
Three Artists' Vision - The Federal Court House and Post Office

A Look at the WPA's Guide to Florida

An Aqua Tot Makes a Splash at the Biltmore Watershows

Personal Memories of the '26 Storm

The Historical Association of Southern Florida

UPDATE

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On the cover: Detail from Denman Fink's mural at the old Federal Courthouse and Post Office. Story on page 3.

Design commemorates opening of Post Office. See page 3.



AROUND THE MUSEUM

Railroad Days

To anyone who used to love to ride on railroad trains as much as I did, the Historical Museum's exhibition, **Rails, Tycoons, & Gales**, was a clickety-clackety nostalgia trip backward to a time when trains were spotless, porters were benign to little girls, women wore hats, gloves and traveling suits, and men wore ties. The high spot of the trip was always the visit to the dining car—napkins so vast and starched they seemed on the verge of cracking, heavy silver flatware and covers for dishes, tables for four, each with a rose in a bud vase reflected in the window. I don't really remember the food; it was the environment that mattered. Even at the time people felt the mystery and glamor of the train. Dinah Shore sang about the lonely whistle blowing down the trestle, and who can forget the face of Laura on a train that was passing by?

All of this came vividly to mind as I looked at the photographs and artifacts in the exhibit. One of the fascinations was the close connection between the development of the railroad, the steamboat passenger liners to Cuba and the Caribbean islands, and the grand hotels built in the emerging coastal resort towns. It paralleled a similar development earlier in the 19th century in England and Europe.

HASF operates under the rubric of local history. We are right to specialize in local history; it's worth doing and we do it well, as this exhibition attests. But in our concentration on the local or regional concerns, we may lose sight of the place these concerns have in broader movements of global consequence. Such an instance was our maps exhibition, which has its place in the story of the age of exploration and conquest. The exhibition focused on the role that Henry Flagler and the Florida East Coast Railway played in the development of South Florida sketches on the



No one who attended the railroad exhibition could identify the man in gray who stands second from left. Let us know if you can.

local level many facets of the Industrial Revolution.

Henry Morrison Flagler and the age of railroads were born at the same time. Barely two months before Flagler's birth in January, 1830 the memorable competition of engines on the Stockton and Darlington railway in England had seen the triumph of George Stephenson's "Rocket," which ran at the incredible speed of 30 miles an hour. The event launched the surge of railroad building that spread from England to Europe and led to the railway mania of the 1840s and 50s.

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Enlargements by: **KENYA PHOTO MURAL**





Federal Courthouse and Post Office

Monument to three Artists

BY SUSAN HALE FREEMAN

The old Federal Courthouse and Post Office stands today as a monument to three men whose artistry contributed so much not just to the building, but to Greater Miami itself. They were Phineas E. Paist, Denman Fink and Harold Steward. Built over a half century ago, the building reflects the dignity and permanency of the neo-classical style adopted by the United States Government. Tempered with local distinctiveness through the use of coral rock and the low Spanish tile roof, it is a product of a time when the architect, sculptor and artist were essential to create the finished work.

In 1928 postal officials in Miami recognized a need for expanded facilities to serve the growing area, and contracted with the Board of Public Instruction to purchase for \$440,000 the site of the Central Grammar School, land which had been donated to the School Board in 1897 by Henry Flagler. Since the full effect of the economic recession had not penetrated the community, public outcry arose. Many people felt the property value was over one million dollars. D. H. Thompson and others filed a taxpayers' suit contesting the

sale. In 1929 the suit was withdrawn after federal appropriations for the project had been approved; however, Cheeley Lumber Company filed another suit contesting the sale on the same grounds.

Despite directives from Washington giving Miami one week to agree on a site, delays continued until May 27, 1930, when the United States filed condemnation proceedings in the United States District Court. On July 17th of that year the jury established a verdict of \$440,000 for the property, plus a fee of \$1,600 for the School Board attorney.

When the Treasury Department announced that by law it could not pay the attorney's fee awarded by the jury, the School Board agreed to rescind the fee. After four extensions of time within which to make payment, the Treasury Department forwarded its check to the Clerk of the District Court, who waited for the funds to clear before exchanging his check for the hand-delivered Warranty Deed on October 8, 1930.

Since the official dedication on July 1, 1933, as a post office, courthouse and federal office building, the interior has been altered considerably,

but there remain remnants of the artistry of its architects and builders. The lobbies with their colorful high coffered ceilings lead into the main hall, which features a high vaulted ceiling, ten-foot marble wainscott and pilasters, and a formal patterned marble floor.

The only public room reflecting the abilities of its creators is the Central Courtroom located on the second floor, accessible only by way of the patio arcade. Still functioning as it was originally designed, it is impressive as to size and architectural treatment. The locally produced, hand-carved judge's bench, the jury box and other furniture of antique design lend dignity to the events which transpire in this room and the people who make them happen.

The majesty of the room is complimented by the mural on the west wall above the bench. Executed by Denman Fink, the oil on canvas measures 25' 2" x 11' 2" and is titled "Law Guides Florida Progress." Cast reliefs 6' x 9' (cast stone reinforced with plaster) executed by Alexander Sambugnac installed over the entrances on the east wall complete the decoration.

The focal point of the building's exterior is the facade fronting N.E. 1st Avenue. With entrances through small lobbies on the north and south ends, it features a projected pedestal wall visually supporting a row of attached Corinthian columns separating lofty arched windows.

Between the columns and separating first and second story windows are a series of bas-relief panels which celebrate American progress from its wilderness to 20th Century industrialization. These panels executed in the Art Deco style invite the onlooker to examine and rejoice in the accomplishments of this land and its people. On the entablature appears the inscription "U.S. Post Office and Courthouse."

In order to stimulate work in the early days of the depression, the Hoover administration had established guidelines for government construction projects, giving priority to local labor and advocating the use of local architects. Miami was the first city to benefit under this program when Phineas E. Paist and Harold D. Steward of Coral Gables were chosen to design the new project.

Phineas E. Paist, born in Franklin, Pennsylvania, in 1875, graduated from the Drexel Institute of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine art, and received the Crescent Award which enabled him to do post-graduate study in Italy. He was associate architect on the Willard Hotel, Wash-



The august Central Courtroom - home of Denman Fink's mural.

ington, D.C., that city's first skyscraper. In 1911, working with William Hewitt in Philadelphia, he designed the large third addition to the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, one of the most opulent hotels of its era.

Paist's abilities were brought to the attention of Paul Chalfin, a New York designer chosen by James Deering to be the artistic supervisor of his new estate in Miami called "Vizcaya," and in 1916 he found himself in Miami as Chalfin's personal representative and associate architect supervising work on the estate.

Paist drafted the casino plans and designed the Chinese bridge in the south gardens (also known as the "O" bridge) and the structures in the farm section of the estate. By 1924 he was associated with the dean of Miami architects, Walter DeGarmo, and was working on the Douglas Entrance project with Denman Fink. Paist the architect joined with Fink the designer and Merrick the developer to build Coral Gables.

