that he had shipped it at

the plaintiff's risk." Porter is said to have admitted that he had shipped it contrary to orders but that there had been no opportunity to ship it to New Orleans.

Reversal was based on the reasoning that "A bailee or factor is bound to follow such instructions as are given him by his principal, unless such instructions are inconsistent with the special agreement between them; . . . and is liable for any injury resulting from a departure from such instructions, and this liability is incurred, although the services undertaken are gratuitous."

Just how many years before 1845 Mr. Ferguson had been in the arrowroot business we do not yet know.

We do know from Senator Mallory's statement that the industry was in existence in 1835. We know too that Dade county's representative to the Constitutional Convention held at St. Joseph, December 3, 1838 may have had some connection with the industry.

That representative was Richard Fitzpatrick, a Miamian since 1830. Fitzpatrick had acquired the holdings of the Egan family, whose father had received a grant in 1808 from the Spanish government. Egan's children had added to their holdings in 1827 under grants approved by Congress in that year. These holdings were cultivated for that was one of the conditions under which they were obtained.

Old records mention the large holdings of Fitzpatrick along both sides of the Miami river; his many slaves brought from Columbia, S. C.; state that he raised cotton and planted the original lime groves in the Miami area. One history states that the United States Court of Claims awarded him $12,000 in 1877 for his lime groves which had been destroyed by the army during the Seminole wars. One can't help but wonder if Fitzpatrick was not one of those shipping arrowroot to "northern markets at 8 cents per pound."

Miami was made the county seat of Dade County in 1844 and by a bill approved December 21, 1846, the Miami river was declared "a navigable stream in its whole extent." A postoffice existed at Miami as early as October 1850, according to a register of all officers and agents in the service of the United States on 30th, September, 1851.

I am convinced that these acts were prompted at least in part by the manufacturing going on. It seems certain to me that the *Acts of Florida* for 1850, ch. 334 prove the existence of the arrowroot business, for that year the legislature appropriated $1,000 for "a proper wagon road" from Indian River to Miami, because Miami was "reported to possess many advantages resulting from an abundant and valuable spontaneous production." Coontie

is not mentioned. But what could that "abundant and valuable spontaneous production" be but coontie?

Within our own times we know that to later settlers coontie served like the Manna of old, which fed the Children of Israel in the Wilderness. It had done the same for the Indians before them, from whom the white settler learned the first steps of its purification.

What matter if it did not "lay like hoarfrost on the ground?" When the root was processed the resulting starch was snowy white and it provided food for the family, a fertilizer for crops, and a by-product which could be fed to the pigs; it was considered a cure for burns, and most important of all, it was a money crop. It also had a social value. School children of the 1900's and probably many before them threaded the coral-red seeds into streamers for Christmas trees.

Webster's dictionary states that the plant is "any one of several plants of the genus Zamia, of Florida and tropical America, the roots and half-buried stems of which yield a kind of arrowroot."

To natives of South Florida coontie will always mean the specific type, Zamia integrifolia, which is found also in small quantities on the islands of Andrus and Abaco, in the Bahama Islands, according to John B. Hurst of 6 N. E. 89th Street, Miami, who states that he belives some is also grown in the southeastern part of Cuba.

Mr. Hurst used coontie for the subject of a college thesis but other than that not enough has been said and written to preserve the history of an industry now lost and a plant which has all but disappeared.

His father, Mr. A. B. Hurst, established one of the best known mills in 1910 at Biscayne, or what is now N. E. Second Avenue and 103rd Street. An arrowroot wafer, manufactured by the National Biscuit Company, was made with starch produced at this mill. Starch from this mill was shipped to Italy for the use in the manufacture of spaghetti.

During the first World War Mr. Hurst operated his mill 18 hours a day to supply the United States government. It had been found that the first nourishment a gassed soldier could take was a thin arrowroot gruel made with a beef broth base.

According to Mrs. A. C. Barrett, 515 N. E. 83rd Street, her father, Mr. W. M. Mettair, who came to Dade County from Tallahassee in 1869 as a young man of twenty, first worked in coontie at Cutler. Later in 1902 Mr. Mettair operated his own starch mill on the shore of Biscayne Bay, near what was then known as Knight's Dock. Here sailboats docking from Key West could be loaded with the product for shipment to that city and the Bahamas.

This section, known as Lemon City, was growing into a thriving community. The Knight Brothers, D. R. and John, owned a large store at the dock site. There was a sawmill, and a sawdust street led to the postoffice and store. Homes faced a path along the Bay and here lived the Currys (Henry Filer's uncle), Mrs. Keyes, where the library was later started, the Harringtons, Russels, Bill Pent, and the Mettairs.

Mr. Mettair originally owned a full section of land upon which a great deal of Lemon City grew up. Even today Mrs. Barrett says, she and her brothers and sisters are called upon to give quitclaim deeds to private properties and even for roadways.

Mrs. Barrett remembers from her childhood a commonly used expression among the settlers: "Guess I will have to dig coontie." This statement became the measure of their discouragement when funds ran low, for digging coontie root brought only 20c a barrel.

Mr. Mettair's mill was probably a replica of those 1870 mills where no doubt, he had worked as a young man. His grinder was a log of pine, turned to be exact, and spiked diagonally with nails for grinding. The coontie roots were soaked over night and after grinding were fed into a hooper or deep box and from there put through a strainer rubbed constantly with running water. It was washed for two hours, the starch dropping to the bottom where a hole at what was called "starch level" drained away the water. This "red water" was found to make good fertilizer for home use and the discarded pulp, also good fertilizer, was sold as a by-product.

The wet starch was packed into barrels to be washed again three times, while stirring and settling. It was allowed to reach the bubbling stage in fermentation for then all dirt and sugar came out. The residue from this "yellow contie" was cooked and fed to the pigs, making another useful by-product.

William Mettair, the oldest son, and inventor of the family, in 1904 devised a revolving strainer which eased the manual labor, resulting as well in a purer product.

The finished starch was spread out on canvas driers and kept broken up until completely dry, before it was packed into barrels for shipment. It required one ton of coontie root to make 200 pounds of starch through this process.

Asked for her recipe for pudding Mrs. Barrett stated that she never measured, but wet the starch in cold water using "just enough" and then poured on boiling water until the mixture took on a clear yet thick consis-

tency. The skin on top would have a bluish tinge. The pudding was sliced when cold and served with a sauce made of yolk of egg creamed first with sugar and then butter. No sugar was used in the pudding itself, the sauce providing the sweetness.

Since this delicacy belongs to the past, coontie mills having disappeared along with the local supply of the plant perhaps Mrs. Barrett can be forgiven for her lack of exactness.

