

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

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Muriel M. Curtiss continues her history of Key Biscayne which began in the May 1988 *Update*.

Stuart McIver is the co-editor of *South Florida History Magazine* and the author of a number of books including the recently released *Glimpses of South Florida History*.

On the Cover: Indian guide Abe Lincoln jokes with Miami Mayor E. G. Sewell, in white suit, after Tamiami Trail Blazers finally made it across the Everglades by automobile in April, 1923. The trip took 19 days then. The Tamiami Trail is faster these days.

South Florida History

M A G A Z I N E

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Editor's Notes

by Stuart McIver

Sooner or later everything changes. Sometimes for the better. For the past 15 years the Historical Association of Southern Florida has been publishing a journal of popular history. It has undergone a number of changes and with this issue it undergoes still more.

First, and most obvious, the name has changed — from *Update to South Florida History Magazine*, certainly a more precise description of the publication.

Second, the content will be changing. The publication will become less a journal and more a magazine. An increased number of pages will give us the opportunity to continue our coverage of Greater Miami, while presenting a wider range of subjects, covering more of South Florida and the Caribbean and displaying more and bigger pictures of what the area and its people looked like.

Loosely, we are defining our principal area of interest as all of South Florida from the Keys to the northern shores of Lake Okeechobee, from Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Palm Beach and Stuart across to Naples and Fort Myers. Other parts of the state may also be included from time to time when the subject matter and photographs are strong enough to warrant it.

South Florida History Magazine is planning, too, to increase its use of stories and pictures from the Caribbean basin and the Bahamas. Expect more datelines from Havana, Nassau, Kingston and Port au Prince.

Over nearly half a century the Historical Association has acquired a vast collection of photographs. Some are pictorial masterpieces from highly professional photographers, others are informal snapshots which capture candid and revealing moments from everyday life in the area. The Florida Room at the Miami-Dade Public Library houses the Romer Collection. In the 1920s and 30s photographer Gleason Waite Romer took an enormous number of pictures of the great and small in the Greater Miami area. We will draw heavily on our own photo collection, on the Romer Collection and on the picture resources of the many historical societies in the cities and counties of South Florida.

So, welcome to the first issue of *South Florida History Magazine*. We hope you enjoy it.

Unlike so many of the country's original thirteen states, the new land of Florida has not immersed itself in the statue craze. Generals on horseback, governors, senators, scientists, educators are rarely seen in full-figured stone and bronze. The state's most important figure, Henry M. Flagler, is honored with only one statue — in St. Augustine. Palm Beach and Miami, which owe their international celebrity status to him, have erected no stone or bronze figures to the great man. It just isn't done here.

Miami, however, has seen fit to honor with full statues such diverse legends as Christopher Columbus, Ponce de Leon, Carl Fisher and Martin Luther King. Palm Beach, while bypassing Flagler, has erected a full figure of Cap Dimick, the town's first mayor.

Broward county has now joined the ranks with the unveiling last fall of an equestrian statue of Major William Lauderdale, the Tennessee soldier who built the fort on the New River during the Second Seminole War. Ironically, the statue stands, not in Fort Lauderdale, the city that bears his name, but in Davie where the battle of Pine Island was fought in 1838. Nor was the figure built with public funds on public property but rather with developer funds at the development of Forest Ridge.

The Lauderdale statue is the first in the county to honor a specific historical hero. On Hillsboro Beach a generic barefoot mailman beckons visitors to the oceanfront Barefoot Mailman Hotel and Resort.

Cesar Trasobares, executive director of Art in Public Places for Dade County, has commissioned a survey of existing statues, busts and memorials. The list includes such figures as Jose Marti and Dr. Carlos Finlay, from Cuba, aviatrix Amelia Earhart, scientist George Wash-

(Continued on page 23)



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Blazing the Tamiami Trail

by Steve Glassman



The Trail Blazers speed through Everglades sawgrass.

On April 4, 1923, a convoy of one Model T truck, two heavy touring cars, and seven Model T Sedans paraded through the streets of Fort Myers. A brass band played. Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, winter residents of Fort Myers, entrusted the motorists with a ribbon-tied bottle of grape juice to be presented to William Jennings Bryan, the silver tongue of the Platte and now land boomer, at convoy's end in Miami.

Newreel cameras and press photographers duly recorded the event. The best guess of the leaders of the motorcade was that they would arrive in Miami three or four days later.

After all the only real problem they expected to encounter would be in the mere forty-mile gap in the fledgeling roadway, the so-called Tamiami Trail, that had been surveyed across the Everglades. Among the twenty-five or so members (accounts vary) of the expedition were some of the leading boosters of the lower west coast. They included editors and publishers of various newspapers, such as Russell Kay and Frank Whitman of *The Florida Grower*, George Hosmer of the *Fort Myers Press*, and Allan Andrews of the weekly *American Eagle*.

Other civic leaders were also represented: George Dunham, director of the Tamiami Trail association of Fort Myers, John Morris, a Lee County Commissioner, and Stanley Hanson, the local Indian agent. These men and others had seen the prosperity and boom times the brick-paved Dixie Highway had brought to the lower East Coast. They reasoned—quite accurately—that the loop road through the Everglades had to be completed for the West Coast to garner some of the Gold Coast's glitter.

In fact, the whole point of the expedition was to prove that the South Florida vastness was not the alien environment for automobiles that weary roadbuilders were beginning to suspect it was. John Gifford, the noted University of Miami professor of tropical forestry, was apparently the first to propose in print—in a 1914 issue of *Tropic*—that a highway be laid across the Everglades. The cry for this road was

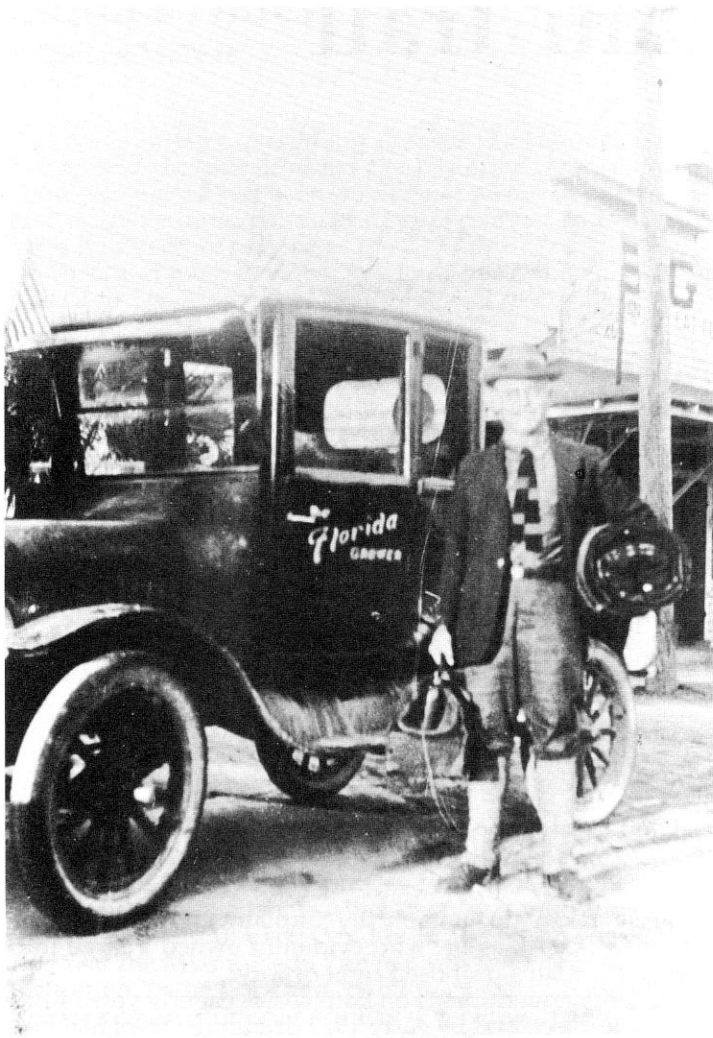
eagerly taken up, notably by Captain J.F. Jaudon, Dade County Tax Assessor, who evidently owned a large track along the road's proposed right of way.

