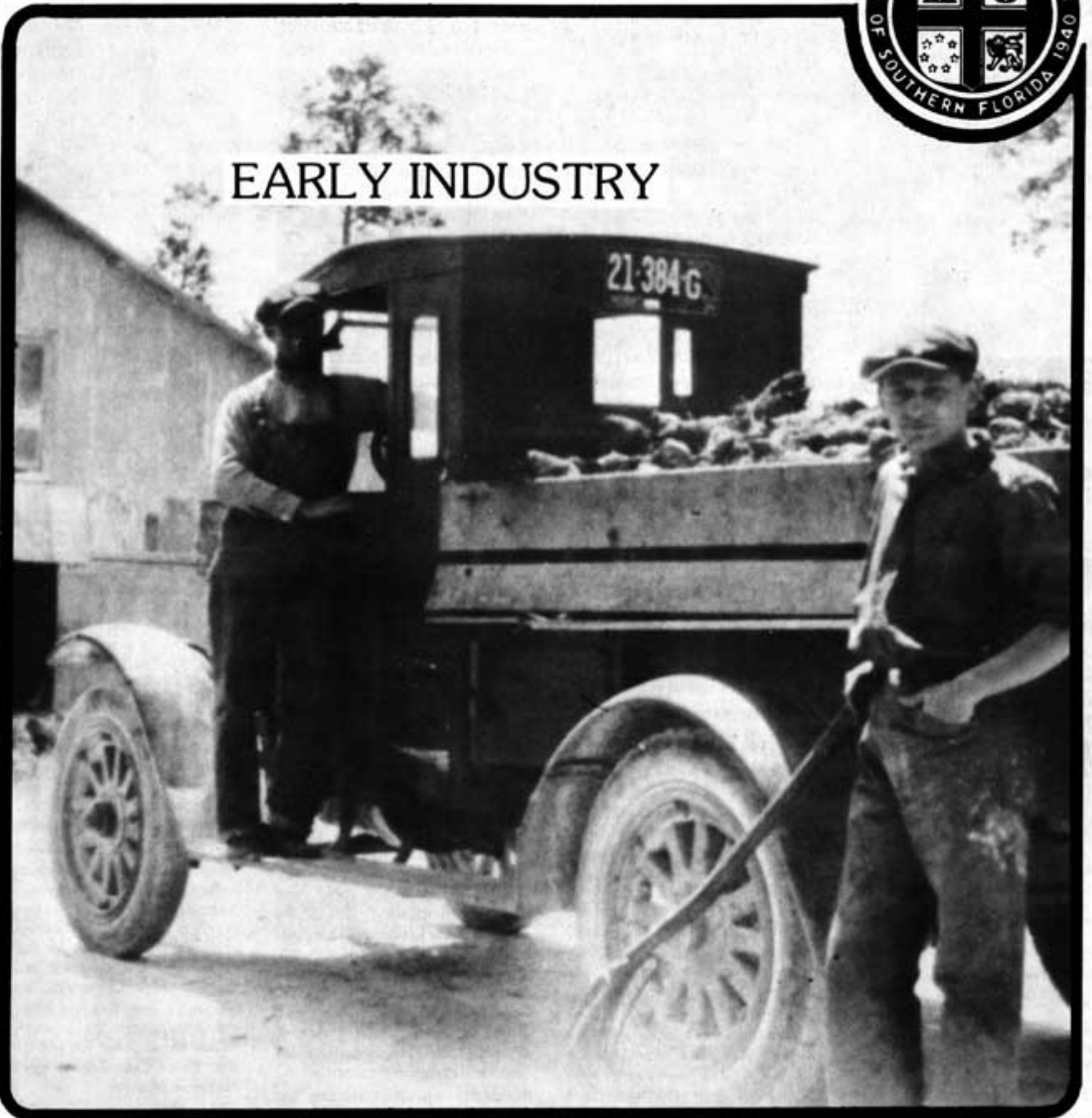


Update



EARLY INDUSTRY



DIRECTOR'S DESK

by Randy F. Nimnicht

CONTENTS

- 2 Director's Desk
Randy F. Nimnicht
Join Us For Our November Harvest
- 3 Early Rock Houses
Joseph H. Chaille
- 4 The Industrial Reporter
- 5 Gifts of the Land
Thelma Peters
- 6 South Dade's Last Commercial Starch Mill
Jean C. Taylor
- 8 Tannin for Tanners
- 9 My Thirty-Six Years With Burdines
Nelle Coates
- 10 Reflections on Black History
Dorothy Jenkins Fields
- 11 Castor Oil Helped to Win the War
History Is A Mystery
- 12 History Is No Longer A Mystery



On June 15, the Dade County Commission took action which will result in a new permanent home for the Historical Association of Southern Florida in the planned downtown government and cultural center. The new main library, the Metropolitan Art Museum, and the Historical Museum will make up the cultural components of the complex. The Malt study (completed November 1974) had recommended additional space for HASF at our current location in the Vizcaya complex but only after indicating there was not really

adequate room for the various institutions. Consequently the past twenty months found HASF anxiously awaiting the County's decision. Earlier this year the County Manager, then Ray Goode, requested the Historical Association of Southern Florida to consider the possibility of the move downtown. After in-depth discussions the Board decided the move would be a fine opportunity for HASF to ultimately serve more people because of the location of the mass transit line and other cultural attractions in the downtown complex. The Board indicated to the County Manager several factors that must be present if we were to provide a first class historical museum. These included a separate building, adequate space (31,000 sq. ft.), other cultural attractions and a revenue package. At

the County Manager's request, a presentation was made before the Commission which resulted in endorsement of the idea. I find it gratifying that an organization such as HASF, which is primarily interested in the past, was willing to make such a strong commitment to the future hopes of this community. Will downtown be revitalized? Will mass transit be a reality? Our Board has enough confidence in the future to vote "yes" for a location where we can serve the most people.