Sometimes this starch was used by the Mettair family for laundry purposes but great care had to be exercised for it was "the stiffest starch" known for such use.

In 1896 when the family home was located at what is now 71st Street Mr. Mettair shod their spotted ponies for the Indians while working his farm and carrying on other types of business typical of that day's need. It was there that the older children in the family watched the Indians in their temporary camps. The Indians washed the roots, grated them by hand and strained them into a vessel, sometimes using a canoe for this purpose. The precipitate was washed and strained through baskets after which it was ready to use in the form of cakes roasted in the ashes, the poisonous cyanic acid evaporating in the baking.

I failed to learn the capacity of the Mettair mill, but the Hurst mill, operated on a large commercial scale, ground from 10 to 12 tons of roots a day except during World War 1 when the capacity was increased to 15 and 18 tons . The starch content being higher in the fall and winter grinding usually stopped in May and was not resumed until August unless orders were pressing. The starch content, to quote Mr. Hurst, is "as high as 20 percent in the winter and as low as 8 percent in the summer."

At the Hurst mill, which was a steam plant, the roots went through a grinder, next were passed over a brass seive, then a silk seive, with streams of water spraying over them, and then settled into long trays. From these the product was shovelled into drying racks and left to dry in the sun. Later the starch was settled into large tanks and re-settled three times, the water being extracted by a centrifugal machine. Next it went into an air drier heated by steam coils, was then pulverized, and finally packed for shipping into 100 pound bags.

Analysis proved the result to be a chemically free starch with very little fiber, a strictly edible product. It was used for cookies, crackers, cocoa filler, ice cream compounds, and chocolate candy, as well as in spaghetti and starch puddings.

It is recommended to those insatiable collectors of recipes that they seek out a copy of the "Florida Tropical Cook Book" edited in 1912 by the Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church, Miami. This book carries many recipes contributed by church members, including Mrs. A. B. Hurst, for use of this starch in sauces, gravies, puddings, pies, etc.

Mouths will water in vain, for slow growth, an antipathy to cultivation, together with the onslaught of bull-dozers in a spreading community, has wiped out coontie as a commercial product. The plants are rarely seen except in a few gardens whose owners love to preserve native materials, and as impressions in native rock where they have left their fern-like tracery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

This research was undertaken by the wish of Everglades National Park library for a history of the white man's manufacture of coontie starch. It is a compilation of information from many friends and acquaintances, all of whom were eager to assist.

Besides those mentioned in the article itself, thanks are due first to my sister-in-law, Mrs. Y. G. Pope, who suggested that I write it; to Helen van Hoy Smith, who called my attention to the census list in the *Palm Beach Sun;* to Ruby Leach Carson, who told me of the Ferguson-Porter case; to Dr. Dorothy Dodd, who not only checked a number of references for me, but who sent me the Mallory statement; and to Miss Clarissa Greene who called my attention to the "Florida Tropical Cook Book".

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South Florida's First Industry

By ERNEST G. GEARHART, JR.

Manufacturing starch from the coontie root is probably the earliest known industry in Dade County. The Indians are credited with the discovery that starch could be extracted from these roots which once grew so abundantly on South Florida's high pine land. However, it has been established that white settlers engaged in this industry some time prior to 1840.

The coontie root, a species of Zamia, was also known as Florida Arrowroot. The early settlers called the root and the starch obtained from it "comptie." It is believed this name was derived from the Indian pronunciation. Northern biscuit makers, principal users of the product, called it Florida Arrowroot Starch.

The roots of this cycadaceous plant are found one or two inches below the surface of the ground and resemble a large sweet potato in appearance. Each plant puts out several red stems bearing small fern-like leaves. There is a male and a female plant, the latter being distinguished by a cone-shaped seed pod which grows just above the ground. The coontie root itself is quite poisonous. Therefore, it was necessary to crush the root and wash the starch entirely free from the poisonous pulp. Historians have reported instances where men, who were lost and starving, ate the roots in the mistaken idea they were edible. The results were usually fatal.

Birds are the chief planters of coontie roots, plucking the seeds, eating the meat therefrom, and then dropping the seeds while in flight. Because of their slow growth, it was not practical to cultivate these plants commercially. This, coupled with the gradual disappearance of the forests, was an important factor in bringing about the industry's eventual demise.

The process employed by the Indians was crude and it remained for the early white settlers to improve on these primitive methods. Long before Miami came into existence, nearly every family living in this area had its own little starch mill. Whenever any extra money was needed, the whole family would get together and make starch. Some mills were operated entirely by hand, while others employed mule and horse power. In later years, there were a few motor driven mills, including at least one large steam driven mill located in the vicinity of Little River. This mill was owned by

A. B. Hurst, and remained in operation until 1919, when it was moved to the southern part of the county near Kendall. It continued in operation at this new location until 1925.

In order to describe the type of starch mill being used in South Florida just prior to and shortly after the turn of the Century, the writer personally interviewed Mr. John B. Hurst, son of the aforementioned A. B. Hurst, and Mr. Willie Mettair of North Miami, Florida. The latter was actively engaged in the manufacture of starch before 1900.

These early mills consisted of a wooden cylinder, usually a section of pine log, about 12 inches thick and 18 inches long. Diagonal lines approximately 1 inch apart were drawn lengthwise all around the cylinder. These lines followed the general pattern of a lawn mower blade. Shoemaker's nails were then driven into the cylinder along these lines. The nails were 3/4 inch apart in the row and about 1/8 inch was left exposed. A shaft was driven through the center of the cylinder which was then mounted on a wooden hopper. A container underneath the hopper caught the pulp as it came through. A settling tank with a large sieve was placed nearby. The rest of the equipment included drying racks which were usually 30 inches wide and 6 feet long. These racks were made of horizontal poles raised several feet above the ground and covered with muslin.

If the mill was to be powered by hand, a crank was attached to one end of the cylinder shaft. Horse or mule power could be used by hitching the animal to a 20-foot sweep. This sweep turned a gear resembling a universal joint which was joined to a large vertical wheel by a rod approximately 25 feet long known as a tumble rod. A belt running from the wheel to a small pulley on the cylinder shaft turned the cylinder at a rapid rate of speed because of the high ratio achieved by this ingenious hook-up.

The process used by the white man in the manufacture of starch was quite an improvement over the method employed by the Indians and resulted in a more highly refined product. The starch manufactured by the Indians was slightly yellow in color while the starch made by the settlers was pure white.