County governments on both coasts eagerly voted funds for the project, and by early 1923 dredging crews had been inching toward each other from both sides of the peninsula for going-on seven years. Populous Dade County had floated enough bond issues to have just about completed work on the so-called Tamiami Trail all the way to the county line. But with war time inflation and what not Lee County with its miniscule population had long since taxed its fragile base to the limit.

The purpose of the motorcade, then, was two-fold. First, the Tamiami Trail Blazers, as they came to be known, wanted to prove automobile travel was feasible across the Everglades. Secondly, they hoped to gain publicity necessary to finish the highway. The evening of April 4 found the Trail Blazers singing campfire songs at the end of the graded roadway, not far from the present Collier-Seminole State Park. Their high spirits weren't even dampened the next morning when the first automobile plunged down the grade into the mucky sawgrass prairie, plowed along for a hundred yards, then became mired to its hubs. Not deterred by that example, a second car roped its tires and tore into the sawgrass.

Before long all but two of the vehicles were stuck fast. The reason for that problem was anomalous, the men—like all good pioneers and trailblazers—reasoned. Recent high tides had flooded the muck, and no less authority than George Storter, the owner of a locally famous Everglades trading post, had told them that the stretch of wet muck would probably be their most serious obstacle. Storter, along with Trail advocate Jaudon, had, in fact, crossed the Glades on foot two summers before.

Camp the second night was considerably more glum than the first one. Camping and cooking equipment had been unevenly distributed in the cars strung out across the marl



Ora Chapin wears knickers and leggings as the Blazers starts out from Fort Myers.

prairie, and there was no dry place to sleep. However, the Trail Blazers were cheered considerably by the arrival of a wide track Cletrac tractor shortly before dark. The tractor was sent by the Collier Company, headquartered in Everglade (now Everglades City).

The Collier Company, of course, was the brainchild of New York advertising magnate Barron Collier, who had recently acquired a reputed million acres in southern Lee County, which later became much of the county that now bears his name. Naturally, the Collier people were sympathetic to the aims of the expedition.

By noon of the third day, things were looking up again for the expedition. Most of the automobiles had been extricated from the muck and were poised toward Miami. In addition, two Miccosukee guides had joined the party. Conapatchee, called Little Billy by the whites, and Assumhachee, who bore a striking resemblance to Abraham Lincoln and who therefore was stuck with that moniker.

The only sour note was that one of the cars, a hefty Elcar, brought along by the Fort Myers Elcar dealer, was so hopelessly stuck that it had bogged the Cletrac tractor. But even that had a positive side. The Collier Company had sent a railway car to bring the expedition to Everglade for a well-earned respite. Four men went back to extricate the Elcar. The rest accepted Collier's hospitality and slept between sheets. Little did they know that in the morning they would embark on their worst nightmare.

The Everglades in 1923, although not quite virgin wilderness, was not far removed from that category. Haphazard exploration in the area had occurred during the Second Seminole War, some eighty years before.

In the intervening times, plume and hide hunters had penetrated the territory, but at the time of the Trail Blazers' expedition, the sole permanent occupants of the territory between Collier's narrow-gauge railroad north of Everglade to well into Dade County were Miccosukee refugees of the Second and Third Seminole Wars. The Trail Blazers had only the rudest maps—if any—to guide them, and even one of their Indian guides got lost for a time.

The only concession the Trail Blazers made to the uncertainty of the environment was to abandon Dealer R. W. Giles and his Elcar. April had been purposely chosen for the time of the expedition because it was the height of the dry season. However, should the early summer rains start before they had gotten out, the entire expedition could have been marooned in the interior.

So on the fourth day, with the commissary truck loaded with goodies, courtesy of the Collier Company, the Trail Blazers sans Dealer Giles and his Elcar, chugged off to the east. Their optimism was matched by the terrain, which proved to be drier sawgrass prairie interspersed with areas of relatively high pine flatwoods.

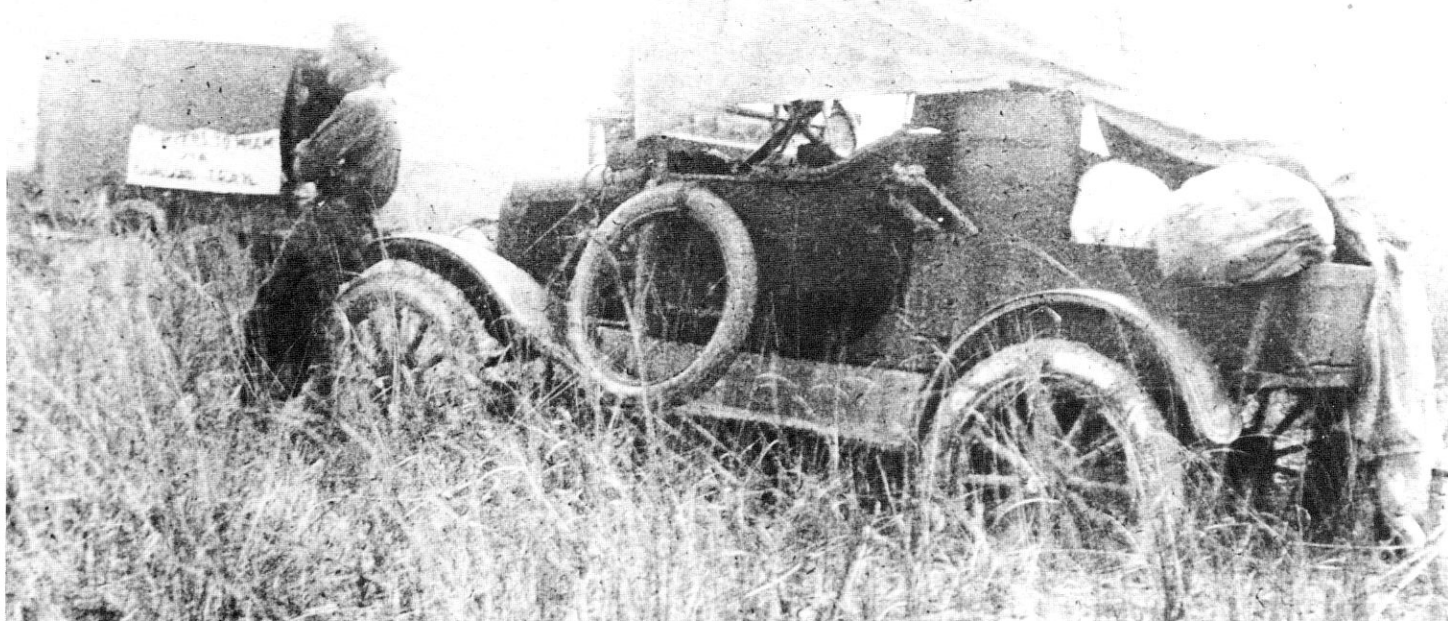
Even the first cypress strand at Turner River didn't seem all that formidable as an old ox-cart trail was discernable across it. True, fallen timber had to be cleared and some stumps lowered to allow the cars with their lower clearance to pass and a few spongy areas had to be corduroyed with brush. However, even the relatively mild terrain was too

ORIGINAL TAMIAMI TRAIL BLAZER



Fort Myers--Miami
..1923..

The "blue ribbon" of distinction.



Overland touring car breaks down near Turner River.

much for the second heavy touring car, an Overland, which broke down, and was abandoned.

Still, Sunday, the fifth day out, found the expedition tooling through Rockwell Cypress Strand on the ox trail with hardly a problem except for having to lay down brush to help with traction.

According to Allen Andrews, the "American Eagle" writer and horticulturist (whose horticultural claim to fame is introducing the now much maligned cajuput tree to Florida), Rockwell Strand was the prettiest of all, "containing a rank and varied growth of tropical vegetation...[with] a small lake in the center." In the afternoon the motorcade putted across a parched sawgrass prairie raising dust clouds.