COVER:

"Coomptie" root en route to processing plant in Kendall, 1924.

UPDATE

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JOIN US FOR OUR NOVEMBER HARVEST

An old-fashioned country fair is being sponsored by the newly organized volunteers of the Historical Association of Southern Florida.

The Harvest will be held at the Dade County Youth Fairgrounds, Tamiami Park, on Saturday and Sunday, November 6 and 7.

This event will be an expansion of the Craft Show held at our Historical Museum last January and will feature authentic historic craft demonstrations ranging from candlemaking to woodcarving. Marlene Arel, tel. 448-0087, and Mary Pirie, 667-0755, are jointly heading up the Crafts Committee to select the participants who will demonstrate and in some cases sell their handmade crafts.

Numerous exhibits also are planned: antique automobiles; the restoration of a coomptie (arrow-root) mill by volunteer Elroy Cormack' private doll and shell collections and many, many more exhibits which reflect Southern

Florida, its people and its heritage. Libby Fullerton (444-5929) and Betty Tongay (445-7524), who are coordinating the exhibits committee, will be happy to receive any recommendations. Local historic and service groups are being invited to participate.

Contests will be about: essay, oratory, multi-media, poetry and quilt making, as well as pie, cake, and homemade preserve competitions. In store for the children are games that Grandpa used to play, such as greased pole climbing, sack racing, and conch shell blowing. These are samples of the fun Joan Thompson and Kathy Greenan are planning. Music will include Bluegrass, Jazz, Calypso, Rock, Flamenco, all part of South Florida's past and present. Silvia Morgan, music chairman, 665-8004, welcomes suggestions and additional committee members.

Food preparations include ribs, roast pig, black beans and rice, fried chicken, conch salad and more native fare to please every palate.

Health food and fresh produce reaped from the area's farmland are included in Chairman Pat Molinari's plans.

In telling the story of our community we wish to recreate yesterday to give everyone an opportunity to return, at least for one weekend, to the grass roots, so as to enjoy the simple entertainments of our past and to appreciate what we are today.

Help us to enjoy the Harvest! Plan with us, volunteer your time, your efforts, your friends, your skills and your talents. Please call Pat Brandt, 271-5736 or Bixie Matheson, 665-2128, or any of the other persons listed. (Pat and Bixie are Harvest Committee Co-Chairmen). Sherrill Kellner is Treasurer and Nita Norman is secretary of the Harvest Committee. Irene Shiverick, 666-6982, is the Fair Coordinator for the Historical Museum.

Hop onto the wagon and join the hayride to our country fair so you can be part of the Harvest in November.

EARLY ROCK HOUSES

by Joseph H. Chaille

A home with rock walls was particularly appropriate to South Florida's hot summer months in days before air conditioning. A solid rock wall must be at least 12 inches thick, Mr. Savage says. Rock veneer over a wooden frame is about eight inches thick. Such a house with a properly constructed roof is practically hurricane proof, according to Mr. Savage. He says that buildings unroofed during hurricanes had roofs that had not been firmly fastened to the underlying structure. In any event, he says, most hurricane damage comes from water, not from wind.

According to Dr. John Edward Hoffmeister, professor emeritus of the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences of the University of Miami, the term "coral rock" applied to rock comprising the Atlantic coastal ridge is a misnomer. In his book, *Land from the Sea*, Dr. Hoffmeister points out that there is indeed coral rock in some parts of Florida or off shore from Florida; that is, rock originally formed by the organisms that create coral reefs. The bedrock in the Atlantic coastal ridge, a narrow strip between the Everglades and the sea running north from Homestead, is oolite, and the surface rock used in the construction of houses and fences came from outcroppings of the bedrock. Oolite, says Dr. Hoffmeister, was originally formed under water from grains of sand deposited on the bottom. In one of the rises and falls of the ocean level that occur

Mr. Chaille is a retired insurance executive.



The Tee House Plantation, home of William B. Ogden was built in the early 1900s in Lemon City. William Savage and his son added the rock facade and trim to the house which was located on Ogden's thirty-five acre tropical fruit plantation. The water in the foreground is Biscayne Bay. Today land fill has moved the bay eastward and the Tee House has been partially restored and serves as the City of Miami Adult Recreation Center at Legion Park. (Photo from *The Lure of the Southland* by C. H. Ward.)

periodically in geologic time, these sand deposits became dry land. Rainwater trickling down between the grains dissolved some of the lime in the sand and the lime was then redeposited to bind the grains together into rock.