Paist became supervising architect for the Coral Gables Corporation, and within a four-month period in 1925 (August 28 - December 30) the City of Coral Gables issued over fifty building permits to Phineas E. Paist. Included were plans prepared for 34

private residences, one hotel, a private school, a riding academy, rectory, warehouse, three office buildings and a field sales office.

By 1926 Paist was joined by a young man named Harold D. Steward. He had worked as a draftsman in DeGarmo's office. Born in Asbury Park, New Jersey, in 1896, Steward had graduated from Syracuse University and served in the Navy during the First World War. Steward worked with Paist on projects of the Coral Gables Corporation such as the Colonnade Building (Denman Fink and Paul Chalfin, designers), which was the corporation's sales office, the San Sebastian Apartments at 333 University Drive, the Art Center Building at 2901 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, and the Coral Gables City Hall (Paist and Fink, architects).

Not to be overlooked is their association with the University of Miami. Paist, Denman Fink and Paul Chalfin were appointed to the Board of Consulting Architects for the University in April, 1925, and Paist, Steward and Fink designed its first building, dedicated to the memory of Solomon Merrick, George's father. Construction began in 1926 but was halted by the September hurricane.

The building remained unfinished for the next two decades.

Denman Fink, the artist of the mural in the courtroom, was born in Springdale, Pennsylvania, in 1881. He attended the Pittsburgh School of Design, Museum School of Fine Arts and the New York Art Students League, and was an established artist before coming to Florida from Haworth, New Jersey, to join his nephews, George Merrick and H. George Fink, in planning a new city.

While Denman Fink sketched fountains, gateways and plazas, George Fink designed tropical bungalows of stucco and native coral rock and Merrick subdivided his farm which he called "Coral Gables Plantation," bought additional land and enlisted financial backers. Merrick did not begin to sell his project until his vision was laid out on paper, a residential community with wide boulevards, grand entrances and plazas based on a mixture of Spanish, Italian, Venetian and Moorish designs.

When Coral Gables Corporation was formed in 1925, Denman Fink was named art director, leading a planning board composed of architects, artists and builders which approved every proposed structure.



The Mediterranean inspired interior court yard at the Federal Courthouse.

The City of Coral Gables was simultaneously incorporated. Its first city commission, composed principally of corporate officers, undertook to supervise and regulate the visions of George Merrick through its Board of Architects. Denman Fink played a dominant role.

Fink consulted with all architects designing in Coral Gables, sometimes collaborating with them as in the Douglas Entrance, Colonnade Building, Coral Gables City Hall and the unfinished Merrick Building. Often he did the actual designing himself as in the Granada Entrance, Country Club Prado Entrance, Gladeside Entrance and the DeSoto Fountain. Fink created the Venetian Pool, from a rockpit, visualizing a swimming pool with a grotto, bridge, beach and casino which was to become world renowned through the publicity of the Coral Gables Corporation.

In April, 1925, Fink was appointed to the Board of Consulting Architects for the University of Miami, and in 1927 joined the University as a member of the faculty of the School of Architecture.

Fink's collaboration with Phineas Paist had been long and productive and it was not surprising that Paist

and Steward turned to him to fulfill the design in the courtroom. It was the duty of the architect to choose the artist.

Fran Rowin in her article, "New Deal Murals in Florida Post Offices," published in *Update*, February 1977, recounts the events which followed. New regulations of the Roosevelt administration removed art work decisions from the architects to competitions sponsored by the Treasury Department. Architects Paist and Steward were among the jurists, but the state supervisor judged all entries, including Fink's, as "failing to measure up to Section standards."

A new competition was open to all artists from the fourteen southeastern United States, but a New York artist was requested to submit designs for the mural. It took local protest and the combined intervention of Florida's Senators Claude Pepper and Charles S. Andrews before a new competition was arranged. Denman Fink's sketch was chosen. The finished mural was installed on February 28, 1941.

A common practice of mural artists is to include familiar faces in their work, and in the courtroom mural Denman Fink depicted Phineas Paist

in the lower right corner. The young man centered on the canvas bears a striking resemblance to George Merrick, reported to have shipped the first box of grapefruit to New York from Dade County. In 1938 George E. Merrick was appointed postmaster and worked in the building created by his closest artistic associates until his death in 1942.

The Chicago firm of Ralph Sollit & Sons Construction Co. was appointed as general contractor, and, heeding federal policy, delegated much of the work to Miami firms. Among them were Alexander Orr, Jr., Inc., which did the finishing work, the heating and refrigeration installation, gas fitting and provided cafeteria equipment, and John B. Orr, Inc., which received one of the largest contracts for supplying, cutting, carving and installing rock facing.

The limestone was quarried at Windley Key, three miles north of Islamorada. John and Alexander were two of nine sons of Alexander Orr, a master craftsman who had emigrated from Scotland and arrived in Miami in 1918.

The later work of Paist and Steward included private homes both in Coral Gables and Miami Beach, the Coral Gables Women's Club and Library and the \$1,000,000 Liberty Square Housing Project. Phineas E. Paist died May 2, 1937.

In 1949 the University of Miami completed construction on its Merrick Building. At the specific request of its President the original concept of Paist and Fink was followed and the name retained. The building functions as an integral part of the University today and contains the Schools of Education, Continuing Studies and the Departments of Psychology and Sociology.

Denman Fink remained with the University of Miami until his retirement from the position as head of the Art Department in 1952. During his long career he was a prolific artist, producing magazine illustration, portraits of early South Floridians, paintings and murals which enhance public and private places, including the Commissioners' room at Coral Gables City Hall. He exhibited at the National Academy of Design, American Water Color Society, City Art Museum of St. Louis, the Corcoran Gallery and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Susan Hale Freeman was awarded the Judith Seymour Memorial Scholarship in Historic Preservation in 1983.



Cover of 1984 edition WPA Guide

Florida Guide Revisited

BY DAVID KAUFELT

Recently, a producer of a potential television series about famous American writers asked me to take her on a tour of Key West writers' houses. We started with Key West's southernmost house, built by Thelma Strabel in the '40s after she earned a large sum in Hollywood turning her period Key West novel, *Reap the Wild Wind*, into a successful film scenario.

I asked the producer if she had, by chance, read the book, and the woman looked at me with a gimlet eye and said, "I only read lit-er-a-ture." I asked her, quite seriously, how she could tell what was literature and what was not but her answer, if any, was lost as we went on to a presumably more literature-oriented writer's house. I thought of this when I was asked for an assessment of *Florida, A Guide to the Southernmost State* as a genre form of literature for a seminar on the state guidebook produced by the Federal Writer's Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA); the Florida guidebook was written and compiled in 1939. The seminar was sponsored by the "Florida Endowment for the Humanities" and organized by the Florida Center for the Book.

Webster says literature is "writing, having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest." In that event, *Reap the Wild Wind* is not literature - no ideas of permanent or universal interest there except for a little dubious Key West history, mostly mere entertainment. However, I'm pleased to report that the Guide is chuck full of ideas virtually everyone interested in Florida's history would find of permanent interest.