However, the next morning the caravan was faced with a prospect considerably different from the traveling of the day before. Ahead lay Chatham Bend Cypress. The ox trail had petered out.

The Trail Blazers were now in what for the purposes of vehicle travel was virgin territory. Assumhachee (Abe Lincoln) surveyed a course and the two-dozen mostly white-collar Trail Blazers spit in their hands, took up their axes, and began chopping.

In the breathless cypress dome, the heat, which had hardly been noticed before, now seemed intolerable. Added to that rather trivial problem was the more serious one of energy. As their progress hadn't kept pace with their rather too rosy expectations, the Trail Blazers had had to put themselves on short rations.

Also, the water supply now came from scratch wells made by scooping out a few feet of soil and bailing the water that seeped into the pump. This liquid, though perfectly safe, was warm and flat-tasting. Because of the great demand for water the hard physical labor made for, drafts were often scooped up before the well had sufficient time to recharge, and the thirsty men would swill down generous proportions of mud and silt.

Insects could be a nuisance. Although the Everglades totem, the mosquito, was not present in any great quantities, this being the dry season, hard work with the ax would shake

loose fuzzy green worms that showered down causing painful stings.

Then, of course, there were fears that were perhaps more mental than physical, such as the city dwellers worries about snakes. Although the caravaniers spied only one rattler and a few cottonmouth mocassins, something happened in the Turner River Strand which couldn't help but be on many minds. They'd come upon a pool with dozens of mocassins frolicking like children. One of the whites had killed two of the snakes, and both the Indians had threatened to abandon



The Indian guides, Conapatchee, left, and Assumhachee, whose resemblance to an American president earned him a second name, Abe Lincoln.

(Continued on page 12)

Key Biscayne -- An Isle of Palms

by Muriel Curtiss

During the Second Seminole War the population on Key Biscayne mushroomed with troops under the leadership of Colonel William S. Harney. He would gain fame in the history books as the man who brought about the capture of Chekika and crushed the Seminoles in their Everglades fastness.

In 1838 the owners of 175 acres on Cape Florida returned, now that Harney's Dragoons were camped there and could protect them against any further Indian raids. William G. and Mary Ann Davis together with Harney conceived the idea of a town, mapped and platted it. The streets were named for the United States presidents and Harney was so enthusiastic he purchased two lots.

Some years later Harney tried to claim his property with no success. Today his lots in the Town of Key Biscayne, bounded by Washington and Jackson Streets, are under water, a problem that would be faced by many buyers during the great Florida boom less than one hundred years later!

While the Dragoons occupied Fort Bankhead on Cape Florida, a unique naval force designated "the Florida Squadron" under Lt. John T. McLaughlin was serving in these waters. The Squadron consisted of four schooners, three cutters, two barges and one hundred forty canoes and had a complement of over six hundred men. Their basic duties had to do with the Indians: to cut their supply lines from Cuba to Nassau, to keep them from looting wrecked vessels and to keep them from raiding the settlers. Their claim to fame, unfortunately, did not lie in their good deeds and naval exploits but in the scandal that would surface later.

Only five able-bodied men and ten in sick bay were left at the Tea Table Naval Base when Lieutenant McLaughlin left for Key Biscayne in the United States schooner *Flirt*, the *Wave* having sailed south some time before.

This was the opportunity the Indians had been waiting for - to get Jacob Housman, the wrecker, the salvager, the merchant, the unpopular feudal lord of nearby Indian Key. The Indians' dislike for this man had turned to hatred some few years before when he had offered his solution to the Indian problem; he wanted a bounty of \$200 for each Indian he killed and claimed he'd do a good job.

The irony of the Indian Key tragedy is that Housman and his wife escaped and among the innocent people killed was

the famed botanist, Dr. Henry Perrine. Lieutenant McLaughlin, ostensibly the protector of Indian Key, arrived in time to take Mrs. Perrine and her children and the other survivors from the schooner *Medium* to the protection of Key Biscayne.

At the close of the Seminole disturbances, Harney's Dragoons were transferred and the "Florida Squadron" was praised for a job well done.

Unfortunately for McLaughlin, a Congressional Committee on Public Expenditures had more to say about him and his command. When it became known that he and his men had consumed one hundred and thirty cases of wines and liquors daily for four years, they became known as "The Unquenchables." He was also questioned about paying \$29,203 for one hundred and twenty-nine canoes, more than \$225 per boat, while Harney had paid ten to fifteen dollars apiece for those he used in chasing the Indians into the Glades. Many other irregularities were brought to public attention including the fact that McLaughlin had raised his own rank to that of Captain.

With all this scandal, Key Biscayne was pictured as a tropical island with cases of spirits stacked on the beach to be used as medicine to battle the "bad swamp air."

Empowered by an act of the General Assembly of the State of Florida in January, 1855, the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund of this state sold, for the "consideration: \$0.70 per acre," lands on Key Biscayne to Ezra A. Osborn and Elnathan T. Field. These two men from New Jersey appeared to have great faith not only in Key Biscayne, but in much of South Florida; records showed their names in the abstracts of many properties. Their first purchase on Key Biscayne from the IIF was in September, 1885, and in fact, through error, the Board sold the same land almost seven years later to Narcisse Bouchard for one dollar per acre, and had to refund his money.

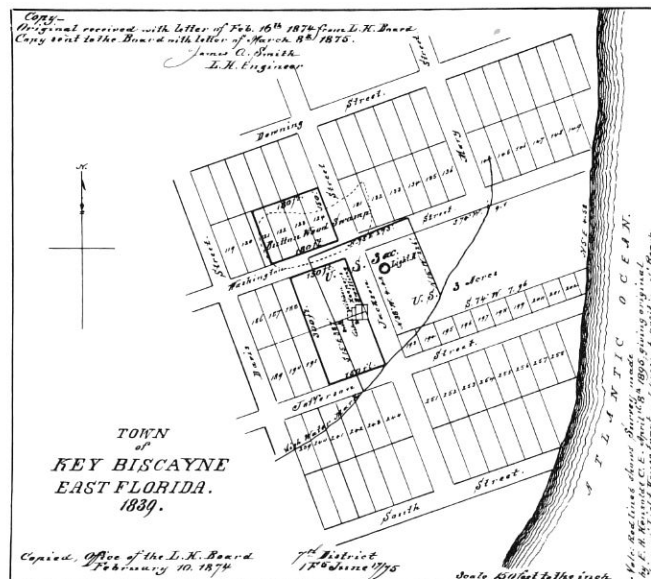
In October, 1908, William J. Matheson became a Key Biscayne landowner when he

started buying parcels of land from the Osborn and Field heirs and the Davis heirs. By 1928 Matheson and his family owned seventeen hundred of the island's twenty-one hundred acres.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, writing in the *Coconut Grove Village Post* in November, 1957, admirably describes one who loves the area as much as she: "I don't suppose anyone loved Coconut Grove and Key Biscayne better than W.J. Matheson did... He loved Key Biscayne, almost all of which he bought, the marvelous lonely beaches smoking with white water in sunlight, and the jungle where his son, Hugh Matheson, set out thousands and thousands of coconut palms."

His childhood was remarkably diverse, born in Wisconsin, lived as the son of a sugar planter in British Guiana and schooled at St. Andrew's and the University of St. Andrew in Scotland. Just as varied was his adult life. Matheson was a man of action, a man of many interesting facets, intelligent and amazingly far-sighted. All this spelled success and wealth, thus enabling him to pursue interests denied most people.