The roots were dug out of the ground with a tool similar to a mattock. It was customary to soak them in water overnight. This not only washed the roots clean, but made them considerably softer and, therefore, easier to work with. They were usually cut in half before being thrown into the hopper where they were crushed to a pulp by the whirling cylinder. The pulp was placed in the sieve atop the settling tank and water was used to wash the

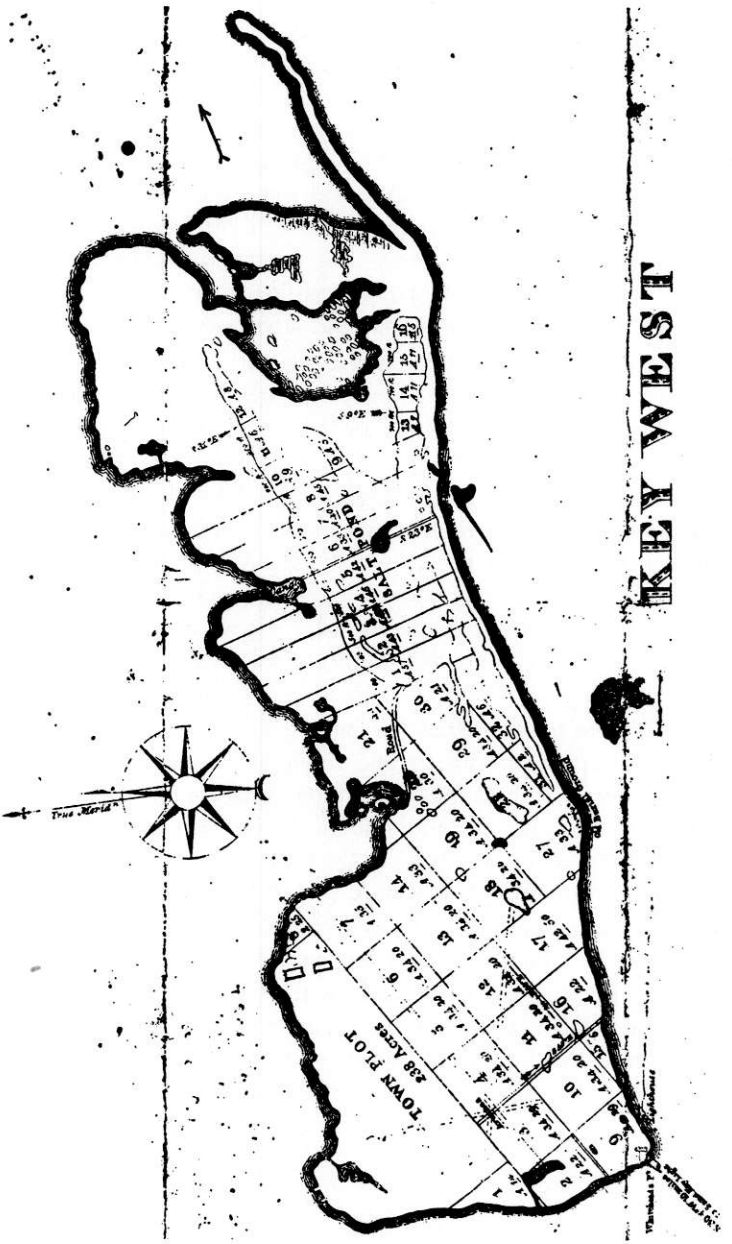
starch out of the pulp and into the tank. In order to remove small bits of pulp and other foreign particles which may have washed through the sieve, there was a series of drain holes at one end of the tank. The starch being the heaviest had a tendency to settle to the bottom of the tank. As it settled below the level of one of the holes, a plug was removed and the water with the bits of pulp and dirt was drained off. As the starch continued to settle, the next plug was removed and so on until all of the water was drained off and nothing remained in the bottom of the tank except starch. It was sometimes necessary to repeat this washing and draining process several times to obtain the desired results. The starch, while still damp, was then placed on the drying racks. Although it was already white, the sun had a tendency to bleach it even more.

As soon as the starch was thoroughly dry, it was placed in barrels which held approximately 250 lbs. It is estimated that it took 500 lbs. of roots to make 100 lbs. of starch. A family of three or four could make about one barrel or 250 lbs. in a week.

The starch was sold at prices ranging from three to eight cents per pound to shippers who operated several schooners between here and Key West. From there, it was shipped to the northern markets. As a general rule, these transactions between the starch manufacturers and the schooner captains were not on a cash basis, the starch being traded for groceries, clothing and other necessities of life. These goods were delivered on the return trip from Key West.

In addition to being used in the manufacture of biscuits, this starch was excellent as a staple food for use aboard ships. It was found that it would keep indefinitely as long as it remained dry, whereas flour would spoil after a certain length of time. A by-product of the industry was discovered in the pulp. After the starch was extracted, the pulp was left to decay. This made an excellent fertilizer which was widely used throughout the area.

An unpleasant feature of this early South Florida industry was a most objectionable odor which was always present wherever starch was being made. This, plus the fact that the price paid for the starch was small in proportion to the amount of labor involved in its manufacture, may have helped to bring about the eventual end of South Florida's first industry.


KEY WEST
TOWN PLOT
238 Acres

Rare Plan of Key West

This engraving was sent by Captain Arthur W. Thornton while on duty with the Navy at Key West to his family to show them where he lived. It may have been prepared for the government, but there are no markings to indicate it. The family later moved to Pensacola and a descendant presented the engraving to Mr. Julien Yonge. The date is in the 1830's, possibly earlier.

Apparently there was no copy of the plat in Key West. At least, it is not referred to by any of the historians of the island city. In fact, it seems to differ from one statement in Judge Jefferson Browne's *Key West.* In his chapter on "Burial Grounds" (pp 48-49) Browne says a certain plot was selected in 1831 and used until 1847, which doubtless is correct. Later he says, "The disinterment of human bones on the southeast side of the island gave rise to the impression that a burying ground had once been located in that vicinity. These remains, however, were those of the Africans who were brought to Key West in two captured slavers in 1860 . . ." But this map shows the location as "old burying ground." This was before 1831, and hence was apparently the first Key West cemetery.

The two small rectangles in the upper left were added by the officer who sent the map to his family. He noted with pencil that the upper one was the men's quarters, and the lower one was the hospital. The arrow on the right side (outside the island) was added to indicate the direction of the trade winds. The irregular blot in lot 2 shows an inlet.

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William Adee Whitehead's Description of Key West

Edited by REMBER W. PATRICK

In the 1830's Key West was an Island and a town of mystery. Uninformed men gossiped about the pirates who inhabited the Island, but enlightened men knew that a squadron of the United States Navy, using Key West as a base in the 1820's, had searched out and destroyed the Caribbean Corsairs. Even the more informed citizens of St. Augustine, the nearest Atlantic settlement of importance to Key West, were not certain as to the character of those Islanders who salvaged the many ships, and their cargoes, that were wrecked on the Florida keys. Most Floridians had heard of the shipwrecks, but few knew of the exact size and location of Key West, or population of the town, or of living conditions there.