As travel literature, the tour section—by no means

totally dated—gives social information often masked as tourist stuff. For instance, in the pages devoted to Palm Beach, the guide tells us there are but two movie houses in that city and those only open in winter which leads us to believe 1930s Palm Beach summers are a touch on the quiet side. Later, buried between two paragraphs describing lah-de-dah social events, there is this stopper of a sentence: "Palm Beach has no Negro settlement and Negroes are not allowed on the streets after dark unless actively employed in the city."

As a matter of fact, one of the most revealing (and quite deliberately so, I suspect) aspects of the guide is its thorough indictment of the shameful way in which blacks are almost uniformly treated in 1930s Florida—usually by merely reporting devastating discriminatory practices. One of the numerous nuggets of information the Guide gives in its historical section is the way in which blacks—presumably brought in as slaves by the British during their twenty year occupation—were treated during the second Spanish occupation, circa 1810; black children could attend the St. Augustine school but they had to sit by the door.

One of the great virtues of the Guide as travel literature is the consistently provocative information it provides, even when the prose is not quite up to the subject. One had to be on the dole to write for the Guide so in addition to the Ralph Ellisons, Zora Neale Hurstons, Studs Terkels and Stetson Kennedys, a certain number of "near" and "occasional" writers filled the ranks, according to Director Henry G. Alsberg. Here's what they wrote about St. Petersburg: "...more than 5,000 green benches, in recreation centers and flanking the sidewalks of the principal thoroughfares, have converted the city into a park. The benches are open-air offices of the promoter, the hunting grounds of the real-estate bird dog, a haven for the lonely, and a matrimonial bureau for many. They have figured in fiction, swindles, and divorce courts."

There are any number of such evocative observations, found especially riveting despite its work-a-day prose, a description of the Tin Can Tourists of the World's annual winter season which begins with a homecoming in Sarasota, moves on to Thanksgiving in Dade City (see Tour 22) and peaks with Yuletide at the Arcadia Municipal Tourist Camp.

The first section of the Guide is devoted to an overview of Florida and is entitled, appropriately, *Florida's Background*. Archaeology and Indians, Folklore, Music and Theater Art, architecture and literature are among the subjects succinctly and often trenchantly covered. Though the narrative has a sometimes irritating homogeneous and removed tone to it, there is no doubt that the feelings behind what some of those near writers must have thought of as appropriate travel-book-ese are passionate. I am a sports illiterate, but the chapter on Sports and Recreation caught even my limited attention, especially those rhapsodic lists of fish and small furbearing animals—red and grayfox, skunk, raccoon, possum, the otter—available for visiting hunters.

I found that despite the multiplicity of subjects covered, the thread connecting all of them—ethnology, zoology, anthropology, sociology, advice on roads and tours and parks and cities—is the history of Florida. Each section hangs its muscles on the skeleton of Florida's past and if one reads the Guide from cover to cover, a historic entity has taken form. If one is to write a historical novel with Florida in mind, a writer could do no better than to start and perhaps finish with the Guide. The chronology is one of the best I've come across and virtually each entry in the tour section describing Florida cities contains enough information for half a dozen novels.

continued on page 14



Little Jackie Ott takes a fast ride in the Biltmore pool.

Stars Glistened in Biltmore Watershows

BY SUSAN PETERSON

Early one morning in 1926 a young boy launched his home-made sailboat on Seybold's Canal. He embarked on a solitary adventure that took him down the Miami River, across Biscayne Bay and back in time for dinner. His mother didn't believe him when he told her about it that evening.

At age eight he was already a retired movie star, famous across America for his daredevil stunts which were recorded on many newsreels. The boy's name? Jackie Ott.

The World's Most Perfect Baby was a title awarded to Jackie when he was four years old. He had won a series of beautiful baby contests, culminating in a victory over 17,000 other children at Madison Square Garden in New York. By then he was already a show business veteran.

His parents, Grace and Alexander Ott, raised their son to be a star. Jackie could swim before he learned to walk. He first appeared as an "Aquatot" in his father's watershows at the Royal Palm Hotel around 1920.

By the time he was three, Jackie was the darling of celebrities who visited the Roney Plaza in Miami Beach, where Alexander Ott was director of the Roman Pools. Wire service photos show young Jackie

boxing with Jack Dempsey, kissing movie star Bebe Daniels, posing with a dozen women swimming champions who traveled from New York to train and compete in Florida.

In 1924 George E. Merrick engaged Alexander Ott to put on watershows at his Venetian Pool that would attract people out to Coral Gables. The concept was successful and thousands of people attended on weekends. Jackie Ott performed in the shows, aquaplaning and diving through fire from the age of four. Wirephotos and newsreels made Alexander Ott's Miami watershows famous throughout America.

In the summer of 1924 Jackie Ott was "discovered" and spent several months in New York acting in the silent movie, "Born Rich," with Bert Lytell, Claire Windsor, Cullen Landis and J. Barney Sherry. Still photographs from the filming of "Born Rich" show Jackie climbing hand over hand down a 60-foot rope from the third story window of a mansion. The film got good reviews.

He was scheduled to make another film, "Shooting Stars," but an automobile accident in 1925 ended his movie career. He went through the windshield of a car in Coral Gables.