Commodore Matheson decided to make a paradise of Key Biscayne. He filled swamp areas, dug canals, built yacht basins, introduced rare and unusual plants like the Norfolk



First plat for Town of Key Biscayne



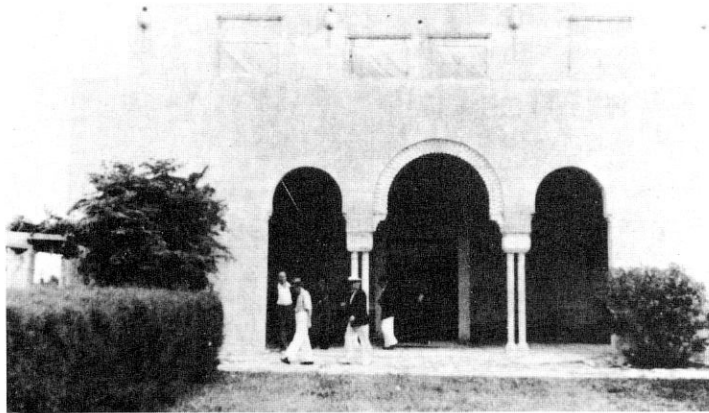
Palm trees on Key Biscayne.

Island pine, the baobab tree from Africa, and many varieties of palms and flowering trees, and cleared roadways.

To accomplish this dream meant employees and their families living and forming a new community on the island. Sturdy wooden houses resting on firm legs, with open porches and high pitched roofs were built with the climate in mind, including the winds of hurricane force.

A great house was built on the ocean surrounded by the smaller homes, the barn, the building used as a schoolhouse in the early days, storage buildings, equipment and potting sheds, even a commissary on the Hacienda Inlet. With the palms swaying in the tropical breeze, the delightful climate of 25° 47' N. latitude with the Gulf Stream flowing off shore, the relaxed easy way of life was reminiscent of the Pacific Islands.

It was in this rather Polynesian atmosphere that Matheson built his "Mashta" house, copied from the Moorish style he admired while sightseeing on the Nile River in Egypt. Built in 1917, the large Oriental house, incongruous in this setting,



Mashta, Commodore W. J. Matheson's Moorish-style mansion.

was a well-known landmark on the bayside of the island and the scene for idyllic vacations and parties.

Other than the lighthouse, this was the key's first edifice of stone and cement. In later years visitors and members of the community and the Roman Catholic Church, using the Mashta House for the site of religious services, enjoyed this interesting reminder of more glamorous days.

The boat house with its docks... the lagoon for anchorage... the spacious lawns and winding drives... the intricately carved wooden porch ornamentalions and the same painted carved wood used as a harem-like lattice screening over a north window... the floors of the main room of lovely travertine marble reputedly left over from Grand Central Station... the wonderful European showers partially encircled and sprayed the bather from several levels... the small wall safes in the bedroom walls... the large rainwater barrel in the garage... doors... windows... stairs inside and outside, up and down... What a wonderful old house it was.

In the mid-thirties more cement was poured, and poured. This was the strong two-story hurricane shelter house built just north of the old school building. An outer wall of poured concrete with sand packed in between could have meant the difference of life and death in a hurricane, but it wasn't needed before the great iron ball of the wrecking crews bounced off its wall to open the way for today's East Heather Drive.

Jose Aleman, former Minister of Education in Cuba, and the owner of 547 acres at the southern end of Key Biscayne, enclosed his bayside lands with a concrete seawall. A small lagoon was formed and bulkheaded south of the Pines Canal to protect the Maule batching plant, work boats and equipment.

Hugh, Malcolm, and Anna, the children of William Matheson, donated to Dade County the two northernmost miles of Key Biscayne. With the tireless efforts of Charles Crandon, County Commission Chairman, the causeway and Crandon Park opened November 9, 1947 to anyone with the fifty cent admission toll. John Q. Public loved every bit of the tropical splendor arranged for their pleasure and almost managed to cart it off for souvenirs before being stopped. The only things safe were the concrete toll gates and the park buildings.

In September, 1950 the combination lock was removed from the old wooden gates at the south end of the county-owned land and construction crews and prospective buyers drove through. The Mackle Company and Investors Diversified Services combined building know-how and financial backing to give the average income earner an island home. The subdivision was named Biscayne Key Estates, which led to considerable confusion.

Harry Vernon, Sr. signed a contract for a post office in the rear of his drug store and for one day mail was stamped "Biscayne Key" until the contract was rapidly revised. Almost a year after the first residents moved in, Southern Bell Telephone Company recognized the need for communication to this outpost of complaining civilization and promptly listed the area as Biscayne Key. The complaints of "no service" changed to "wrong name." Although the new phone book was almost at the printers, so much pressure was brought to bear that the island was once again recognized as Key Biscayne in the 1953 phone book.

The first 298 houses in Biscayne Key Estates expanded into a shopping center, three more subdivision names, Tropical Isle I, II, III, and a mild boom was with us. On the



W. J. Matheson

ocean front, the first villas and pool were built, followed by a hotel and the entire establishment named fittingly, The Key Biscayne Hotel and Villas. Aiding the hotel in accommodating visitors are five motels.

Next door to the hotel, the residents were entitled to a private beach area according to sales advertisements, and today 871 families enjoy the facilities, including a \$75,000 clubhouse. A community yacht club located at the Mashta House never materialized, but today the Key Biscayne Yacht Club is well known to boaters for its beautiful setting and convenience to the deep blue waters of the Stream.

When the Dade County Board of Public Instruction moved the first wooden portables onto its less than eight acres of land in the summer of 1952, the residents promptly dubbed it "The Little Dread Schoolhouse." They were delighted when a lovely new pre-cast concrete structure was dedicated in 1957.

The Community Church was first designed and used as a community meeting place, hence its appropriate name. The Key Biscayne Civic Association moved down from the open-air facilities of the County Marina, and held its argumentative meetings there. The Key Biscayne Woman's Club met there, held dances for the teen-agers, served lunches, donated glass plates and punch cups to be used by the community. The Scouts met there, voters made it their precinct polling location, the Catholics gathered to plan their new red-tiled Spanish style church.

It was truly a community center from the symbolic turning of the first shovelful of dirt the day of the groundbreaking ceremonies. These were witnessed by their Congregational members and by the Jewish Civic Association president and the Catholic president of the Key Biscayne Woman's Club. Today their active membership is proud of lovely pews, choir stalls and altar in the main building, classrooms and a large social hall.

On acreage donated by the three Mackle brothers, St. Agnes Catholic Church was built and the architecture took you back to the bygone glory of the Spaniard. Next door a most unusually designed Presbyterian Church was built with its altar in the round. St. Christopher's Episcopal serv-

ices are still being held in one of the charming small wooden buildings on the original Matheson property, but a recently erected sign on Harbor Drive near the Catholic Church announces the new site of St. Christopher.

Island House, a fourteen story co-operative apartment house mars the horizon with its towering size, and also trespasses its cement patio and pool on the beach belonging to the people of Florida. Apartments to rent and apartments to buy on the first, second and third floors are filling Sunrise Drive. Opened in December, 1965, was the Galen Beach Hotel, lovely to behold and nearly an arm's length from the curling waves of the ocean.

Today the north end of the island is a lovely expanse of public park, all the facilities enjoyed by thousands. The residential section in the middle of the Key, built from ocean to bay, offers every variety of shop and service needed from supermarkets to a medical clinic.

The south end of the island, some 100 acres, became the Bill Baggs State Park. Thanks to public sentiment, the Cape Florida Light still stands as a sentinel, from where we can look forward without fear to remembering history uncluttered by the cement of progress.



Crandon Park, looking south to the Cape Florida Light.