The isolation of Key West from the rest of territorial Florida was largely responsible for the misinformation about the Island. Hundreds of miles separated it from other settled areas of Florida, and only infrequently did ships from the keys sail into Atlantic ports. Even then the tales of sailors and the conflicting statements of promoters and disillusioned settlers contributed more confusion than information.

Speculation about the Island centered in St. Augustine. According to some, Key West was an Island of sand, sterile, worthless, and inhabited by "wreckers" who were closely related to, if not actual, pirates. Others proclaimed the Island the jewel of the Gulf, a land of opportunity, peopled by enterprising and cultured citizens.

In 1835 one St. Augustinian, John Rodman, determined that he would secure reliable facts about the Island. Rodman knew something of the background of Key West, for he had aided in defending the land claims of the Americans who had bought the Island from Juan Pablo Salas. It is probable that Rodman had become acquainted either in person or by letters with William Adee Whitehead, one of the leading young men of Key West.

Whitehead, a native of New Jersey, joined his elder brother John in Key West in 1828 and rose rapidly in the young community. In 1829 he made a survey of the town, and a year later was appointed collector of customs. He

served in this capacity until he left the Island in 1838 and returned to his Northern home. He lived a long and active life as a businessman of New York City and Newark, New Jersey. Whitehead never returned to Key West, for the last year of his stay there was not a happy one. As Mayor of the town in 1838 he insisted on collecting a yearly occupational tax, but the merchants refused to pay and the Council did not uphold the Mayor. Whitehead called a special election and publicly announced that he would resign if the people did not support his stand. The merchants won the election, and true to his word Whitehead resigned.

In 1835, however, he was well qualified to answer John Rodman's questions. Whitehead gave his correspondents a summary history of Key West and then proceeded to answer each inquiry. A copy of Whitehead's letter was retained in Key West. It was deposited in the Monroe County Court records and eventually came to the P. K. Yonge Memorial Library of Florida History at the University of Florida.

Notices of Key West
for
John Rodman Esq. St. Augustine
Written December 1835

Before proceeding to answer your specific questions, relative to the present condition of Key West, it may not be uninteresting to you to receive some information as to the first settlement and improvement of the Island, with which so far as my acquaintance extends, I willingly furnish you.

It is probable that from the time of the first visit of Ponce de Leon in 1512 (1513) until the cession of the Floridas to the United States, the Islands (or Keys as they are termed, a corruption of the Spanish *Cayo*) which extend in a South Westerly direction from Cape Florida, were only resorted to by the aborigines of the country—the piratical crews with which the neighboring seas were infested—and the fishermen (many of them of St. Augustine) who were engaged in supplying the market of Havana from the "finny tribes" that abound in their vicinity. Of the occasional presence of the first, we have evidence in the marks of ancient fortifications or mounds of stones found in various situations, (in one of which, opened some years since, human bones of a large size were discovered) and tradition has in addition, brought down to us notices of them which deserve all the credit conferred upon the same authority in other parts of the country. The oldest settler in this section of the country, one whose residence for 50 years has been in the vicinity of Charlotte's Harbor, has informed me that it was an account, current in his

early years, that some eighty or ninety years previous (probably now 130 years ago) the Indians inhabiting the Islands along the coast and those on the main land were of different tribes, and as the Island Indians frequently visited the main for the purpose of hunting, a feud arose between the two tribes, and those from the main having made an irruption into the Islands, their inhabitants were driven from Island to Island until they reached Key West. Here, as they could flee no farther, they stood their ground, and a battle was fought resulting in the almost entire extermination of the Islanders; only a few escaped, (and that by a miracle as they embarked in canoes upon the ocean) whose descendants, it is said, were known to have been met in the Island of Cuba.

This battle strewed the Island with bones, as it is probable the conquerors tarried not to commit the bodies of the dead to the ground, and hence the name of the Island *Cayo Hueso* (in Spanish "Bone Key") which the English, with the same ease that they transformed the wine *Xeres Seco* into "Sherry Sack," corrupted into "Key West."

That the harbor of Key West was the resort of Pirates, occasionally, has been proved by the evidence of many who were connected with them in their lawless depridations (sic), and by the discovery of hidden articles that could only have been secreted by them.[1] That the Islands of the Florida coast were known to the fishermen supplying the Havana market is certain, as many persons are still to be found who visited them in that capacity, some years before the Provinces were ceded to the United States.

On 26th August 1815 for some military services rendered to the Government by Juan P. Salas,[2] Don Juan de Estrada,[3] then Governor of Florida granted to him the Island of Key West, but nothing was done by him in the way of settlement or improvement, and the Island had the same wild aspect it had worn for ages, when on 20th Dec. 1821, Salas sold his right, title and interest to John W. Simonton Esq.[4] then of Mobile, who met with Salas in Havana. Having heard of the advantageous situation of the Harbor & etc., Mr. Simonton was induced, from the certain prospect of improvement throughout the country, by the cession of the United States, (which his mercantile experience led him to foresee must advance the interests of a settlement at this point,) to give Two thousand Dollars for the Island, and on the 19th January 1822, took possession. Soon after making the purchase Mr. Simonton sold one half of his interest to the John Whitehead[5] & John W. Fleeming Esqs.[6] also of Mobile at that time, and another quarter to Messrs. John Warner and John Mountain, whose interest is vested in Col. P. C. Greene, who resides on the Island.

The Proprietors immediately did everything in their power to improve the Island as rapidly as possible, and they all gave their personal attention to the erection of buildings, clearing of land & etc. In February 1823 Commodore Patterson[8] & Lieut. Tuttle of the U. S. Navy arrived with orders from the Government to survey the coast and harbor of Key West. They were soon followed by Government vessels bringing stores ,materials & etc., and by the end of the year the Island was a regularly constituted Naval Depot & Station under the command of Commodore Porter,[9] by the name of Thompson's Island, a title it has long ceased to bear, and which it is probable will never be revived, as it was conferred merely out of compliment to the then Secretary of the Navy.[10] A Collector and Inspector of the Customs arrived in April 1823—and since that time Key West has been a regular Port of Entry.