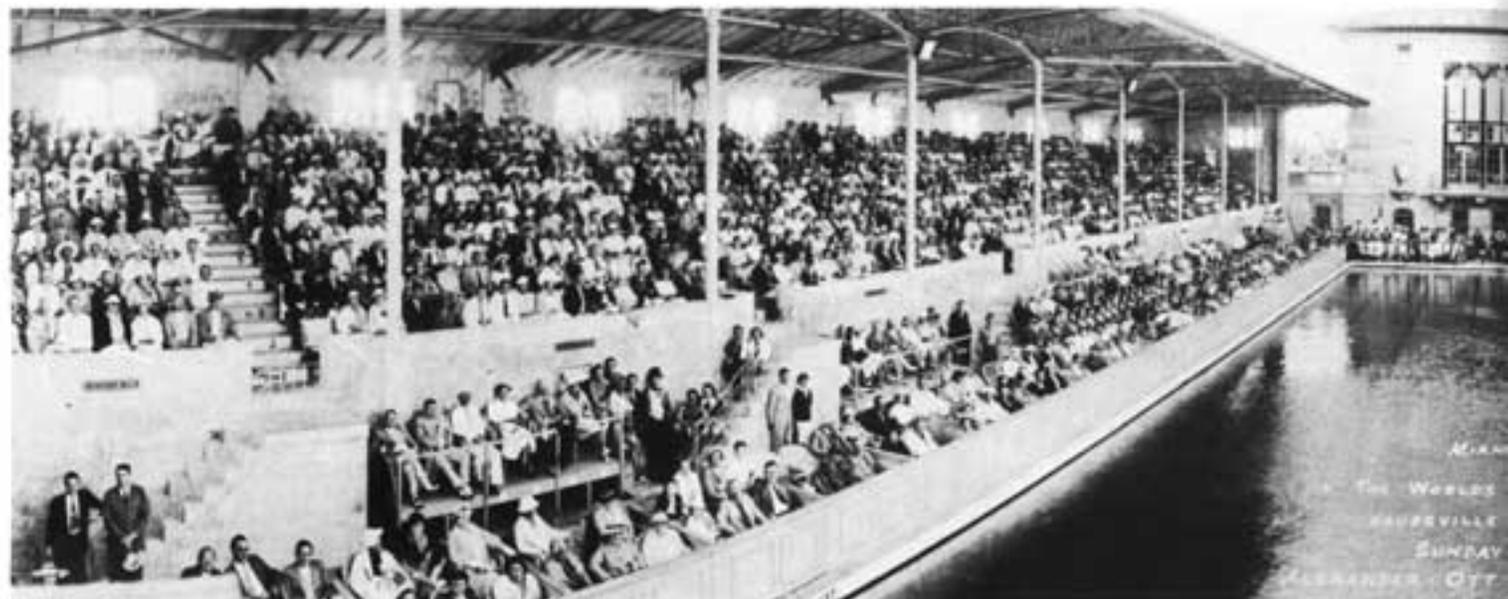
The Ott's moved to the Opa-locka

Pool in 1927 under contract to Glenn H. Curtiss, and put on watershows there until George E. Merrick made them an offer to put on watershows at the Miami Biltmore pools. First class room and board for the Ott family was written into every contract. Jackie Ott lived at the Biltmore Hotel with his parents from age ten until he graduated from the University of Miami.

From 1928 to 1942 Alexander Ott produced watershows at the Biltmore Hotel. From the beginning they were successful and drew audiences of as many as 3,000 every Sunday afternoon during the season from December through April. The swimming and diving stars and other performers who had worked with Ott at his previous successful shows followed him to the Biltmore.

Jackie Ott appeared on an early Biltmore watershow poster as "Miami's Favorite Water Star." "Alligator Jack" Coppinger received top billing for "WRESTLING 9-FT. LIVE EVERGLADES AMPHIBIAN."

Alexander Ott's winning formula of "comedy, contests, thrills and exhibitions" drew capacity crowds. His watershows were regularly featured in newsreels which showed famous swimmers setting many new American and world records at the



William J. Fallon's 1937 photograph captures the grandiose watershow. See if you can find clown Emmet

Biltmore.

Along with the swimming, diving and water comedy events, there were vaudeville acts by top circus performers like Emmett Kelly and the Wallendas, famous aerialists.

Emmett Kelly, the Barnum and Bailey circus clown who performed at the shows for about six years, would roam the grandstands. During a lull in the watershow events, Ott recalled, "You'd hear the people roar with laughter because he would come up with some crazy stunt."

Beauty contests on a grand scale were held at the watershows, including the Miss Miami and Miss Florida contests, along with baby fashion shows, ballet, acrobatic acts—even poolside weddings. All were accompanied by singers and orchestras and announced by Alexander Ott himself, who always M.C.'d.

"We had all kinds of fashion shows," Jackie Ott says. . . . "The orchestra would play 'Easter Bonnet' and these girls would come walking out. There'd always be some singer that would be ready to sing that song and when these girls came out it would just make you feel really great."

Alexander Ott's style of announcing was an important part of the show's excitement. Jack Ott explains: "Before my dad got through introducing a swimmer or diver the people would actually feel like they knew that diver intimately because he would say: 'Look, Folks, look at that big smile on that boy up there on the tower; that's Hank Akers, our diving champion,'" and Hank would come out with a big smile, and he'd laugh

and my dad would kid him about his girlfriend and so forth. When the people saw Hank Akers they would always have the feeling that they knew him personally. He did that with all the performers and after awhile you just seemed to know everybody in that show."

Grace Ott organized everything and, according to Jack Ott, she was the "brains of the Ott family." She kept records, corresponded with the performers, planned publicity and advised her husband. Mrs. Ott was in charge of the beauty contests and fashion show models. Every consultant had to pass an interview with her.

Another popular event was "human fishing." Celebrities and athletes pitted their skills as anglers against the top swimmers of the day. A 1930 article about human fishing at the Biltmore pools tells how it was done:

"Human fishing is not half as gruesome as it sounds. To play, you need only a good strong swimmer, light salt water tackle, . . . a bit of white rag and an expertness with your equipment. Your fish you truss up in a strong leather shoulder harness to the back of which is attached your line, usually of about 18-pound test. Seven feet from the fish, the bit of rag is tied to the line . . ."

Your "fish" now jumps in, having been given about a 40-foot handicap. At the crack of a starter's gun the battle begins.

"A human fish is considered landed when the bit of white rag touches the tip of the fisherman's rod. Six

minutes are usually allowed for the contest, but if you have tackled a good strong "fish" like Stubby Kruger, Ralph Flanagan or some other worthy foe, the chances are you'll be in the pool with the fish before six minutes have elapsed."

Alexander Ott, one of the best human fishermen in the business, used to fish for Johnny Weismuller, the champion human "fish" of all time. Noted "fish" available in these waters that winter included, besides Kruger and Flanagan, Georgia Coleman Gilson, the Olympic diving champion, Pete Desjardins, men's Olympic diving champion in 1928, and Captain Bob Finnegan, underwater star.

Early show posters and clippings list a program of eight vaudeville acts and twelve water events. By 1940, the showposter lists "25 - SENSATIONAL ACTS - 25." The posters were painted by Captain Finnegan, whose "Secret Service" act involved

Jack Coppinger vanquishes an alligator.





Kelly.

walking underwater while carrying bags of cement.

Admission to the show was 50 cents, reserved seats one dollar and boxes two dollars a ticket, with prices slightly higher by the '40s. Some seats in the section reserved for celebrities cost ten dollars.

After the watershow tea dances were held on the downstairs patio, with dancing to popular music. "We all looked forward to taking our good looking girlfriends into the tea dance and having a drink and dancing there with some of the top bands," Jack Ott said. Drinks were served instead of tea and the dances were attended by members of the watershow audience, hotel guests and watershow performers.

Alexander Ott's watershows made money for the hotel. Said Jack Ott: "My dad was the only one really writing his figures in black ink at the Biltmore."

Alexander Ott persuaded owner



Grace Doherty, widow of the head of Cities Service Oil, to build grandstands and expand the seating capacity to 3,000 seats protected from rain.

One clipping from the Fort Lauderdale Swimming Hall of Fame collection describes the opening of the new swimming stadium at the Biltmore: "Biltmore Books Big Water Card."

"A gala water sports program, dedicating the new beautiful stadium overlooking the pool, is scheduled for the Miami Biltmore today at 3:15."

"Alexander Ott, director of water sports, has arranged for two numbers from the Biltmore Supper Club floor show to appear on an eight-act vaudeville program and promises some of the best aquatic events seen here this season."

"High diving from the 90-foot tower, waltzing in the water, diving exhibitions by national stars, greasy pole walking and numerous other events will be presented. An attempt will be made by Captain Finnegan to swim 100 meters under water . . . Stubby Kruger, ace water comedian, and Peter Desjardins, Olympic champion, will present the famous comedy routine put on by the Kruger-Johnny Weismuller combination in former years."