Off The Wall in Broward

by Stuart McIver



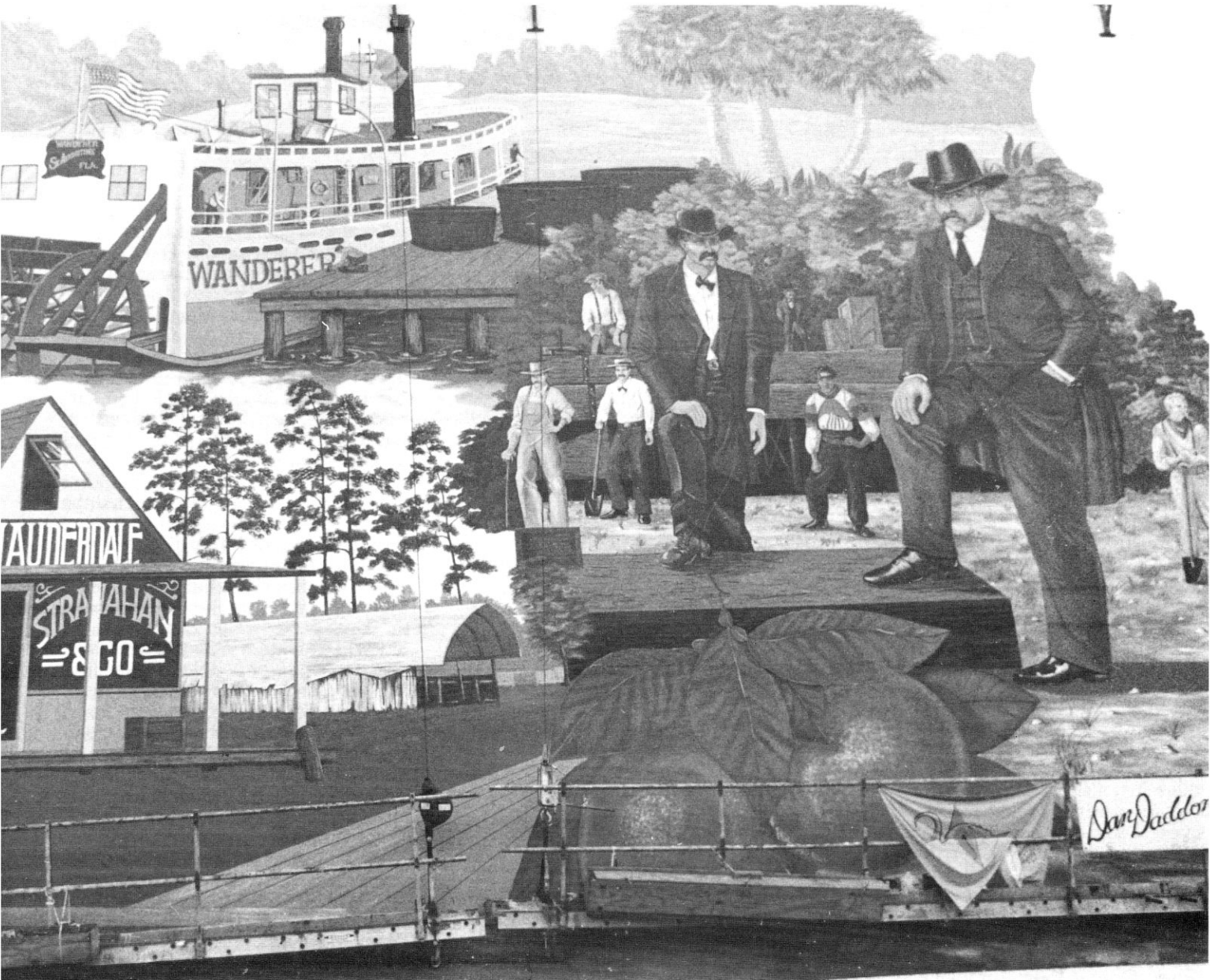
Details of completed mural:
Florida Governor, Napoleon

On downtown Fort Lauderdale's Broward Boulevard some 30,000 motorists a day drive past a 30-by-85-foot mural on the north wall of the Broward County Governmental Center parking garage.

Except when stopped by a red light, they seldom have time for more than a fleeting glance at the colorful mural depicting Broward County's history. Here is a breakdown of

the mural's elements as explained by the artist who created it, Dan Daddona.

The central figure, the artist explains, is Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, for whom the county is named. At the upper left hand corner is *Wanderer*, naturalist Charles Cory's luxurious houseboat which graced New River's waters almost a century ago.



the Stranahan Trading Post, the sternwheeler, *Wanderer*, and Bonaparte Broward.

Just below the houseboat is Frank Stranahan's New River trading post, the starting point of modern Fort Lauderdale. At the lower right hand part of the mural a 1915 scene is recreated, depicting the opening of the Dixie Highway in Dania. At the upper right is the Broward General Medical Center, established in 1938 as the county's first public hospital.

Scattered throughout the design are such typical touches as oranges, grapefruit, an egret in flight and South Florida foliage.

Daddona designed the mural at his studio in Pompano Beach. He was assisted in painting the giant picture by Vince Mrazovich, of Miami, and Phil Long of Hialeah.

(Continued from page 5)



Deep in the Big Cypress Swamp.

the expedition because of the wanton killing.

Finally, Indian agent Hanson convinced the Miccosukees to stay, and Conapatchee told the whites that if they minded their business, the snakes would mind theirs. To prove his assertion he sashayed barefoot through the throng of snakes. The mocassins, as Little Billy predicted, merely wiggled out of his way. However, it seems unlikely that this demonstration relieved most of the city-bred whites' serpent phobias, as they chopped and slogged through the swamp.

The sixth night the Trail Blazers made a dreary camp among the cypress. The next morning they broke through to a dry sawgrass prairie, but there just a short distance ahead was the dispiriting prospect of another cypress strand. Their food was practically gone. By the odometer, they were about a hundred miles from Fort Myers, but otherwise they didn't really know where they were.

On top of this mental anxiety, physically they were exhausted from hard work. One of their number was out with an ax gash and their Indian guide, Conapatchee, was apparently still missing. However, in neither of the two first-hand accounts left of the journey, was the prospect of turning back ever mentioned.

The men tore into the next strand, Robert's Lake Strand, as they had the last one. The method they employed was this. First, an advance party would blaze a trail on trees on both sides of the route striving to avoid big timber and, of course, coming through in the shortest route. Ax men would then

chop out the pole cypresses and corodroy the trail where necessary. When a half a mile of trail was clear, the car would be brought up, generally with a lightweight such as hundred-ten-pound Russell Kay driving "like a command pilot," gunning the engine to keep from bogging down as he negotiated the numerous hairpin turns big timber necessitated in the trail. All this was accompanied by the necessary incantations such as "Give her hell" and "Step on her."

Over the rough spots a half dozen more fellows might have to lend their backs as well as their oaths. One of the handy things about exploring in a Model T was that when the light car became hopelessly bogged a gang of men could simply lift them out and move them to an area of the trail with firmer botton.

They remained in Robert's Lake Strand for two nights. In the meantime, they sent three members of the party on ahead to get word out to the anxious family members and to plump for relief supplies. Fortunately, Assumhatchee had killed several deer, which was good because otherwise their provisions had just about given out. Only a little coffee was left.

However, as they stumbled into the pole cypress on the edge of the strand, prospects seem to improve immeasurably. A rifle shot was heard. This turned out to be a signal from the three members of a surveying crew which the advance party had told of their plight. The surveyors gave the Blazers some much-needed gasoline and invited them to their camp twelve miles away.

Presumably, the members of the

expedition believed their ordeal pretty much over at this point. Close observers among them, however, had noted the truck the surveyors drove had double wheels bolted to each tire hub. The upshot would prove the use for dual tires, but for the moment, the Trail Blazers bumped across the roughest country they had yet encountered as huge limestone outcroppings had to be negotiated at every turn.

Finally, it was with a sense of relief that they entered the by-now familiar world of the cypress strand, which seemed especially cordial because of their false belief that the surveyors' camp was nearby. They shortly became disabused of that idea when they encountered the rescue party's truck mired in the mud. Although two cars were able to get through to the surveyors' camp, most of the Trail Blazers slept, once again, in their cars strung out through the cypress strand.

When the sun rose on Friday, the tenth day out, the vanguard found they were only five miles from the end of the road grade as far as it had been completed west of Miami. The surveyors shared what provisions they had but, unfortunately, they too had an almost empty larder.

Still, the explorers' position didn't look too bad. Once they extracted the rest of their autos from the swamp, they had to cross only five miles of marl prairie to return to what they began facetiously calling the United States.

Unexpected relief came from the sky when aviators W.A. Carr and N.C. Torstensen swooped down to a landing and handed over five big sacks of bread and canned goods, sent courtesy of the Miami Chamber of Commerce. The aviators promised to return with gasoline, so the explorers spent the rest of the day retrieving their automobiles from the swamp.