During the occupancy of the United States the growth of the Town was considerably checked from its being most of the time under martial law, but the advantageous locality of the Island, the fineness of its harbor, etc., were fully developed, and the effectual suppression of Piracy may be attributed in a great measure to the conveniences it afforded to our Squadron engaged on that arduous service. The Naval Depot was removed in 1826 to Pensacola. The Superior Court for this portion of the Territory, being much needed on account of its civil jurisdiction, but imperiously called for by the fact that all the admiralty business, involving a vast amount of property, devolved for want of it upon minor tribunals, was established by Act of Congress in winter of 1827. The winter following, the Island, which had previously been held in common, was surveyed and divided among the four proprietary interests, and they retain undiminished, with the exception of a few sales of town lots, the portions then allotted to each. Since that time the Town has increased in size and population, and the character of its inhabitants has risen considerably from the introduction of many families of great worth and respectability, bringing with them and spreading among their fellow citizens a desire for the privileges, protection and advantages of social order and wholesome restraint. It is now the seat of Justice for the County of Monroe, and the residence of the officers of Superior Court of the Southern Judicial District of Florida having Maritime Jurisdiction. It is also a Port of Entry enjoying all the privileges of the largest seaports of the Country, and a Military Post. It has a Court House, Custom House, and other public buildings of respectable size and appearance, although of course not to be compared with those in the older sections of the Union, and the private buildings erected are assuming annually greater marks of taste and

comfort in their construction. Having premised this much and I fear rather at too great length for your patience, I proceed to the consideration of the questions proposed.

1st. "Are the dimensions of the Island of Key West, as laid down in Morse's Gazetteer (to wit 7 miles in length, and 2 in breadth) correct?"

I do not recollect having seen an edition of Morse's Gazetteer in which Key West is mentioned, but the dimensions as you give them from that work are *not* correct. The survey made in the winter of 1828-9 (by myself) which is a correct one, gives about 4¼ miles as the length of the Island from its two extremes, and about 1 mile as its greatest breadth, but it is extremely irregular in shape. As it contains 1975 acres the average of its breadth may be estimated at about three fourths of a mile. Its greatest length lies from N.E. to S.W. and its western end being that on which the City is located is in Latitude 24° 33′ 30″ W.

2nd "Is the soil of the whole Island very sandy and sterile, or is any part of it arable or productive of any grass or pasture for cattle?" "Is there any clay in the soil?" 3rd "Are there any large trees, pine or others, growing on the Island?"

Key West abroad is generally considered as nothing but a *sand bank.* (I have recently seen it spoken of in a public print as a *small coral reef*) but there is not, strictly speaking, a particle of *sand* upon the whole Island, and so far from its being sterile there is not a thicker growth of woods or one presenting a more pleasing variety of verdure than that on this and the neighboring Islands. In truth, the soil is too prolific for the comfort of the inhabitants, as it requires constant attention to keep an enclosure, and even our streets, free from bushes and plants that spring up spontaneously the moment the forest trees are cut away. The wild grass is not of a very nourishing species, nor does it grow in any very great quantities, but a considerable number of cattle, running loose upon the Islands manage to procure a living from that, and the young twigs of the trees and bushes, although it is not much calculated to improve their condition. The few milch cows that are on the Island are kept up, — a certain plant which they eat when allowed to range injuring materially the quality of their milk.

In consequence of most of the population heretofore being in some measure but temporarily located, and engrossed with mercantile affairs, no attention has yet been paid to the cultivation of the soil, more than to rear a few of the tropical plants, and a few vegetables, although the soil is admirably adapted to all the tropical production that have not a *tap root,* or one requiring a greater depth of earth than three or four feet, and that do not stand in

need of clay, as there is none whatever entering into the composition of our soil, which consists entirely of mould formed by decayed vegetation of the average depth I have mentioned.

I have alluded to the thick growth on the Island—it consists of a great variety of trees of all sizes, the largest I have seen having trunks about the size of a man's body. There are no *Pines*, nor *Oaks* that I know of, and I believe there is no part of the Island I have not visited. The vulgar names of some of the trees are as follows—Gun Mastic—Gum Elimi—Yellow Wood —Iron Wood—Dog Wood—White Wood—Torch Wood—Wild Fig—Button Wood—Sea Grape—Pigeon Plum—Satin Wood—Box Wood—Mangrove— Stopper Wood—Wild Sappadillo, etc. I do not know that you will recognize all their names, but they are those by which the trees are distinguished here, and in the Bahamas where a similar growth prevails. The shrubs and vines are also in great numbers and variety.

4th. "It the ground generally level or are there some hills?"

The highest point of the Island is considered to be about twenty five feet above high water, and the slope is gradual thence to the shores, there being but few inequalities of surface. There being no hills on the Island, or any where in its vicinity, we have no very good wells of water, but there are some which are used by persons residing near them for every purpose, and many which answer for all culinary uses. Rain water however is preferred by everyone, and is as you well know the best that they could have. A prejudice against the Island was endeavored to be raised by an officer of the Army stationed here some two years since, in a communication to the Army and Navy Magazine, in which he stated that the inhabitants were obliged to send to Havana (70 miles) for all their water, which he afterwards modified into the complaint that water is sold here. The first assertion is utterly false, and could only have been made from a desire to injure the place, or its author must have been most eggregiously (sic) deceived—and the second is a charge which applies equally to every Sea Port in the United States. Since my first acquaintance with the Island (one of more than seven years) I have never known the inhabitants to want water, although sometimes from the great dependence placed upon the clouds for a supply, it has been less plenty than at others.

5th. Are there any rocks on the Island of granite, serpentine, cobalt, quartz, sandstone, calcarions (sic), argillaceous or others?

The foundation of the Island is what mineralogists term, I believe, *Secondary Lime Stone*, and it is the only kind found upon the Island. It rises to the surface in masses in some places, and lies in fragments and detached

portions everywhere. The western and southern shores of the Island consist of this rock pulverized and intermingled with shells, and this mixture is the nearest approach to sand that we have upon the Island.

6th. "Do the people raise any vegetables for the tables, any corn or sweet-potatoes?" I have already observed that a few tropical plants and vegetables are cultivated here. In favorable seasons, or in other words when dry weather does not prevail to too great an extent, there is no kind of garden vegetables that cannot be raised in the greatest perfection, but when the season is unfavorable, constant attention, and the greatest care observed in irrigating the ground, etc., cannot always attain the success desired. There are few persons consequently who attempt the growth of vegetables to any extent, unless they have negroes who are unemployed. I have eaten as fine melons, sweet potatoes, beets etc., raised upon the Island as I have ever met with elsewhere. Corn does not do as well, but it has been placed upon the table in good full ears *six weeks* after being planted. We depend in a great measure upon the North for the supply of all such necessaries.

It is my belief that it would be well worth the attention of some person having a few hands, and accustomed to the care required by Orange, Lime and other trees suited to the climate, to commence a plantation of them here. There are some lime trees upon the Island that will compare in size and fruitfulness with any I have seen in Cuba, and Plantains and Bananas of full size and fine flavor have been raised without difficulty.

The Cocoa nut also thrives remarkably well.

7th . "What do you estimate to be the whole population of Key West at the present time?"

8th. "Are there any Mechanics at Key West engaged in useful domestic arts?"