Tom Sellers, whose real name was Sol Solomon, held the record as world's highest diver. He was a regular performer in the Biltmore watershows. Since the pool was only nine feet deep, his dive from a 150-foot ladder was quite a dangerous event.

Other divers used the high ladder. Some were injured. Jackie Ott was used to doing 85-foot fire dives from

the ladder at the age of twelve.

The best competitive swimmers and divers of the era appeared in the amateur section of the watershow program, setting records and generating publicity. Katherine Rawls, Ralph Flanagan and Pete Desjardins were the local Olympians of the '30s, and Mary Hoerger, national diving champion at age eleven, was Miami's next famous "water baby" after Jackie Ott. Her sister Helen, and Katherine Rawl's sister Peggy became third-generation aquatots with their high dives at age five.

In a 1939 article for the *New York Journal and American*, sports journalist Paul Gallico wrote: "The newspapers have been using the swimmers as circulation-pullers just as the real-estate promoting corporations in Florida, California and New York have been using them for years . . . on this publicity women's swimming built itself up from the semi-private meets held in tiny indoor pools to a huge and successful sports attraction that upon several occasions has drawn more spectators than a heavyweight prizefight . . . this beauty chorus of the sports world had an amazing development during the wild days after the war, the era of gold, coincident with the great Florida boom."

"The real-estate promoters of that happy land were not dumb. They imported whole troupes and circuses of women swimming stars, all expenses paid, suitably chaperoned and properly attested to by the A.A.U., always glad to aid a worthy cause."

"Meet after meet was staged with the promise of broken records as the

announced lure. In one afternoon at the Miami-Biltmore pool they created twenty-five new records. Every time an old record fell, there was free publicity in the newspapers, with the pool of the development, Coral Gables, Roney Plaza, Miami Biltmore, or Palm Beach, mentioned prominently. The crowds packed the



The Ott family: Alex, Grace, and Jackie

pools . . . to see the latest athletic phenomena—which didn't hurt the pictures or the advertisements any."

Stubby Kruger performed in watershows most of his life until the late 1950s and worked as a movie stuntman in over fifty films, including "Mutiny on the Bounty." His last film role was as Spencer Tracy's stand-in for "The Old Man and the Sea."

The watershows grew every year. By 1940 when there were 25 acts, Crooner Rudy Vallee said: "It's the best show in Miami."

A showposter from that year lists nine famous divers including Olympians Desjardins and Marshall Wayne, with specialty divers Charlie Diehl, "heavyweight diving king," Tony Zukas, "daring acrobatic diver," and Don Grubbs, southeast champion.

Jackie Ott, Frank Snary and Ted Wingstrom were billed as "Internationally Famous Water Clowns." Also appearing in that show were Earl Montgomery - "U.S. Secret Service Operating Under Water," and John (Apollo) Grimek as "World's most perfectly developed man. In an amazing muscle control act."

Tarzan streaks



Johnny "Tarzan" Weismuller (right) chats with (left-right) swimmers Arne Borg, Helen Meaney and Jackie Ott.

Johnny Weismuller, who also stayed at the hotel, upset the manager with his hijinks. Jack Ott recalls: "We had Johnny at the hotel one night and the manager of the hotel was getting pretty angry at my dad because he caught Weismuller on one of the floors running around in the nude up there. But he was a crazy guy, like a big kid and he enjoyed doing crazy things."

"That Tarzan yell I think was actually his yell, because he had the ability to make a noise like a siren. I remember going to the West Flagler Kennel Club one night. I rode out with Johnny in his car and he would make that siren noise and the car in front of him would pull over like we were a police car, you know, and we got a big kick out of it."

Alligator wrestling ("Battling a Savage Man-Eating Alligator in the Pool!") rounded out the program. There was also water ballet by "Lovely Mermaids Waltzing In The Water" and music by Michael Marvin's band.

The Great Wallendas received top billing in this show: "Stars of Ringling Brother's Circus . . . See them in a dare devil high wire act 70 feet above the water . . . defying death!"

A beach wear fashion show was announced along with a preview of the Miss Florida contest: "COMING! MISS FLORIDA CONTEST, MARCH 5 . . . 260 Girls Competing for Beauty Honors. Girls! Register Now With Mrs. Ott, at Biltmore Pools."

What happened to the Biltmore watershows? World War Two intervened, and in 1942 the hotel became a military hospital. Jack Ott graduated from the University of Miami that same year and enrolled in the Naval Air Force.

Before he left for the service he

built his father a 28-foot sport fishing boat named **Shark** in the driveway of their home. Alexander Ott began a new career as a charter captain specializing in shark fishing. After a long and successful career in the fishing charter business he retired. He died at age 81, within a month of the death of his beloved wife Grace.

Jack Ott became a command pilot for the Naval Air Force. He was commended for saving a burning B-26 with crew of eight by landing the plane single-engine without hydraulics on the edge of a cliff in Oahu.

When he returned to Miami after World War II, Jack Ott became supervisor of pools for the city of Miami and retired after 28 years in that position. He has been married four times and is the father of five grown children.

Susan Peterson is a champion butterfly swimmer, a mime and a "mermaid," a professional role she plays in mime makeup.



Not even this seller of Ajax tires was spared by the 1926 hurricane.

Weathering the Storms

BY JEWEL ALDERMAN

My husband, Charles Alderman, and I moved to Miami in 1922. We were from Adel, a little town in south Georgia. My husband, a pharmacist, had come down in January and bought into Byron Freeland's chain of drug stores. He had rented a house for us on N.W. 10th Avenue, just off Flagler Street and the streetcar line, in Riverside.

Soon we bought three lots in West Shenandoah, south of Tamiami Trail, and built our home on the center lot. We had to walk from 8th Street to see our property as the streets were not yet paved. In 1925 we moved into our home. My mother's sister and husband, the E. Lloyd Knights, Sr., built a home next door.

That fall, Mr. Keene, a former employee of my husband's, came to call. Charles had helped him buy the leading drug store in Hialeah. The young man came to urge my husband to join him in buying a boatload of lumber from the Blessingham Lumber Co. in Norfolk. By then Charles was already in the business of developing subdivisions.

Keene recounted the great shortage of lumber in Miami caused by the building boom. He knew the bay was

filled with masted schooners bringing lumber, and he thought they could make money fast. I didn't think it was wise.

"Mrs. Alderman," he said to me, "I'll give Mr. Alderman a mortgage on my store—so you can't lose."

"But you are our friend, we wouldn't want to take your store," I replied.

Charles went to Norfolk and bought a boatload of lumber. Since they made money on it, they decided to buy another much larger boatload.

By the time this load reached Miami Beach, ready to turn into the channel, the *Prins Valdemar* had sunk in the channel. Only small boats could go in or out. While deciding what to do, we paid one hundred dollars a day demurrage fee. Then Charles had the lumber unloaded on Fisher's Island, and reloaded on small boats, brought into Miami, trucked and stacked on some of our subdivision lots. By that time, the need for lumber was over. Mr. Blessingham came down and sold a portion of it to a lumber company here. There was quite a loss for all, and for Keene a loss of his

drugstore.