Even though thunderheads had been billowing over the Everglades the past several days, the following day was devoted to resting up and composing a ditty the explorers planned to sing once they arrived in Miami. After all, they only had five miles to go across one of those fast-traveling marl prairies. Indeed a Mr. Cook, evidently one of the surveyors, had warned them that that the five miles was tough going, but his warning struck no fear in the explorers' hearts. After all, he hadn't crossed the terrain they had.

On Saturday, their twelfth day out, the convoy started its engines early and it was hoped for the last time on this trek. But they hadn't gone far when they found the footing became sticky, then downright soft. By noon only a mile and a half had been covered, and

all their autos had been stuck fast in the muck, although two were presently free.

At this point, Trail Blazers began defecting. For instance, Allen Andrews and five others walked to the construction camp at the end of the grade, where they cadged a good meal and a none-too-comfortable night's sleep. After dark the clouds finally opened and deposited the deluge that been threatening for days. Water was standing everywhere the next morning. It was too much for Andrews. He hitched a ride into town and treated himself with a shave and a bath in Miami Hotel and then, for amusement, sat down to read the news accounts of the trek. Andrews could hardly have read them all for an estimated 35,000 front-page columns were devoted to the Trail Blazers by American and European papers. But what he did read bore little resemblance to the journey he'd undergone. The newswriters used their imaginations to supply the needed verbage. Some reported that the expedition was fighting for its life against wild animals, alligators, and snakes. Another account told of their being taken captive by Indians.

After several days of sightseeing in Miami, the dissident faction was distressed to learn the expedition's cars were still marooned on that last stretch of sawgrass prairie. They determined to try bolting an extra set of wheels to each hub. The necessary equipment was sent out along with a fresh crew of men. Finally, on Saturday, April 22, all the Model T's were extricated. They'd been stuck on that last stretch of prairie for an entire week.

On Sunday, April 23, two and a half weeks after their departure from Fort Myers, the seven Model T's, with a few dented fenders, but otherwise in remarkably good shape formed a procession down Flager Street. The newsreel camera whirled.

The president of the Miami Chamber of Commerce waited at the waterfront park for the Trail Blazers to sing the ditties they had written. But there was no singing; the Trail Blazers were too tuckered out to sing their ditties they had composed in camp especially for the occasion. It isn't known if William Jennings Bryant was present, but his jug of grape juice had long since been guzzled by thirsty Trail Blazers.

In the last analysis one might ask what the Trail Blazers really accomplished. So far as their aim to show the automobile had a natural affinity for the South Florida swamps, the decision was probably split. True, the Model T had bested the last natural barriers to machines in Florida, but the Trail Blazers' exploits were not



Airlift brings food to the Trail Blazers. Note the pilot's helmet -- a shower cap.

likely to be emulated by many.

On the publicity front, the Trail Blazers scored more closely to the mark. The Florida Legislature endorsed the Tamiami Trail as a state project and allotted many thousands of dollars to county road-building funds. However, thousands of dollars counted for a little more than spitting into the ocean compared to the enormous expenditures required to lay a causeway across those bottomless South Florida swamps and marshes. For instance, in 1924 Collier County bonded itself for \$350,000, which sum disappeared way before the road was completed.

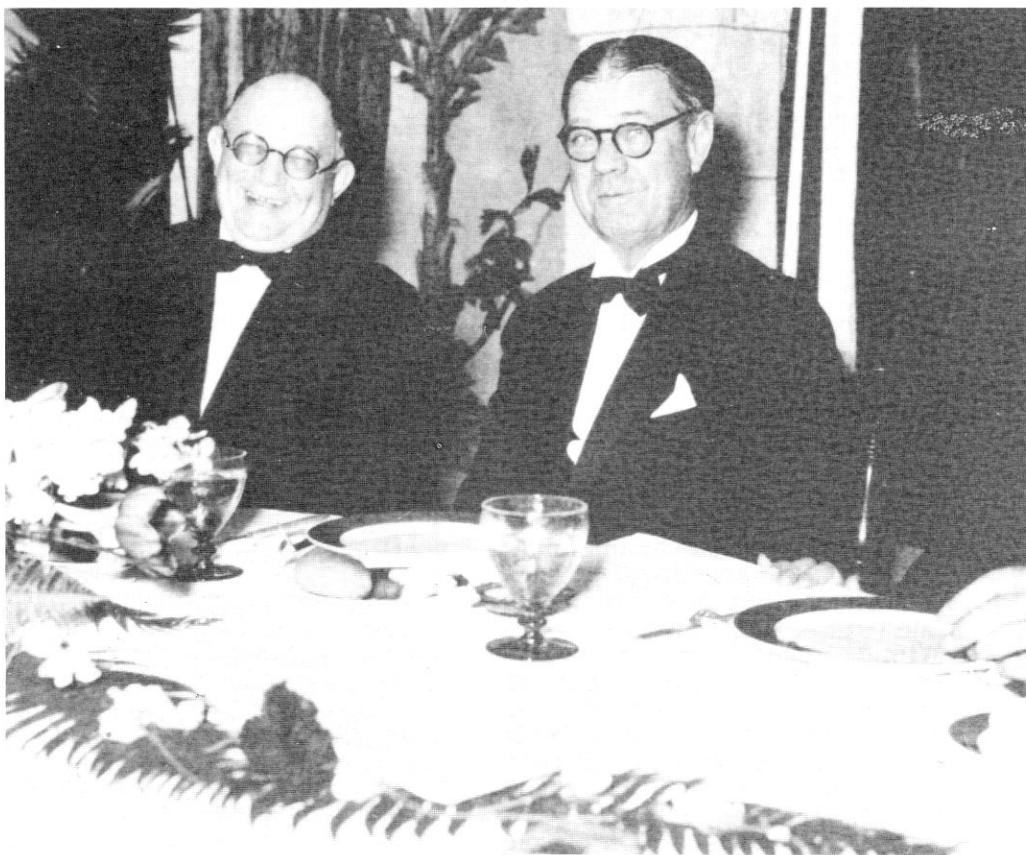
Thereafter, Barron Collier person-

ally financed the operation of the dredges through the agency of warrants. In the meantime, one of the planks in Governor Martin's platform was to complete the trail. Presumably the publicity the Trail Blazers garnered had something to do with getting that plank inserted.