I estimate the population of Key West including transient persons, sailors etc., in Port exclusive of U. S. troops, at an average of about 600 throughout the year. It cannot vary much from that number. There is one company of troops stationed here at present. Our mechanics are not as numerous as we could wish, but we have permanently established Masons, Ship and House Carpenters, Bakers and a Blacksmith; we want in addition a Shoe maker, a Tailor, and one or two others who though at first their patronage might be small, would, if good workmen and of steady habits, secure a living and grow and prosper with the place.

9th. "What was the annual amount in the year 1834 of the Revenue from Customs House duties, and has it during the present year been equally large?

—and have the duties for the last two years been as large as they were four, five, or six years ago?"

During the first years of the settlement, a considerable trade was carried on between the Island and Cuba, in consequence of Key West having been made a depot for the supply of flour to the Havana market, and to such an extent was it carried, that for a short time almost all the flour destined for that Port went *via* Key West. Restrictions however were laid upon this commerce by the Spanish authorities, at the request of those persons in Havana, who had previously been benefitted (sic) by the consignment of flour from New Orleans and other ports, and it was of course discontinued. Since then the foreign business of the port, excepting the importation of such West India produce as may be required for the consumption of the place, has been that growing out of wrecked cargoes, and indeed the main commercial operations of the place may be considered as depending upon the wrecks occurring upon the Florida Reef. The time however is not far distant, I think, when Key West from its peculiarly advantageous location will become the depot for the supply of both the Cuban and Mexican Ports, and its advance in commercial prosperity be rapid. It has also within itself a source of profit and improvement in its Salt Pond which is now just beginning to be worked. A Company commenced their operations here the last year, with covered works, on the plan pursued by the Salt Makers of Massachusetts, and they have before them every prospect of complete success. In Massachusetts with their short season, the manufacturers expect to realize 25 per cent on their investment—what then must be the result here where the water contains 1/3 more salt—the evaporation is at least twice as rapid, and the season comprises nearly the whole year?

The coasting trade of the Island is of very considerable extent, and as the main land becomes more cultivated, and the Salt works progress, we may reasonably calculate upon its rapidly increasing.

The following schedule will show you the number of vessels *entering and clearing* at the Custom House during the years mentioned—excluding of course all vessels merely reported, not being obliged by law to enter, which would probably have doubled the numbers in some years.

ENTRANCES

	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833	1834	1835
From Foreign Ports	154	177	218	184	176	172	162	103	178	173
Coastwise	43	86	109	99	114	118	141	106	135	158
TOTAL	197	263	327	283	290	290	303	209	313	331
Foreign Vessels	30	16	23	19	30	22	20	10	16	10
American Vessels	167	247	304	264	260	268	283	199	297	321

CLEARANCES

	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833	1834	1835
For Foreign Ports	151	177	208	175	153	158	177	106	183	171
Coastwise	57	86	135	148	134	124	94	110	81	89
TOTAL	208	263	343	323	287	282	271	216	264	260
Foreign Vessels	27	15	21	30	31	21	15	11	15	12
American Vessels	181	248	322	293	256	261	256	205	249	248

The value of the Imports from, and Exports to, Foreign Ports previous to 1831, cannot be ascertained from the Custom House Records, without considerable trouble, the value since then is as follows.

1831	$ 67,863	$35,152
1832	108,778	63,943
1833	39,024	35,138*
1834	107,856	86,947
1835	71,099	27,657
AVERAGE	78,922	49,767

To the amount of exports should be added annually from $15,000 to $20,000 the proceeds of live fish caught in the district for the Havana market, which sums do not enter into the Custom House returns.

The Revenue of the Custom House for the years previous to 1828—averaged about $45,000 per annum.

From 1828 to 1832 inclusive $36,500 per annum.

From 1833 to 1835 inclusive 10,000 per annum.

1835 alone $20,000.

The great diminution in the revenue of the last three years is owing to there having been a less number of vessels with foreign merchandise wrecked—to the abolition of Tonnage duties in almost all cases, and to the great additions made to the list of free articles by the present tariff, including almost every article of common importation at this port.

I have alluded to the large proportion of our commercial operations arising from the adjudication and sale of wrecked cargoes: the following schedule will give you some idea of the importance of the business for the last year.

Schedule showing the amount of the wrecking business on the Coast of Florida during the year 1835.

Amount of sales made by Marshal of Admiralty Court	$182,685
Amount of sales by Auctioneers (estimate)	5,500
	$188,185
Amount of salvage received by wreckers from court	$ 88,225
Awarded by arbitration — (estimate)	3,500
Total	$ 91,725

Estimated value of vessels and cargoes saved, on which the above salvage was awarded $260,000.

The number of vessels engaged in wrecking is about twenty, the aggregate amount of whose tonnage exceeds 1,000 tons.

I have thus endeavored to answer your inquiries at length, and if I have succeeded in removing any prejudices, or given any information that will lead you to estimate our Island more highly than you have hitherto done, I shall be satisfied.

Key West has been much calumniated—not to as great an extent of late years as formerly—but still from the constant repetition in the papers of whatever tends to its injury, and the suppression of whatever tells to its credit, (intentionally or not I cannot tell) the disadvantages it has labored under from previous attacks, continue to some extent to mar its advancement. Capital and enterprise have been kept away, and it may be some time ere the regular course of either towards the Island will be unobstructed by the remaining prejudices against it.

The principal charges against the island are the unhealthfulness of the climate and the character of its population. In relation to the last, you who know personally, many, residing here, and others by reputation require nothing to be said to prove the high character of a portion of our citizens, and I feel no hesitation in saying, (although like all inhabited spots on the face of the globe, we have our variety) that the remainder as a body deserve in no way the aspersions cast upon them. The wreckers and those connected with them, suffer most from these calumniations, but had I time I could produce many instances of an exhibition of honesty, generosity, fortitude and a number of other of the best characteristics of our nature, which would have done credit to far more exalted stations. Judge Webb[11] took occasion not long since, from the Bench, in giving his decision in an admiralty case to speak of these men in the following terms. "I am gratified with the opportunity of expressing on this, as I have done on other occasions, my entire conviction that the course pursued by the individuals, now engaged in this occupation on the coast of Florida, is as exemplary in regard to the rights of others, as that of any other class of this or other communities. They are the instruments of saving an immense amount of property, which without their exertions would be wholly lost, and so far as their conduct in rendering these services has come to the knowledge of this Court (and it is often the subject of minute and critical examination) it has, with but few exceptions, been found correct, meritorious and praiseworthy." These are the men that Mr. Ornithologist Audibon[12] [sic] must go out of his way (in the volume of work not long

since published) to stigmatize as being "engaged in enterprises which they are nowise anxious to publish either to the government or the world." Place a man in a tempest-tossed vessel on the Florida reef, and I am much mistaken if he would not think a Wrecker a being of more intrinsic value to him, than all the bird catchers in Christendom.