A close neighbor of the Museum of Science and the Historical Museum of Southern Florida on South Miami Avenue is Vizcaya which is largely constructed of oolite, says Dr. Hoffmeister.

A mark of affluence in early Miami was a home built of native rock. Until the boom of the early twenties, many of the better homes in South Florida had exterior walls of solid rock or a veneer of rock outside a wooden frame. Fireplaces and mantels of native rock were built in homes, clubs and other buildings, and rock fences with ornamental entrances were frequently seen.

William R. Savage of North Miami was a stone mason when he came to Miami in 1913 and recalls building fourteen of those rock-walled residences during the years 1914 to 1925. Most of them have since been torn down to make way for apartment buildings or other commercial developments, he says.

Mr. Savage attributes the decline in rock construction here to present-day costs of rock construction and a scarcity of the surface rock that was abundant in earlier days. Rock construction involves much labor in shaping the rock and in putting it in place, and costs far exceed those such as cement block that lend themselves to mechanization, he explains. Furthermore, now that most of South Florida land suitable for groves or building sites has long since been cleared of surface rock, the earlier

sources no longer exist. The bedrock is still there, of course, but lacks the irregular surfaces and weathered appearance that made surface rock so attractive to the eye.

In the technique used by Mr. Savage, hand axes were employed to smooth the surfaces that had to fit together. A mortar of one part cement to six parts sand, plus lime, held the stones together. In cases where a newly cut surface would be visible, Mr. Savage devised a method of coloring it with a mixture of lamp black and cement to give the rock a weathered appearance.

More elaborate methods of constructing with rock came to be employed as the Florida land boom developed. Italian workmen were imported, Mr. Savage says, to cut and trim the rock in painstaking fashion.

"THE INDUSTRIAL REPORTER"

Miami's Early Black Newspaper

The *Industrial Reporter* was the first organized newspaper in Miami and environs to be written, edited and published by black people.

Selected articles from the column, "The Colored People Here and Elsewhere" are reprinted here just as they appeared in 1905. (Additional articles from 1904 were printed in the February, 1976, *Update*.)

We are glad for any one to send us news of interest at any time. Anything that occurs and you would like to have it published send it to our office. We want news.

The schools of the county generally will open tomorrow. Some few may have opened today. This being Emancipation Day one does not feel like anything but celebrating this, the greatest holiday of the year to the thoughtful negro. This day means more to the negro than the Forth of July does to the Americans. On that day more than 41 years ago, between three and four million slaves heard the glad tidings of freedom ring our through this country like charming bells and ever since then they have been rejoicing and doing whatever they could to make themselves American citizens, and today they own several million dollars' worth of real estate and personal property.

The fact that the negro went to work willingly, faithfully and earnestly is shown in the material progress he has made with all the disadvantages and marks him as being far superior to the Indian who has never accepted labor either for himself or for anyone else, and universally enjoys the rank of a

Compiled by Dorothy Fields, a teacher and researcher in history.

savage rather than that of a civilized being.

The colored mechanics of the city met last evening with twelve present and elected the following officers for a local union: President, H. S. Braggs; Vice-President, P. W. Doctor; Recording Secretary, A. Hepburn; Financial Secretary, J. R. Knowles; Treasurer, Jas. Pritchard; Con., M. G. Green; Warden, G. E. Clear; Trustees, M. T. Mitchell, H. H. Lovette and Harris Williams. They will send in tonight to the local white un-



Contractor Henry S. Braggs moved to Miami in 1896. His wife Julia was a charter member of the Bethel A.M.E. Church, organized in March of that year. (Photo courtesy of the Black Pioneer Photographic Archives, Dade County Public Schools.)

ion for a recommendation for a charter.

Mr. John D. Johnson, a highly respected man from Nassau, N. P. and father of Samuel D. Johnson and Mrs. Thos. Bullard, came in a few days ago on the sailing vessel, the Hattie Darling. He will return when it returns.

Mrs. Florence Gaskin, a well-known and highly respected lady of this city, is employed by a well-known firm in the North to canvass for a very good book. She is on her mission every day except Sunday.

Mrs. A. Hepburn writes from Cocanut Grove that her mother, Mrs. Catherine Robinson, is not seriously ill as thought. She has been very ill, but is now improving a great deal.

Mr. Nelson Thompson, the ice man in white town, a very efficient one, has been up in Florence, S.C., visiting friends.

Mr. H. S. Braggs, a worthy citizen of this city, is erecting one of the best houses in Colored Town. It is a five roomer with a porch

Magic City Drug Store.

J. A. BUTLER, M. D.
Proprietor.

Drugs, Patent Medicines, Toilet Articles, Sundries, Perfumery and Stationery.

Only Drug Store in Colored Town
COR. AVE G AND FIFTH STREET.

This advertisement for the Magic City Drug Store was featured in an early newspaper issue. The proprietor, Dr. J. A. Butler was the "senior doctor in colored town" according to the *Miami Metropolis*. (Photo courtesy of the Black Pioneer Photographic Archives, Dade County Public Schools.)

under the same cover with the main building. When completed it will be a "dandy". It will cost in the neighborhood of \$800.00.