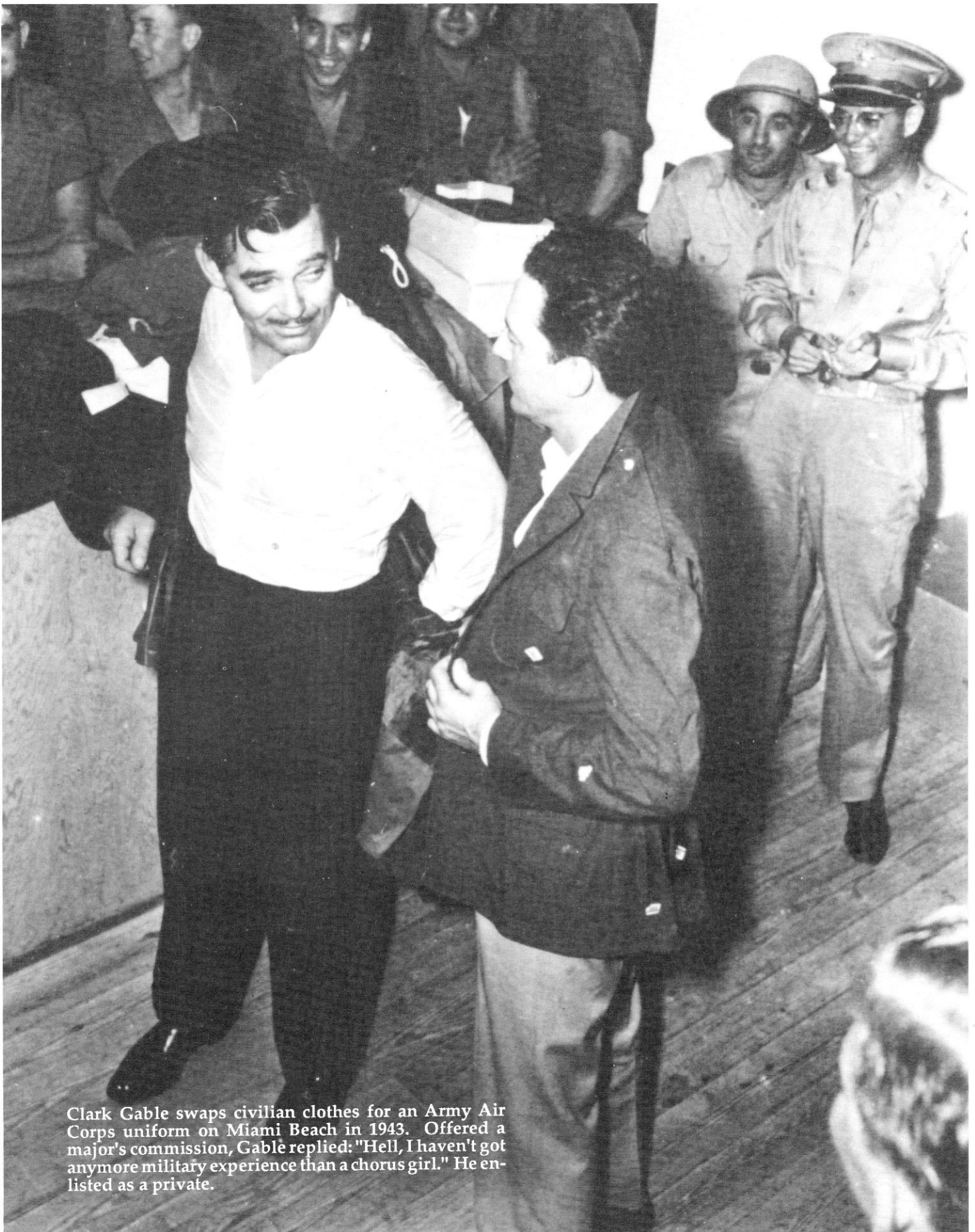
Ultimately, the state took over construction of the final twelve miles of the road in August of 1926. The Tamiami Trail officially opened on April 25, 1928, almost five years to the day after the last of the Trail Blazers' Model T's was extricated from the swamp.

Through the Lens

Tire tycoon Harvey Firestone, Sr., left, and inventor Thomas Alva Edison perch on the running board of Miami limousine, 1932.



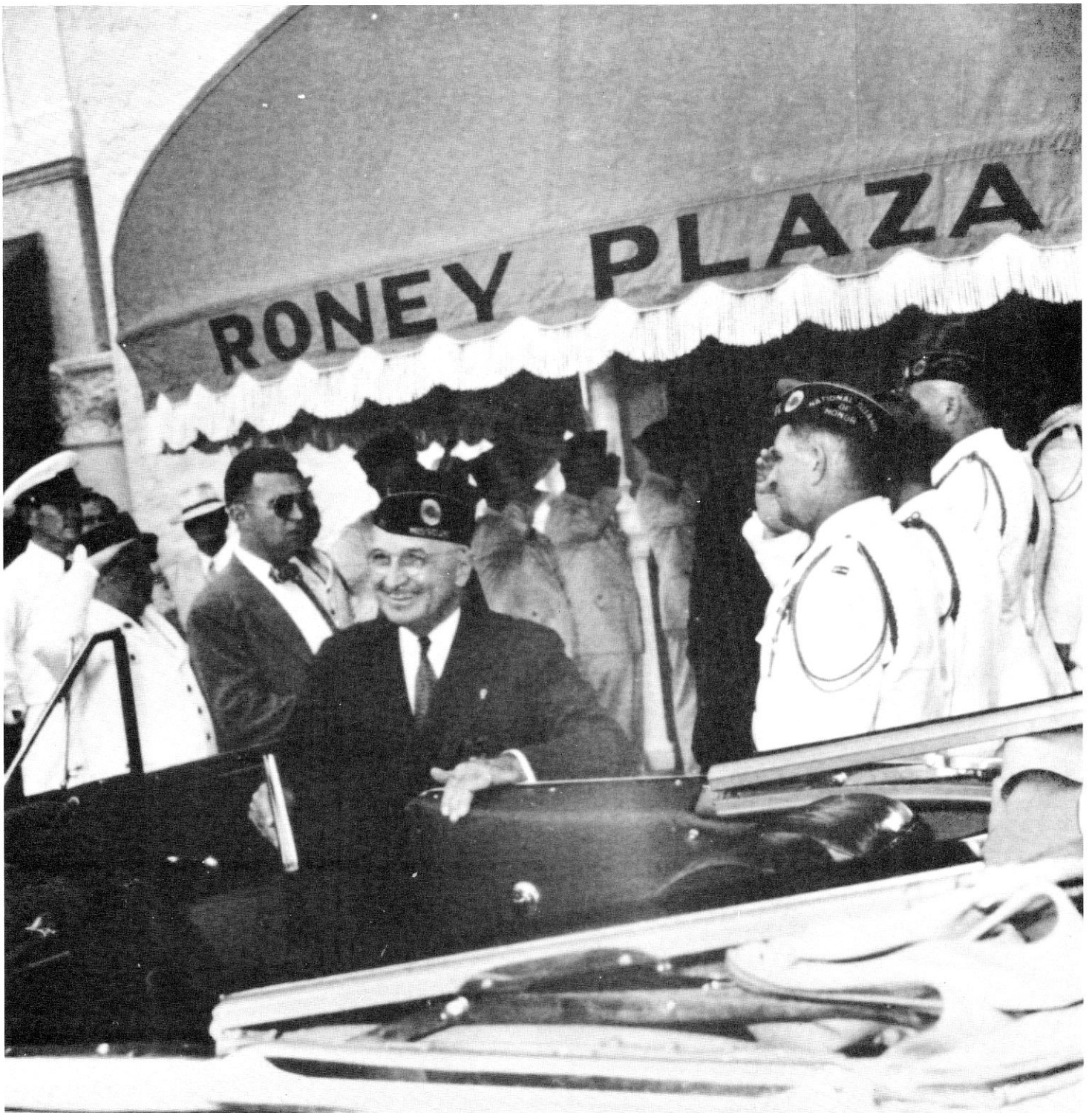
Carl Fisher, developer of Miami Beach, relaxes at a dinner meeting with Edward Romph, banker and one-time mayor of Miami.



Clark Gable swaps civilian clothes for an Army Air Corps uniform on Miami Beach in 1943. Offered a major's commission, Gable replied: "Hell, I haven't got anymore military experience than a chorus girl." He enlisted as a private.

Xavier Cugat, an orchestra leader noted for his keen appreciation of feminine beauty, presents the winning trophy to Barbara Wardell, Miss Physical Culture of 1946.





President Harry Truman visits Miami Beach's Roney Plaza Hotel in the late 1940s.



Fulgencio Batista, President of Cuba, visits Miami in July 1948, with his wife Marta Fernandez Miranda Batista.



A young, and slim, Elizabeth Taylor announces her engagement to Miami's William Pawley in 1949. The wedding never took place.

Brazilian bombshell Carmen Miranda caught in Miami without a fruit basket on her head.

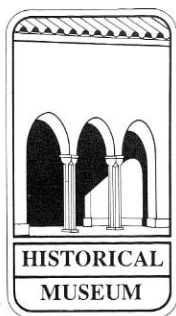




With World War II safely behind him, Winston Churchill, painter and British Prime Minister, hones his artistic skills at the Surf Club, 1946.

The Sultan of Swat, Babe Ruth, introduces Harry Welch, Jr., to the subtleties of the grip, 1948.