At the drug store, the shelves were full of merchandise. The red-haired bookkeeper showed Charles the check stubs, showing all bills paid to date. Keene turned over the store as promised. He left for Europe, sent us a card saying, "Happy New Year, forget the lumber."

When Charles took over the store, he learned that he had been shown fake stubs—now he was responsible for the debts.

He realized he needed to live near the store so we could give it close attention (He eventually got his sister and her husband, Ernest Joiner, to run it for him.) We rented a house in Hialeah, three blocks from the drugstore.

Before we moved out there, Charles came home one day and asked me if I'd like to take a long train trip to Colorado Springs, Yellowstone Park, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, Victoria, Banff, Lake Louise and Chicago. He'd get his sister in Chanute, Kansas, to keep our little girl, Lillian, so we wouldn't be so far from her.

All the lots of our subdivision were sold, and we thought payments



Privacy can be a casualty of a major hurricane.

would be coming in for years—how little we knew. We were broke already.

About that time my cousin Mrs. Valley Bennett and her mother moved here from Tifton, Georgia, and were looking for a house to buy. They rented our house for six months. Valley was Lloyd Knight's sister. We had a wonderful trip, arriving back here two weeks before the hurricane of 1926.

The day before the storm the papers told us how to prepare for it. The worst storm Adel, Georgia, had probably only blew down one tree.

I had planned a table of bridge for the following day. One of my guests phoned her regrets; they were leaving town immediately to get away from the storm, driving as far up the road as they could before the storm stopped them. I had never thought of running from a storm. Nor had I ever thought of being afraid.

By eleven o'clock the wind was really howling, when Ernest Joiner came home from the store to be with us. Charles stayed at the store until two or three o'clock sending medicine by brave young men to a nearby church where the injured were being treated. In one instance a board had just sailed through the air and cut off a man's head.

At the house we were having our own troubles. The French doors wouldn't stay closed, even though they were locked. We put the Victrola in front of them and added the sew-

ing machine. It did no good.

I remembered some heavy nails in the kitchen and found the hammer. Ernest Joiner drove nails at the top and bottom of each door; that did the trick.

Both of our cars were blown to the street. The back porch screen door where we kept our icebox refrigerator was blown open, taking the refrigerator and most of our food halfway down the driveway. Everything on that porch went into the yard.

This house, owned by winter tourists, had awnings. Soon they were in shreds. The iron rods were flapping noisily which was disturbing. The water in the commode was sloshing. Would the house be blowing away any minute? I got out heavy coats in case we had to get out. The lights went off. We had a couple of lamps, some candles, and a flashlight.

Our house was leaking all about, including the closet with all my nice new clothes. But who can worry about clothes when lives are at stake?

Roofing paper, garbage cans and tree limbs were flying through the air. The gabled roof on the house next door was lifted and dropped on the vacant lot between us.

All night and through the next day cars crept by attempting to reach Miami. I wondered if they'd reach their destination.

Finally the lull came; we didn't know about lulls, about the eye of the

hurricane. We were so grateful, we thought the storm was over. We began to think about food. We rescued bacon from the yard. The eggs were broken and the milk spilled.

But we had to get back in the house. The storm had started again—this time from a different direction. It blew the cars back into the porte-cochere. It blew the door open on our front screened porch and blew all the furniture into the yard. In the late afternoon the winds began to weaken.

Now people were walking towards Miami. Fifteen people slept in our house that night, on the sofa, on the dining table, on the floor. The trouble was finding a place where the water didn't drip, drip, drip, on you.

We had an oil stove. This helped, since we had no electricity. The grocery stores had been blown away. To make matters worse, we were eaten up by huge mosquitoes.

The next day, we drove into Miami to see my family and relatives. We were very thankful that no one was hurt.

My father's garage was blown away. It contained trunks of the old family pictures and relics. The garage hit the back corner of Pap's house and knocked off part of the roof. My sister went into the living room to tell my father, being in tears about it.

My father said, "Quit worrying, everything will be all right." Just at that moment a concrete block fell

through the ceiling just missing him.

Then we went to our home. We learned that when the lull came, my relatives also thought the storm was over. They opened all the windows, so the house could get fresh air, then went next door to see how their neighbors got along.

When the storm began again, they couldn't get back home. When they left the house, there had been no trouble, no leaks, no windows broken. When they returned, after the storm was over, they found two inches of water on the floor, seven windows blown off, panes broken. A mirror was blown off a walnut dresser and the bed turned white with mildew.

My new Berkey and Gay suite was peeling. My new rugs were rolled up and put on the lawn to dry. Deep streaks of color from the border left their stain through the center, which I had to live with for several years. Our nine grapefruit trees were blown down.

We experienced two more storms, then we went to Georgia, running away when the next one was forecast. Of course it didn't come. I never ran from another.

In future storms, we knew how to prepare, and with the hallway running down the center of our house,

we felt we had a safe place if windows were broken, but they never were. We never put tape on them either; that sounds like trouble to me.

About 1928 Charles bought the West Side Drug Store at 12th Avenue and Flagler Street at a bankruptcy auction, and ran it successfully for thirty years.

My second child, Ann, was born in 1930. A terrible hurricane was forecast in the fall of 1929. The stress during pregnancy often causes early arrivals of babies. I spent a night at Victoria Hospital, where my Aunt Mary Parrish was superintendent. That storm didn't come.

When Ann was two, a dreadful storm was forecast, one worse than '26. What do you do with a baby when you have to get out in a storm? We reserved two rooms at the Halcyon Hotel, taking our maid and two children, baby food and all the "fix-ins." About 10 o'clock we were told the storm had gone in another direction. So we went home, since that is the best place to be with a baby.

We lived at 2043 S.W. 7th Street until 1944. At the insistence of my daughter, Lillian, we bought a two-story home, four bedrooms and three baths at 151 S.E. 14th Street, on the beautiful street where you could drive by Millionaires Row. We were

between Brickell Avenue and the bay. This house was about eight years old, so it hadn't gone through our worst hurricanes.

One year bay water was blown on to our porch. Thereafter we had our rugs rolled up and put across our long mantel and our buffet. Charles had wooden horses built, so planks could be put across them and our furniture lifted. It was just like moving.

After a storm, I said, "Let's sell this place, I'm tired of all this trouble." But my husband said, "It's only for a couple of days, and it's so nice here the rest of the year." So we stayed, but I insisted that we get the house in order and then spend the night away from our home and the bay.

My husband died in 1960 but I continued living there until 1977, 34 years in all. I loved the house, in spite of the difficulties.

One year while I was visiting Pennsylvania, my daughter, Lillian, who lived in Coral Gables, called to tell me they'd had a hurricane. When she and her husband drove over to see how my house had fared, they couldn't get across Brickell Avenue, the water was so high. She thought I'd better come home. I was there by ten the next morning.

The water had receded, but when

continued on page 15



Volunteers must be pressed into duty after a devastating hurricane.

continued from page 6

I have, in fact, written a historical novel of Florida called *AMERICAN TROPIC*, and was lucky enough to get my hands on a copy of the *Guide* early in my research. The title of my book was inspired by one of the entries in the bibliography, *Our American Tropics* by John E. Jennings, Jr., a travel book published in 1938.