Messrs. John Seibon, J. L. Lathon, Geo. W. Barnwell and Samuel Walker will all leave tomorrow, if nothing prevents, for several months cruise down among the Keys. They will possibly be gone until Christmas. These men are first-class hunters and trappers.

Mrs. Geter Walker, who runs the biggest restaurant in the city and who has been running pool tables in connection, has discontinued the pool tables owing to license going so high. Well, maybe it is for the better.

A sparring contest will come off at Jackson's Hall Monday night between Geo. A. Hayden, the lightweight boxer, of Quitman, Georgia, and Jas. Frazier of Brunswick, Georgia.

The East Coast Band will leave tomorrow night for the Carnival at Jacksonville which begins on Monday. These boys anticipate a good time. Mr. Archie Robinson, its able leader, deserves much credit for his able work.

The cakewalk that came off last night at Barnwell's Hall resulted in the cake going to Benj. Brady and Ella Rolle.

We find quite a number of our people, that is, business people, putting "adds" in the City Directory. Well, as this is quite an advertising medium we think well of it, especially so for those of us who have a substantial business. These books are read all over this country and even in China, Japan, Australia, and many other foreign lands. This year it will be more complete than last, as it will have a full census of the city.

Dr. T. P. Lloyd Lodge of the G.U.O. of O.F. met last night at Barnwell's Hall as the regular meeting. It was an important meeting owing to the installation of officers.

GIFTS OF THE LAND

by Thelma Peters

The homesteaders who began to come to Dade County a century ago, in their eagerness to make a living from the land, turned to extractive industries as well as to farming. There were few homesteads which did not have, at one time or another, a backyard coontie mill to process the wild *Zamia* roots into starch to sell in Key West or to eat in puddings and cakes. When the supply of wild roots came to an end so did the industry.

Lumbering was another extractive industry which went on until the Dade County pine was exhausted. An early newspaper of Dade County, *The Tropical Sun*, commented in 1893 that Dade County had enough Spanish moss "to supply several hundred mattress factories." Indeed, upstate, moss was processed for use in upholstery and mattresses. It is not known if a moss factory ever existed in Dade but another extractive industry was tried with some success, that of making tannin from palmetto roots and mangrove bark. Synthetic fibers put a stop to the moss trade a generation ago.

Native limestone, pushing out of the sand in ragged whorls everywhere in the pinelands, sparked a number of early industries — gravel for roads, chunk rock for walls and houses, and quarried blocks of limestone for some of Miami's fine early buildings, including the courthouse of 1904.

Another early extractive industry, long forgotten, was the making of paint from ocher found in the prairies and glades. Only a small portion of the soil of Dade County was "yellow marl" but this marl contained ocher. In some places, especially along

Dr. Peters retired a few years ago after a lifelong career as a history teacher.

the river banks, pure veins of ocher were found, yellow in



H. F. Fordham built this two story concrete paint factory (above) in 1916 for the commercial production of ocher paint. Below, in 1932, the building became the home of Puritan Dairy. Today it houses Puritan's (Farmbest) accounting offices and is a milk distribution point. (Photo Courtesy of Puritan Dairy)



In the early 1900s, William Freeman painted his two story wooden home in Little River with ocher paint he made himself. The clay was gathered from nearby 79th Street. (Photo courtesy of Ethel Freeman West).

color with the consistency of chalk. Mrs. John Gilpin (*Tequesta*, 1941) told of a sail up Middle River in 1891 because a member of their yachting

party wanted to get some clay for paint. Charles W. Pierce, whose book, *Pioneering in Southeast Florida*, is a faithful account of the early days, told of finding "a sort of ocher, soft

It is thought the early settlers learned the use of ocher from the Indians. The ocher was heated in a pan or bucket over a fire, stirred until thoroughly dry and crumbling. At this point it could be

mixed with oil and made into a kind of yellow paint but the color was muddy hence most preferred the redder paint. By continuing the heating the clay turned to red, the shade depending on the purity of the ocher. The dry clay, reduced to powder, was then sifted to remove foreign matter, mixed with oil and was ready for use.

Lewis W. Pierce of Lemon City painted his roof with it. William Freeman of Little River painted his barn with it. Another used the red powder to mix with cement in pouring a floor and the floor had a dull red color not unlike Spanish tile and never had to be repainted.

It was inevitable that someday ocher paint would go commercial. This happened in 1916 when H. F. Fordham and Son of Buena Vista built a two-story poured-concrete paint factory on Columbia Avenue near the railroad track. Today you will find the old building at 160 N.E. 30th Street. The company ad in the 1919 Miami Directory read "Manufacturers of Florida Mixed Paints." Unfortunately the supply of good ocher was limited and ordinary yellow marl had too much lime to make a quality paint so the Fordhams had to switch to importing pigments for paint making.

After a few years of operation the Fordham paint company closed and during the depressed '30s the building was occupied by Puritan Dairy⁷ as an outlet store. Many a family outing ended with a trip to the Puritan for ice cream cones all around — at five cents each. No one remembers the old paint mill, but many remember the place by the railroad track where you got those good chocolate sundaes.

as chalk and yellow" and said that when it was "fired" it became red and when mixed with oil became a color which the people around Biscayne Bay called "Spanish brown."