On the Plaza

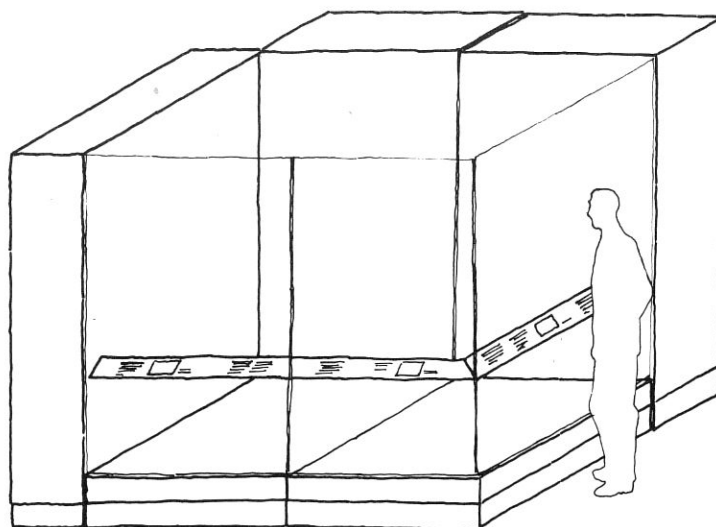
by Lee Aberman

Last June, when I talked to Andy Brian about the *MOSAIC* exhibit scheduled for 1990-1992, it was with the idea of following the development of an exhibition with a very long time frame, so that readers of "Around the Museum" could watch the evolution with a sense of participation rare to museum visitors. Because Andy, who is the *MOSAIC* Exhibit Designer, is also a Director of Exhibits and Curatorial Services at HASF, I assumed rather innocently that what we would see was the creation of a HASF exhibition, with a good look at the nuts and bolts work of the Design Department in cooperation with the Archivists, Curators, and Researchers.

Although we will indeed have the opportunity to learn a great deal about the inner workings of the Design Department and its interaction with other departments of HASF, I learned very quickly that *JEWISH MOSAIC: A FLORIDA STORY* is a vast enterprise, breathtaking in its ambition and scope, both temporal and geographic. Covering the past five hundred years but concentrating primarily on the period since 1820, the central theme of the exhibit will be the specific processes of the American immigrant experience as evidenced in the history of one ethnic group, the Jews, and their interactions with the larger, and diverse, population of non-Jews, over time, in the formation of modern Florida.

Over 1600 individual items have been identified and photographed. About 100 of these will be included in the exhibit. An ethnic survey of this scope is unparalleled in Florida's history. The exhibition is expected to constitute a critical step toward an understanding of the true nature and impact of cultural interaction in a state notable for its ethnic diversity, particularly over the last fifty or sixty years, as successive waves of migration washed over it.

Only one out of five Floridians was born here, and most of us are unaware of Florida's role as an international crossroads. A major aim of the exhibition's leadership is to mitigate



MOSAIC: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN FLORIDA

5.6 PRELIMINARY DESIGN OPTIONS
3 UNIT PANELS - 2 PLATFORMS / W. MEDIA / TEXT BAR
AND ACRYLIC COVER

Design options for Jewish Mosaic exhibition.

the alienation and antagonisms among the various groups by showing through the microcosm of one group of immigrants the problems and challenges common to all—making a living, practicing their religion, confronting a foreign culture and language, and solving the dilemma of locating the fragile territory within which assimilation and ethnic self-preservation can co-exist. To achieve this aim the exhibition will focus on the personal and human equations between and among individuals and groups. Clearly, although this is a story of the Jews in Florida, it is also a paradigm for an experience which if not universal is at least particular to the United States, and certainly to Florida.

To learn more about the progress of the exhibition as well as to find out more of what makes the exhibition's organizers tick, I talked to several of the leading actors, some of those who live in Dade County. First I went back and talked to Andy Brian again. He provided me with fascinating sketches of preliminary designs for the displays, and sent me to Pat Wickman, who is Curatorial Consultant to the exhibition, and Dr. Henry Green, the Project Director. I came away from all these interviews with immense respect for the professional competence and seriousness with which they approached their huge task.

One other thing they all had in common. I was struck by the way they all emphasized "the story" as the indispensable prerequisite for the exhibition. Andy referred to "the story

board," used in much the same way as a script is in a television play. In talking we arrived at the conclusion that the exhibition is now at the point of constructing the plot. Dr. Green, Director of Judaic Studies Program at the University of Miami, disagreed somewhat. It was his opinion that rather than constructing a plot the story is a puzzle which must be put together without knowing either the size or the location of the pieces, only that they must be put together to form a whole filled with human interest, one which would perform the educational mission of bridging ethnicities and helping to build a total community.

Pat Wickman, who in her other life was Director of Collections for the Kislak Foundation and former Senior Curator for the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee, also stressed the imperative need for a story. Every exhibition has a form of its own, she said, and you watch it emerge from the conceptual to the visual. When I mentioned to her the consistency with which everyone I had talked to had emphasized the importance of the story, she asked me if I went a lot to art museums... Oh, yes, lots, I answered, wherever we go that's the first place we head for.

"That's it," she said decisively. "In an art museum the art is the story, but in a historical exhibition many of the objects would be meaningless without an explanatory text that links them together in a cohesive and consecutive story. And the arrangement of displays is also part of the story. I see

this exhibition as a series of concentric circles, but to construct it that way we'd end up with a maze, which would create an impossible traffic pattern, so the circles—each of which will illustrate one of the exhibition's seven themes—will have to be spotted here and there."

All agreed that everything about this exhibition must be on a human scale. "The focus will be on people and families," Dr. Green said. "We don't want a history of prominent Jewish families. We'll choose some families that define particular themes, then we'll create life-size displays with artifacts that belonged to those particular people, clothes, pots and pans, books—whatever lends immediacy to the display because these things were the actual possessions of the people pictured—so that looking at the display you feel it could be your own family."

As you will see, Andy Brian's sketches for the display, too, are scaled to the height of the average man, to produce the intimacy and immediacy desired. I was reminded of the poignance of Thomas Jefferson's silk stockings and spectacles at Monticello. "He really wore them," I remember thinking. Far more moving than a roomful of the most exquisite 18th century furniture he'd never laid eyes on.

The difficulties of producing an



The Hebrew script on W. G. Roe's orange and grapefruit crate labels spells Florida. From the collection of the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee.

exhibition covering five centuries and the length and breadth of Florida can be imagined when you realize that our Historical Museum has one of the two largest display areas in the state. The entire exhibition must fit into a space no larger than 2000 square feet, with approximately 140 linear feet for additional wall displays. Yet I have not the slightest doubt that the end result will be both distinguished and memorable, and will satisfy its creators' dream of an exhibition that will bring the shock of recognition to all who see it, immigrants all, Jew and non-Jew.

(Continued from page 2)

ington Carver, orator William Jennings Bryan as well as a generic Seminole and a polo player.

Too bad we don't have a stone mountain in South Florida so we could carve out our own Mt. Rushmore. Miami's fabulous four could honor Flagler, Julia Tuttle, Carl Fisher and George Merrick. Broward County could sculpt Major Lauderdale, the Indian chief Sam Jones and early settlers Frank and Ivy Stranahan. Palm Beach could display Flagler, gambler Col. E. R. Bradley, architect Addison Mizner and social leader, Marjorie Merriweather Post.

At least, there's hope ahead. Metro-Dade's Art in Public Places has responded to the public's request for a monument of an American figure by picking a good one, even though he never set foot on Florida soil. The agency has commissioned sculptor Nelson Judson to create a statue of George Washington to stand at the Dade County Courthouse Plaza. The Father of Our Country will be a welcome addition to the South Florida landscape.

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- Special exhibitions, changing every six to eight weeks, that help increase south Floridian's understanding of their community and the world.
- Publication of two quarterlies, *Currents* and *South Florida History Magazine*, as well as the annual scholarly journal *Tequesta*.
- Education programs, ranging from historic site visits to dramatic presentations, that reach over 30,000 school children each year.
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- The Museum's folklife program enriches the entire community by discovering and preserving the traditional folkways practiced throughout our region.
- The Museum supports and encourages research into south Florida's past through publications, exhibitions and public forums, providing our community with a complete understanding of itself.
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