In our ordinary Admiralty business there is but little legal skill required, all the services rendered, consisting generally, of drawing a libel and answer, and examining the witnesses on either side. Precedents are very little looked after, and the matter is left with the Judge, whose experience in such cases, from a practice here of six or seven years, is very considerable.

I agree with you fully as to the want of industry, energy, etc., among Floridians generally. It is to be regretted, but we cannot expect that their character in that respect will be improved until more of the sterling citizens of the North are intermingled with them.

The character of Key West for health continues still to be estimated by the standard erected when the Island was in the occupancy of the United States Forces under the command of Commodore Porter, which is far from being the proper way to consider the subject. It is true that great mortality existed among the forces, but they were here without the possession of any of the comforts of life, and the death of numbers may rightly be attributed to their imprudence and dissipation. Commodore Porter himself has stated publicly in the papers, "that malady with which the Naval forces, under my command for the suppression of piracy, were afflicted had its origin in the excessive severity of the duty performed, and the total absence of every description of comfort. The Disease was contracted among the haunts of the pirates on the coast of Cuba, and not, as is generally supposed, at Key West."

Since the removal of the Naval depot, with the exception of the summer of 1829, when fevers prevailed to some extent, I feel no hestitation in asserting that Key West has been as healthy as any place South of the Potomac, if not more so, and indeed far more healthy than many places at the North, where healthfulness is so little doubted as never to be made the subject of inquiry. During the last year (1835) there were, exclusive of Soldiers, 13 deaths, among the population of the town, including transient persons, Seamen in Port, etc., which at my estimate of 600 gives 1 death in 46—a result that will compare with some of the healthiest places on the Globe. The diseases were as follows: Consumption 3; Visceral derangements 2; Bilious fever 2; Intemperance 1; Casualty 1; Chronic Dysentery 1; Lockjaw 1; Measles 1; Cancer in Stomach (supposed) 1.—In conclusion, I would observe that a

residence in Key West is not subjecting oneself to all the evils that flesh is heir to, as is generally imagined. The mosquitoes are to me the most annoying of all the unpleasant circumstances attending it, and their attacks can be in a great measure guarded against, so that we are not deprived of all comfort even in the height of their season, and possessing as we do so many delights, from the climate and other sources, we should not violently complain at their molestation for a month or two.

The temperature of our atmosphere is exceedingly fine throughout the year. I have never known it in the shade above 89° nor less than 45°.

The expense of living is high, but it is counterbalanced in some measure, as labor, mechanical productions, and professional services are much better paid for than elsewhere; the costliness of everything is however a subject of regret.

I will now take leave of the subject, fearing much that I have already exceeded your patience.

Attached to Whithead's letter is a comment by an individual who signs himself Fredrington B. This author comments on the number of individuals who's first names were John that were associated with the Island of Key West in the 1820's. There was John de Estrada, John Salas, John Strong, John Simonton, John Whitehead, John Fleeming, John Warner, John Mountain, and John Gerres. When John Simonton was forced to engage council to defend his land claims, he employed John Rodman and John Drysdale, and a third lawyer who also had the first name of John. The author of the attached note did not recall the name of the third John, but he did point out that the lawyers were successful and Simonton received a clear title to his land.

FOOTNOTES

[1] This sentence and the two preceding paragraphs are quoted from Jefferson B. Browne, *Key West: The Old and the New*, (St. Augustine, The Record Company, 1912), 8-9. Browne eliminates some phrases, rewrites others, and changes capitalization and punctuation. A part of the quotation used by Browne is reproduced in *A Guide to Key West*, (New York, Hastings House, 1941), 30.

[2] Juan Pablo Salas was a Spanish officer who served faithfully in the Royal Artillery Corps at St. Augustine and also acted at times as the Governor's secretary.

[3] Juan de Estrada was the Spanish governor of East Florida.

[4] John Watson Simonton was a native of New Jersey who developed commercial interests in the South and in Cuba. In the 1830's he was the sutler at the United States Army Post in Key West and took an active part in the manufacturing of salt on the Island.

[5] John Whitehead of Newark, New Jersey was the elder brother of W. A. Whitehead.

[6] John William Charles Fleeming came to Key West in 1822, but remained only a few months and then returned to his home in New Bedford, Massachussetts. In 1832 he returned to the Island to make arrangements for the manufacturing of salt but died on December 19th of that year before the manufacturing plant had been established.

[7] Pardon C. Greene of Rhode Island was a sea captain who resided in Key West for more than a decade prior to his death in 1838.

[8] Daniel Todd Patterson (1786-1839) was a native of New York. He entered the United States Naval Service in 1800, served with distinction in the War of 1812, and had considerable experience in dealing with the pirates of the Carribean area.

[9] David Porter (1780-1843) was a native of Boston, Massachusetts. He served in the Navy during the War of 1812 and in 1823 became the Commander-In-Chief of the West India Squadron. Within two years he almost cleared the Carribean of pirates.

[10] Smith Thompson (1768-1843) was a native of New York and Secretary of the Navy from January 1, 1819 to August 31, 1823.

[11] James Webb, a native of Georgia, was Judge of the Federal Court in Key West from 1828 to 1839.

[12] James John Audubon came to Key West on May 4, 1832, and during his stay "his hour of rising was 3:00 in the morning; from that time until noon and sometimes even until night, he was engaged in hunting among the mangrove keys, despite of heat, sand flies, and mosquitoes." Browne, *Key West: The Old and the New*, 15.

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The Association's Historical Marker Program

By OLIVER GRISWOLD

The program of the Historical Association of Southern Florida to erect markers at historical sites has resulted in the placing of three handsome markers.

The Association has a list of 22 additional sites as the basis for continued activity. This may be considerably extended.

Undertaken as a testing or exploratory program, it has met with considerable approbation by the public and the press. Local officials have cooperated wholeheartedly.

Funds for the markers have been raised through many private donations in modest amounts.

All of the markers have been cast aluminum, enameled with gold lettering against jet black background, with the addition of cobalt blue in the Association's seal. So far, the materials have stood up under the sun and weather, but the Association awaits further ageing to decide the degree of permanence.

The plan is to continue the standard size of 42″ by 26″, with the text on both sides in lettering large enough to be read by a halted pedestrian or motorist at about 25 feet. The markers are erected on aluminum-sheathed, concrete posts.