SOUTH DADE'S LAST COMMERCIAL STARCH MILL

From a forthcoming book. Ms. Taylor is a resident of South Dade.

The Florida Indians discovered the trick of extracting starch from the root of the *Zamia*, a cycad known locally as coomptie, coontie, cumpty or coonty. As early as 1840 white settlers in the Miami area listed their occupation as starch maker and for many years the making of arrowroot starch was the only cash crop available to South Florida pioneers. The whole family would pitch in and work for a week to make up a barrel to sell in Key West in return for food, clothing or supplies. Some mills were operated by hand while others employed mule or horse power. In later years there were a few steam-driven mills.

One of the largest and the last of the commercial starch mills was owned by Albert Baxter Hurst. It was established north of Little River on what is now N.E. 102nd Street west of N.E. 6th Avenue in 1908 but in 1919, as that area developed and the coontie plants became scarce, the business moved to the Kendall area and located at U.S. #1 and S.W. 104th Street where the Jefferson Stores shopping center is now. The building itself was not moved — a new one was constructed.

During the first War it was discovered that Florida arrowroot starch made into a thin gruel was the first nourishment a gassed soldier could take. The Hurst Mill operated eighteen hours a day to supply the government with starch for that purpose. After the war they looked for other sources to consume their output and contacted the Joseph Morningstar Company of New York who

made a specialty of importing exotic starches. The Florida arrowroot appealed to them as a root starch is considered very desirable as a food, especially for children. After delivering several successful orders, Mr. Hurst decided to sell the mill to the Morningstar Company.

Delco system provided lighting. There was no telephone. Power was provided by an old-fashioned steam boiler located outside the building on a six-foot concrete pedestal. Fuel to operate the boiler was given to them by Lamar Paxton of the Paxton Lumber Com-

pany. Making was to send the men into the woods to dig the coontie roots. The South Dade area was mainly a wilderness and, although the lumber people had cut most of the pine, the stumps and underbrush made it hard to get through. The Hurst Mill had two moving-van-type wagons drawn by mules; the van had built-in shelves for the help to sleep on. The Bahamian Negroes on the crews left every Monday morning and cruised the woods until Saturday digging coontie. They had no supervisor and worked as they felt like it or weather permitted. On some of the land they got permission to dig but mostly did not know the owners, so they ranged east to Cutler and south as far as Homestead on the high land. *Zamia* did not grow in the glades. At each camp they put up a fence and drove a pipe into the ground and mounted a pitcher pump to get water for the mules and men.

George Muller had an old Ford roadster that could get through the trees and he would check the camp every day or so to see if the men needed anything or if they had enough of a load to send out the two-wheeled mule carts. The men had to pay for their own food. If they had enough coontie on hand to make a load, at first Mr. Muller drove back to the mill and alerted the wagons and truck. However, he soon got tired of so much driving and solved the problem by bringing in carrier pigeons. He would write a little note and slip it into a case on the bird's leg and send it off to Bill Tomlinson to fill the orders. A big truck was sent out on the nearest hard road and the



William T. Tomlinson, son-in-law of mill founder A. B. Hurst, served as superintendent of the Kendall area plant for commercial starch making. The site is now a department store at U.S. 1 and S. W. 104th Street.



The factory and boiler shed of the A. B. Hurst Co. produced "Florida Arrowroot Starch." The powder was used by soldiers in W.W. I and later was considered a good nutrition source for children.

In 1923 Mr. George Muller arrived to look over the mill, modernize it and expedite the shipments. Mr. Bill Tomlinson, son-in-law of Mr. Hurst, continued to operate the mill as superintendent.

The mill was a corrugated iron building of good size, probably 100 x 150 feet, and quite high. There was no electricity for power although a

pany just across the road. Every night they would send the truck over to pick up the bark slabs cut from the outside of the trees as the mill had no use for them. Steam from the boiler was used to operate the steam engines, belts and pulleys as well as to dry the starch.

The first step in starch

by Jean C. Taylor

two-wheeled mule carts made trips back and forth to the camp to bring out each man's load. Each was weighed separately on a scale and the men paid by their tonnage for the week. The woods were full of snakes and the men vied with each other in bringing in snakeskins. The small office building at the mill had its sides covered with snakeskins — some five or six feet long and ten to twelve inches wide.

The next step in starch making was washing the coontie roots. The men had already pulled off the tops before weighing in. The washer was a long concrete trough with a metal shaft through the middle fitted with wooden paddle wheels. This was turned by the steam engine, washing off the sand and dirt. From there the roots went into the pulper. The coontie tubers were shaped like a beet and averaged about four to six inches in diameter although sometimes one as large as twelve inches across was found. They were covered with a thin brown skin that was mashed up along with the pulp. The pulper was the only piece of equipment that wasn't improvised. It consisted of an old-fashioned hammer mill that ran at very high speed, turning a series of heavy gauge cast-iron hammers on a shaft. The hammers beat the coontie plants against the lower half of the mill, an octagon-shaped revolving perforated iron screen. The heavier pulp was then extracted and the finer pulp and the juice went through the screen and onto a conveyor belt that led through a series of fine screens. These were connected with an eccentric shaft that shook the screens

back and forth and separated the coarse stuff from the fine.