The *Guide*, which has as its expressed aim to provide a "comprehensive story" of Florida, more than achieves its goal. Though there are problems. The *Guide's* photographs are, with exceptions, unexpectedly pretty and bland, especially given other WPA photographs from the period. And then there are a number of redundancies: Ring Lardner's wonderful short story, "The Golden Wedding," set among the green benches of St. Petersburg, is mentioned at least three times.

Far worse, the *Guide*—as history—has one extraordinary and devastating flaw: it virtually denies the presence and importance of Jews in Florida's past. To start with, there is the startling omission of David Yulee. He was Florida's first United States Senator and the first Jewish Senator in United States history, a man who founded one of our earliest railroads; he was one crucial influence in having Florida admitted to statehood. He later led the movement for secession—a great friend of Jefferson Davis, Yulee was imprisoned for helping him escape at the end of the Civil War.

His Jewishness is never mentioned and Yulee is only discussed in a paragraph about the city named for him. He was not a practicing Jew, having changed his name from Levi when he married the ex-governor of Kentucky's daughter, a woman known as Madonna for her Christian good works.

In fact, the word "Jewish" is only mentioned once in the *Guide* when composer Frederick Delius' Jacksonville sojourn (1885) is discussed. It's said that Delius, in order to support himself, "found employment as organist in a Jewish synagogue." But we do not get any information as to when this "Jewish synagogue" (as opposed to, say, a Catholic synagogue) was founded or what the Jewish population of Jacksonville, or the state, was about.

Southeast Florida's legalistic anti-Semitism is never alluded to; Julia Tuttle, Henry Flagler and Carl Fisher, among others included a Caucasian clause in all their land contracts which effectively eliminated Jews from buying, leasing or owning property. It is stated that Fort Myers was named after Colonel Abraham C. Myers, then chief quartermaster in Florida (1839) but Colonel Myers' Jewishness is omitted.

St. Petersburg's early and blatant "Jews Get Out Of Town" campaign is also not mentioned nor is the fact that there were two Jewish mayors of Tampa before the turn of the century. This wouldn't be so damaging if other minorities—blacks, Hispanics, the beloved Greek fisherman of Tarpon Springs, Dr. Turnbull's Minorcans, etc.—weren't given considerable space. The result is that the entire and not unimportant history of Florida Jewry is not so much dismissed as ignored.

This would seem especially strange since so many of the people responsible for the *Guide* were Jewish. But one has to take into consideration that historically Jews have had to take on protective coloring, to be considered part of the mainstream in order to avoid persecution. More importantly, the *Guide* was written in the late '30s at a time when European Jews were facing The Final Solution; German cruise ships were still docking in the Port of Miami (Miamians would find anti-Semitic literature under their doors); Jews had only recently been allowed in Miami Beach hotels above Fifth Street; the Klan was a genuine presence in north Florida.

It must have seemed a poorly timed moment to document the Jewish contribution to Florida's history. Now, it seems that would have been exactly the moment but this, you understand, is hindsight talking. The decision not to mention Jews must have been a conscious one.

Aside from that catastrophic omission, the single most damaging flaw of the *Guide* as travel literature is the lack of a single, idiosyncratic voice, entertaining and involving us. In its place is a passionless amalgam of those many voices which belong to the consultants who are lumped together somewhat cavalierly just before the index. What I miss most in this *Guide* is that private, personal voice that is the sound of what my television producer friend rightfully calls literature.

So no, I would have to say that the *Guide* does not rise to the very first rank of travel literature—like the crumbs from the moveable feast of those grand and mostly British tourists, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Somerset Maugham, Bruce Chatwin, and Paul Theroux. The *Guide* was written and edited by committee for a popular audience, and I doubt if literature was on anyone's mind when it was being put together. A compilation, by its very definition, cannot be literature which is a solitary act, one writer speaking to his readers.

But what the *Guide* is is what it set out to be: a "comprehensive story" about the customs of the country, the best key I've come across to unlock the secrets of Florida's history and culture, a necessary source—no formal history book comes close—to any who will understand what Elizabeth Bishop called "the state with the prettiest name."

David Kaufelt is the author of 10 novels, a founder of the annual Key West Literary Seminar and of the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center and a member of the boards of the Council for Florida Libraries, the Florida Center for the Book and the Florida Endowment for the Humanities.

INTO THE TRUNK



Among the many postcards recently added to the collection were two of the Bottle Cap Inn. They stood out, even among the many images of bizarre enterprises Dade Countians have promoted over the years. What was this?

Built in the late 1930s, the proprietor Joe Wiser lined the interior walls and furniture with thousands of bottle caps. This view was taken in the 1950s, after the place had been discovered by **Ripley's Believe It or Not**. The Bottle Cap Inn still exists, still a bar decorated with bottle caps, awaiting rediscovery at 1293 N.W. 119 Street.

Photocredits

page 2: The Seth Bramson Collection, the following photographs are from the HASF collection: page 3: 1986-230-19, page 4: 1987-136-38, 1987-136-10, page 5: 1987-136-60, 1987-136-71, page 7: 1986-209-66, page 8 and 9: 1986-201-28, 1986-209-58, page 10: 1986-246-10, 1986-269-79, page 11: 79-85-13, page 12: 79-85-3, page 13: 79-85-1, page 14: 1986-250-47.

continued from page 13

I entered my house, the rugs went squish, squish and left my footprints every place I stepped. I had had twenty-four inches of water in my house.

So many times I prepared my house for hurricanes that didn't come to Miami. This time I was careless. I didn't know a hurricane had been forecast. My carpenter, who was a "Jack of All Trades," would have prepared my house for me. So now it was up to me to bring order to things.

Everything in my lower kitchen cabinets was filled with salt water. My new gas stove oven was filled with salt water and rusted, the refrigerator stopped because of salt water but could be repaired. The bedspreads were left on the beds, so the water seeped through them and ruined the mattresses and springs in the two downstairs bedrooms. Salt water is something else to contend with; it takes many washings to get rid of it.

There was a bar in the living room behind sliding wooden doors that rolled in a semi-circle when needed. Those doors were swollen and would not open. They had to be torn down for the sea water to be washed out.

I. D. MacVicar was vice president

of the Museum of Science when I was president. He was in the lumber business, so I called him to get new doors; he sent someone to measure them. He phoned saying they were larger than regulation size and they would have to make them for me, which they did. Friends! Kindnesses are so long remembered, like little eternal bright and shining lights in your memory.

I had two coconut trees blown down. Two men stopped by looking for work. They helped rid the floors of salt water. Of course I had to have the floors refinished. The workmen chopped up the trees so the city could pick them up. So gradually I brought order again.

People said the wind wasn't as strong as usual, that it seemed to go by the city and then turned back pushing a wall of water like a tidal wave over the mainland. The closer you were to the bay, the deeper the wake.

Still, would you want to miss a spring like the one we had this year? Hurricanes and all, I'll take Miami.

Jewell Woodard Alderman has written previously for **Update** of her family's migration to Miami from Georgia.