The first marker was erected in Bayfront Park, Miami, August 3, 1951. Former State Senator F. M. Hudson made the dedication address. The marker text reads:

> TEQUESTA
>
> Indians lived at the mouth of the Miami River (200 yards south west of this spot) for more than 15 centuries before White man came. The principal town of the Tequesta Indians, including six mounds used for dwelling, burial, and religious rites, was discovered here by the Spaniards. They built in it the earliest White settlement in S. E. Florida, a fort and Jesuit mission, in 1567. When the British obtained Florida in 1763, most of the Tequestas departed with the Spaniards to Havana and thereafter vanished as a tribe.
>
> HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA, 1951

The second marker was dedicated October 28, 1951, at Meacham Field, Key West, with an address by Roger Wolin, Director of Public Relations, Latin American Division, Pan American World Airways. The marker text reads:

> MEACHAM FIELD
>
> The first regularly-scheduled international flight by a United States airline was made from here to Havana Oct. 28, 1927. This inaugurated Pan American World Airways which later spread through the Caribbean, around South America, and across the Atlantic and the Pacific.
>
> The first Clipper was a wooden-winged Fokker F-7 capable of carrying 10 passengers 85 m.p.h. On the maiden flight, it carried a crew of two and a few bags of mail to the Cuban capital in an hour and ten minutes. Passengers were carried beginning Jan. 16, 1928.
>
> HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA, 1951

Former U. S. Senator Scott M. Loftin made the dedication address July 25, 1952, for the third marker in a small park renamed Tuttle Plaza at S. E. First Avenue and Third Street, Miami. The marker text states:

> Mrs. Julia D. Tuttle of Cleveland, O., acquired 644 acres on the north bank of the Miami River in 1891. She resided in the remodelled officers' quarters of old Ft. Dallas 100 yards S. E. of this spot until her death Sept. 14, 1898.
>
> With rare foresight and energy, she persuaded Henry M. Flagler to extend his railroad to Miami in 1896.
>
> As inducement, Mrs. Tuttle gave him 100 acres for a railroad terminal and hotel and 263 acres in alternate city blocks (more than half her land), thus earning her fame as 'The Mother of Miami'.
>
> HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA, 1951

Other sites scheduled for marking in 1952 and 1953 are Miami International Airport; the House of Refuge, Miami Beach; and Dinner Key.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

TREASURER'S REPORT

FISCAL YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31, 1952

On hand Sept. 1, 1951			
Building Fund	$ 143.77		
Marker Fund	200.00		
General Fund	1,556.10		$1,899.87
Dues collected	3,243.00		
Contributions to Building Fund	22.49		
Contributions to Marker Fund	191.65		
Contributions—Program Meetings	199.46		
Miscellaneous Income	40.64		3,697.24
Publishing Tequesta	$ 868.58		
Program Meetings	334.57		
Treasurer	135.97		
Corresponding Secretary	102.35		
Erection of Markers	267.93		
Archives	32.36		
Miscellaneous Expense	258.41	2,000.17	
On hand Aug. 31, 1952			
Building Fund	$2,166.26		
Marker Fund	123.72		
General Fund	1,306.96	3,596.94	
		$5,597.11	$5,597.11

Number of Members by Years (1952 to Sept. 1)

	2$	$3	$5	$10	$25	$100	$250		
1949	433		119					551	$1,459
1950	423		135					558	1,521
1951	408	2	168	19	2		1	600	2,150
1952	32	303	173	27	7	2	1	545	2,734

Withers Transfer & Storage Co. is providing fireproof storage for our collection without charge.

Of our cash on hand, $2,000 is drawing interest through the Industrial Savings Bank of Miami.

EDWIN G. BISHOP, *Treasurer.*

Contributors

JEANNE BELLAMY is a staff writer of the *Miami Herald.* She has written on a wide range of South Florida Topics, most importantly perhaps on water control in the Everglades. A preliminary draft of this paper was read at a program meeting of the Historical Association on January 31, 1951.

MRS. HENRY J. BURKHARDT, perhaps better known to newspaper readers in Dade County as Sue Pope Burkhardt, comes of a pioneer South Florida family. She is a graduate of Miami High School and attended Florida State University. She filled various positions on the old *Miami Metropolis,* and originally went to West Palm Beach where she now resides to have charge of the *Metropolis* news bureau there. The article on the history of coontie starch making was written for the Everglades Park Library, and was read at a program meeting of the Historical Association of Southern Florida.

ERNEST G. GEARHARDT, JR., is an Assistant Vice President of the First National Bank of Miami. He did the research on starch making machinery and the early methods of processing coontie roots into starch for the purpose of designing a working model of a coontie starch mill of the type being used in South Florida before the turn of the century. This model was the central attraction of the bank's exhibit in the Greater Miami Manufacturers' Exposition at the Dinner Key Auditorium in March 1952. An historical theme was selected for the exhibit to coincide with the bank's observance of its fiftieth anniversary year. The article was originally written as explanatory and background material for the benefit of the bank personnel manning the booth at the exhibit. The starch mill model was later donated to the Historical Association of Southern Florida, and has been on display for some months at the Miami Public Library in Bayfront Park.

OLIVER GRISWOLD is program coordinator for the University of Miami's Radio and Television Department. He is chairman of the Historical Association's Committee on Historical Sites and Markers.

REMBER W. PATRICK, who prepared the introduction and notes for William Adee Whitehead's description of Key West is chairman of the History Department at the University of Florida, Associate Editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly and author, among other things, of *Florida Under Five Flags.*

JULIEN YONGE, Director of the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida, and for more than a quarter of a century editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly, called to our attention the Whitehead description of Key West and supplied the photograph and notes on the early plan of Key West.

F. PAGE WILSON is a long time resident of Miami as his article indicates. He now resides at 102 S. W. 19th Road. He is a member of the Historical Association Board of Directors, and an active member of the Miami Pioneers. This article is part of a larger study of the area's history on which he is working.

LIST OF MEMBERS*

EXPLANATORY NOTE: *The Society provides several classes of membership. Regular or "Annual" members at three dollars a year make up the great majority of the list. For those who wish to contribute more for the promotion of the Association's work, the other classes of membership provide the opportunity, and the publication of their names in the proper category of membership is a means of recognition. "Sustaining" members pay five dollars a year, "Patrons" pay ten dollars a year, "Donors" pay twenty-five dollars a year, "Sponsors" pay one hundred dollars a year, and "Benefactors" contribute two hundred and fifty dollars or more a year.*

*This printed roster is made up of the names of those persons and institutions that have paid dues in 1951 or in 1952 before September first, when this material must go to press. Those joining after this date in 1952 will have their names included in the 1953 roster. The symbol ** indicates founding member and the symbol * indicates charter member.*

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Mershon, M. L., Miami
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Frederick, Bill, Miami
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Shaw, Martha Luelle, Miami*
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