The milk, as it was called, that contained the starch was then run into a series of tanks. There were five tanks about ten feet high and ten feet in diameter with an agitator in the center of each. The milk in the tanks was allowed to settle overnight and the starch, being heavier, sank to the bottom while the lighter pulp collected on the top. In the morning a man would be put into the tank to scrape off the pulp from the top, then water

pipes and an agitator further reduced the moisture to about 20% after several days. The next step was to place the starch in an old flour screen consisting of octagonal reels covered with about 100-mesh cloth that shifted the coontie to its final shape. In the final step the starch went into paper-lined burlap bags and was shipped off to Loose Wiles or National Biscuit or other bakeries.

Actually there must have been a lot of dust in the drying operations, but the Hurst Mill

terrific. The cabins for the men who worked at the mill were also located in this glade. When Morningstar took over the plant, the condition in which the workers lived so upset George Muller that he got permission to buy some high land next to the mill from the FEC Railway. He secured five acres for \$969 with 1/3 cash down and payments of \$200 per year. Here the workers' homes were built.

The A. B. Hurst Mill operations came to an end with the 1926 hurricane. Mr. Muller came back from New York to find the place an absolute shambles. He found pieces of sheet metal miles from the factory wrapped around trees — not with the corrugations but across them. The boiler, a tremendously heavy thing, had been blown off its foundation and into the glade. There was nothing left to salvage and no insurance. Two dump trucks in usable condition were given to the City of South Miami where they became the first garbage collection units. A few of the mules came back to stand around the factory. Nobody had any money to buy anything so they were also given away, one big white one to Emil Cotton to start growing tomatoes.

However, the writing on the wall had come for the Florida arrowroot starch business even before the hurricane. Continued development in the area was making the raw material hard to come by and it was impossible to cultivate it. In addition the Food and Drug Administration in 1925 had ruled

COOMPTIE COOKING

FLORIDA ARROWROOT CREAM

In a double boiler, put one quart of milk; when hot add two tablespoonfuls of Florida arrowroot starch mixed with a little milk; stir and cook ten minutes; add one and one-half cupfuls sugar, pinch salt; remove from fire and add one pint cream; flavor to taste; when cold freeze. Chocolate dissolved and added is also good in this.

ARROWROOT DROP CAKES

Cream one-half cup of sugar with one-half cup of butter, beat separately three eggs, stir beaten yolks into butter and sugar also a level cup of Florida

arrowroot starch in which a teaspoonful of baking powder has been mixed; last add whites of eggs little by little; flavor with grated rind of lemon, fill tins half full. Bake moderately to a light brown.

CECROPIA

This peculiar finger-shaped fruit much resembles the fig. It can be eaten fresh from the tree or made into a paste as is done with figs, for cake filling. One cup fruit, one-half cup sugar, one-half cup water. Boil until thick and spread between layers of cake. If needed to thicken, a teaspoonful of corn starch or arrowroot may be added.

was added and the mixture stirred up and allowed to settle again. This was repeated until the starch was fairly white, usually about three times.

After removal from the vats, the starch was reduced to milk again and placed in an old sugar centrifuge, revolving at high speed, throwing the moisture out of it. The starch was retained by a canvas cover on the outside of the centrifuge. From there the starch, still about 40% moist, was put into the drying room where a series of steam

people were not familiar enough with the hazards to worry about it. Several years later one of the Morningstar plants at Hawthorne, New Jersey, blew up because of lazy housekeeping, killing eleven and injuring thirty employees. At Kendall they were lucky and got away with it.

The mill had no use for the waste from the roots and it had always been their custom to pump it into the glade 500 feet behind the mill. This soon fermented and, especially in hot weather, the stink was

Continued on Page 12

TANNIN FOR TANNERS

In the early 1900s leather was one of the most important of the recognized staple products of the world as it moved the wheels of machinery and contributed so much to clothing necessities and the comforts of home life. To make raw skins usable they were tanned and transformed into leather. The principal tanning agent is tannin contained in the bark of a number of plants. The manufacture of tanning extracts for the tanners was a comparatively new business, and the new combinations and processes produced much better leather in a much shorter time.

The Manetta Company was established on the Miami River in 1904 for the purpose of extracting tannic acid from the bark of the great mangrove thickets in the area both on the mainland and on Miami Beach. When they realized the local supply would soon be depleted, they decided to locate a processing plant along the Shark River.

As only the raw material was on the site, a great deal of work had to be done. As early as 1904 work began on building a 2½ acre platform on pilings, to raise the operation above the mangrove swamp. Offices and quarters for white employees, machine sheds, maintenance shops and drying sheds built on the platform were completed, while up the river a series of houses built on stilts provided homes for the Negro workers brought in to cut the trees and strip off the bark. In 1908 three barge loads of machinery were moved from the Miami plant to the Shark River.