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continued from page 2

In England, hundreds of thousands of small investors bought shares in the dozens of railways that sprang up. In more cautious France, the Second Empire underwrote some of the cost of building the *reseau*, or network, of lines that radiated from Paris to every part of the country (and still do), and gave its official support to a great stock scheme called the *Credit Mobilier*, which financed much of the construction.

Nowhere was the impact of Stephenson's "Rocket" more dramatic than in the United States. By 1840 there were 1,800 miles of railroad in all of Europe; in the United States about 3,000. Canals and rivers were too restrictive for the vast distances, the mountain barriers, the deep forests and huge unsettled plains. A cheap, fast, and above all flexible method of land transportation was needed to link the sprawling country and knit it into a nation. The railroad fulfilled the need.

I thought of all this as I looked at an 1886 map of Florida in the marvelous HASF exhibit that explored Henry Flagler and the Florida East Coast Railway. It was a peculiar feeling to look at a map of so familiar an outline and see nothing written south of Fort Lauderdale. And then to look at another map next to it, with the red line of the railway cutting through the length of the lower part of the state, was to be reminded of why railroads are sometimes called arteries; it was like an injection of life-giving blood.

Flagler, of course, brought his railroad south to Florida late. We all know the story of Julia Tuttle and her famous box of oranges and flowers. I suspect, though, that the railroad would have come anyway, sooner or later, and if it hadn't been built by Henry Flagler it would have been built by somebody else, as other railroads were in other parts of Florida. The country was young and ambitious, and no part of it was to be allowed to remain undeveloped for long, not with this wonderful vehicle available. So the miles of tracks were stitched like seams, connecting Florida to the rest of the country.

Men like Flagler have often been called robber barons, and in a sense I suppose they were the nearest thing to barons a country like ours can produce—smart, lucky, hard and unsentimental; ruthless when they thought it necessary. But robbers? Many of them made great fortunes, and others lost them; but in the process they created the industrial might of the United States, making possible the extraordinary standard of living, the endless flow of goods. When next you look at the Miami skyline, try to imagine what it would be like if the railroad had never come.

The railroad was on the cutting edge of technology in the 19th century. By the time Flagler's railroad arrived in south Florida, men were already dreaming of taking to the sky, or freeing themselves from the tyranny of rails with the new-fangled automobile. It's an interesting irony that much of the early history of aviation occurred right here in South Florida, as we saw in the *Wings* exhibition. Yet anyone who strolls through Miami International Airport today may pause a bit and wonder if travel wasn't more graceful in the heyday of the FEC, when women wore gloves and smart little hats, and the porter always brushed your coat before you got off the train.

I don't know. Maybe not. Today everyone travels, and travels everywhere. They go in their Reeboks and jeans, with their belongings slung over their shoulders in carry-on bags. It's a different world, and in many ways a better one. I still believe in progress, and so, I'm sure, did Henry Flagler.

LEE ABERMAN

FINAL WORD

In researching his saga, *American Tropic: A Novel of Florida*, David Kaufelt made extensive use of *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State*. You can read his assessment of the Guide on page 6 of this issue of *Update*. This will be particularly interesting to you if you are one of the many who have read *American Tropic*. For several weeks it was the No. 1 best seller in Florida bookstores, including our own Indies Company. A paperback edition will be out in the winter.

American Tropic is a story of Florida, from the early 16th century to the 1960s. Of particular interest to South Florida readers is a section entitled "Julia." The Julia, of course, is Julia Tuttle, the Mother of Miami. Kaufelt recounts the story of Julia's long struggle to bring Henry Flagler's railroad to the banks of the Miami River, where she owned considerable land. She succeeds, but she dies an unhappy, repressed woman who has spurned the advances of the Duke of Dade—most, but not all, of the time.

In real life the Duke of Dade was J. W. Ewan, a Charlestonian with elegant manners. In *American Tropic*, he becomes J. W. Ewing. Perhaps a bow to the prime time soap opera, "Dallas?"

"Not really," says Kaufelt. "I changed his name to give myself more freedom in developing his character. He really was no prize, something of an early remittance man."

J. E. Ingraham, Flagler's right hand man, appears in the book as R. O. Watson, but Flagler and Alice Brickell go through their paces under their own names. Of Flagler, Kaufelt wrote:

"He wore a dark suit, a dotted cravat and gold-rimmed spectacles. His hair and mustache were white. He was older, stiffer, and less forthcoming than Julia had thought he would be. He did not look like her idea of an empire builder . . . His restraint and the sepulchral air in that dark office suite—so much at odds with the magnificent mysteries and kinetic elegance of the rest of the hotel—daunted her. There didn't seem to be a sound or a smell in the place."

Some people shy away from reading historical novels, contending that they may saddle the reader with a false view of history, mingling fact and fiction in a way that may confuse the picture. These people are missing an entertaining and illuminating genre. Clearly, a novelist has a right to alter and invent events, people and timetables to make a better story. He has absolutely no right to be boring.

At the 1987 annual meeting of the Florida Freelance writers Association Kaufelt called historical novels a "bridge to teach," declaring: "High schools are now using historical novels in class. Texts are dry and often wrong."

Kaufelt startled, and delighted, an appreciative audience with his reply to the question. "Can I lie?" "If the choice is between dry and interesting, you have a responsibility to tell the lie," he replied, with a smile. "We are trying to illuminate history, to bring it to life. I try to keep to the characters' real lives as much as possible, but the job of a novelist is tell a story to entertain."

Kaufelt has particularly high praise for Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. Other novelists whose historical fiction he recommends include Thomas Costain, Somerset Maugham, James Michener, Louis L'Amour and Mary Stewart.

To me, a good historical novel must pass just two tests. Does it capture the spirit and feel of the times it depicts? And, is it a good read? What do you think?

Stuart M. Dow

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Anna Maria Paartz of Tampa was the properly attired lady of 1891 at the beginning of the era known as the Gay Nineties. Photograph from the author's collection.

A popular tourist attraction in August 1938 was the Lewis Turpentine Still and Plantation on U.S. 41 just south of Brooksville. The Southeastern AAA Tour Book described it as a "typical Old South plantation, where the methods of pre-Civil War days are still used to distill turpentine. Admission was 25 cents and guides were provided to explain the operations. The Florida Federal Writers Project guidebook of the day said "Almost all

Florida

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"I believe a pictorial display is one of the most effective and entertaining ways to present the story of where we came from and how we got to where we are today."

—Hampton Dunn

"Look at the birdie," this trio of young Tampa misses was admonished by the photographer in the late 1880s. That's little Miss Helena Poartz at left; her pals are not identified. Electro Photo Company at 909 Franklin Street was operated by Field & Morast, pioneer commercial and portrait photographers. Photograph by Electro Photo Company from the author's collection.



workers are Negroes. One of the larger cabins is occupied by aged Negroes, billed as ex-slaves, who sing, plunk banjos, and tell tall tales for the entertainment of their visitors and the profit of themselves." The driver of this wagonload of younguns is "Uncle Dud." Photograph from the author's collection.

Coming This Fall.