The tannic acid content of the mangroves was high, but the cost of production was

even higher. Everything used, including all fresh water, had to be brought in. The owners had hoped to use the mangrove lumber left after the debarking as an additional cash product. However, they found no way to dry the



An early Miami tannin factory that extracted the tannic acid used in leather tanning. The first Miami factory was established in 1904. (Photo from the Jaudon Collection, HASF.)

boards without cracking and had to give up that part of the operation.

The 1910 hurricane brought the business to an abrupt halt, and no attempt was made to repair the factory until the submarines and the embargo of World War I created a drastic shortage in raw materials from India and the Malay Peninsula for the manufacture of tanning extracts. The Manetta Company resumed production and operated intermittently until 1923.

Edward Atwell, who worked for the company from 1916 until the close of operations, recalls some of the hardships they endured. Fresh water was always scarce — in fact the company converted from steam boilers to diesel operation as the results of the drainage of the Everglades were already being felt. The men lived on boats until the two-story living quarters on

shore were repaired. They painted their screens with oil to keep out the sandflies. In the mornings they crawled from under their mosquito bars and ran up and down the beach as they dressed to try to avoid the hordes of mos-

quitoes. Atwell at 78 felt years of breathing smoke from the black mangrove smudge posts had permanently damaged his lungs.

After operations ceased Barron Collier bought some of the Manetta Company's machinery for use in his development in the city of Everglades. Residents along the coast salvaged much of the timber and sheet metal and hauled it home for their own use. The remnants of an old barge still lay in a nearby creek, and hurricane Donna uncovered two old steel boilers from the pre-diesel days back in the mangrove swamp. The remainder has gradually rotted away.

Another group of men with years of experience in the tanning business were inspired by the shortages created by World War I to try their luck in the Miami area in the manufacture of tanning extracts. Mr. Walter J. Lloyd,

who had invented a new, much shorter and improved method of tanning in the late 1800s and had caused a complete revolution in the methods then employed, was one of the members. His extracts, which improved the tannage and shortened the time required from 45 to 9 days, used a combination of extracts which were sold to the tanners already mixed.

One of the principal ingredients used in tanning was gambier, a woody vine from the Far East. Mr. Lloyd's problem was to find a substitute for gambier which could be made from products obtainable in the United States. He came to Miami and commenced experiments with the tannic acids found in palmetto and mangrove. Most of the mangrove bark had heretofore been imported from Africa. His experiments were quite successful, and tests made at the Lawrence Tannery showed that leather tanned with straight palmetto was even superior to leather tanned with straight gambier. Some of the combinations of palmetto and mangrove extracts gave even better color and more plumpness and toughness to the leather.

Consequently the Paltonic Extract and Tanning Company was formed under the laws of the State of Florida to manufacture and sell a tanning extract under the copyright name of "Paltanic". The experimental company was located at North River Drive and 15th Avenue, in Miami, and the 1920 City Directory listed the officers as L. B. Boyd and W. J. Lloyd. The company leased "some 30,000 acres of the finest mangrove in the state and ly-

Continued on Page 10

MY THIRTY SIX YEARS WITH BURDINE'S

by Nelle Coates



One day soon after I started to work Roddy and I were the only passengers on the elevator, and he asked if I was the same little Nelle that he knew when he was a schoolboy and delivered groceries to my mother's kitchen. We both laughed when he said he always tried to have a peanut or bit of candy in his pocket so he could see my smile when he gave it to me. He was a wonderful boss and we all enjoyed working for him.

But I had been at Burdine's only two months when the 1926 hurricane hit — just in time for me to be a part of the mopping up, for some windows were blown out, papers wet, and records blown away, but still the people needed service. Everyone did anything and everything they could at this time to get the store back to order. The management made a list of every employee who did not report to work following the hurricane and sent a car to their homes to see if they needed help. They found one dear lady ill and alone and got her out of a wrecked house and into a hospital.

The F. E. C. railroad offered free fare away from Miami for anyone who wanted to leave Miami after the hurricane and many boom-timers left. It was amazing how many Burdine's employees left, some with no goodbyes. I fell heir to one of the deserted jobs and moved up a step.

The employees of Burdine's came to feel like a big family. We all rejoiced when Burdine's acquired the old Biscayne Hotel corner at Miami Avenue and Flagler and could expand. We were thrilled with the beautiful new store, so much larger, but we

had to become acquainted with the new location of everything. We used to have employee meetings before opening hour and small prizes were given to those who could correctly tell the location of departments and merchandise.

And then the escalators! Perhaps they were the first in Miami. We found that parents were allowing school children to come down to ride our escalators as a reward for getting their lessons. We lived through many anxious hours, as customers stumbled, and some fell, in trying to learn to ride the escalators. Children sometimes came with bare feet — ten toes to dig into the steps and get injured — and they all had a desire to hold their hands on the railing as it disappeared "just to see how far it went" and a few got their fingers nipped. Some children would race up the down steps and really make it to the top. One thing all of us employees had to know was how to turn off the escalators.

Another thing we all did was watch for shoplifters. Sometimes we would watch the same woman for days before we would see her take an article and drop it into a side slit in a coat or into a big bag. The arrest was never made until the thief had left the store. One day a nicely dressed lady was observed taking several items of cosmetics from the counter. "Mr. Mac" quietly followed her outside to make the arrest and when he stopped her she slapped him so hard that his face was blistered all afternoon.

One thrill we all shared with the buyers was watching the unpacking of merchandise from foreign countries, like pottery from Italy or fabrics from England. And we all took pride in Burdine's expansion to other stores in South Florida and in its development as a style center. I found merchandising an interesting career and I stayed with Burdine's until retirement.



Harvest Committee Co-Chairmen Pat Brandt and Bixie Matheson busily confer with volunteers as plans are made for the HASF country fair. The event is scheduled for November 6 and 7 at the Dade County Youth Fairgrounds at Tamiami Park. Featured exhibits include craft demonstrations, music, authentic foods, contests and more. (See story on page two).

My family came to Miami by boat just ahead of the railroad in 1896 and I was born here. As a child I remember going to Burdine's to buy material for school clothes and watching the Indian women buying cotton of many colors for their dresses and men's shirts. Burdine's was small then, and the owner, Mr. William Burdine, who had come from Bartow in 1898, often waited on the customers himself. He was a very pleasant man and knew all his customers by name. When I was only six or eight he would call me by name.

As I grew so did Burdine's store. I think it was in July 1914 that Burdine's held the first fashion show. They built a stage and ramp near the front door and had seating for people along each side and upstairs in the balcony. I was a schoolgirl then and my friends and I enjoyed peeking in to watch the beautiful models and their lovely clothes. Little did I dream that I would spend 36½ years of my life working for Burdine's, and even become president of the employees' Seniority Club in the 1940s.

I started to work July 10, 1926. By this time Roddy Burdine was the president of Burdine's for his father had died.

REFLECTIONS ON BLACK HISTORY: Miami's Incorporation

by Dorothy Jenkins Fields

July 28, 1896: Miami Becomes a City

Black men literally built early Miami. Before the territory was incorporated, black men worked in the wilderness clearing the land. Later they laid the rails for Miami's first railroad. According to John Sewell, the white man in charge of the railroad laborers, twelve black men are credited with starting the City of Miami.

In his book, *John Sewell's Memoirs and History of Miami*, he recalls Henry M. Flagler's decision to extend the Florida East Coast Railway from Palm Beach to Miami. Sewell was instructed to select some men to accompany him to Miami. Flagler suggested that Sewell not take too many men to start with as he would have trouble housing them, also getting supplies to feed them.

On Tuesday afternoon, March 3, 1896, John Sewell and his brother E. G. landed at the dock at Avenue D, now Miami Avenue. Accompanying them were these twelve black men: A. W. Brown, Phillip Bowman, Jim Hawkins, Warren Merridy, Richard Mangrom, Romeo Fashaw, Dave Heartley, Sim Anderson, Scipio Coleman, J. B. Brown, William Collier, and Joe Thompson. A. W. Brown, who later became a minister, bears the distinction of throwing the first shovel of dirt, starting to make the city. He was the leader of the gang.

The Florida East Coast Railway reached Miami the latter part of April 1896. On May 15, the Miami Metropolis, the first newspaper, appeared.

Mrs. Fields, a Dade County school teacher, is also a historical researcher.

The Metropolis encouraged incorporation of Miami without delay. John Sewell surveyed the town, going to each shack, tent and boarding house making inquiry as to how many people lived in each place. As required by law, the intent to incorporate and the proposed corporate limits were published in a regular weekly newspaper. The legal notice or advertisement appeared for five regular insertions, the first being on June 19 and the last on July 17, 1896.

Notice was made to all registered voters residing within the proposed limits of the corporation to assemble on the 28th day of July, A.D. 1896, at two o'clock in the afternoon, standard time, in the room over "The Lobby," which building was situated on Avenue "D" in the town of Miami, Florida, to select officers and to organize a municipal government.

The chairman announced that it would be necessary to have two-thirds of the qualified electors present at the meeting. The County Supervisor of Registration certified that there were 424 registered voters in the territory to be incorporated, consisting of 243 white and 181 black. Of those registered voters 370 were present at the meeting, 208 white and 162 black.

The transcript of the proceedings of the Meeting held July 28th A.D. 1896 for the Incorporation of the City of Miami lists the following black men who were present at the meeting:

Austin, Silas	Bright, Harry
Austin, Plum	Bascombe, W.D.
Burns, H.W.	Carr, C.C.
Brimer, June	Coleman, Scott C.
Bevins, Will	Caswell, B.J.
Bell, U.G.	Carr, J.C.
Bevins, L.D.	Cunningham, J.
Burgess, John	Cooper, Joseph
Branch, Gw.	Clarey, J.S.
Brown, J.D.	Cohen, A.
Brown, J.B.	Coleman, Scipio
Brown, Q.W.	Collier, Wm.
Bowman, Phillip	Campbell, Harrison
Blue, Anthony	Crockett, Lee
Bowman, Wm.	Carr, J.B.
Byrd, W.	Cole, Will
Belcher, S.A.	Durham, Wyatt
Bennett, George	Duckell, Asbury
Bryant, Lee	Dolphus, Jasper
Blackston, Laudon	Dixon, I.D.
Bailey, P.J.	Dossey, Monroe
Bellamy, B.	
Barrington, Lee	

Duckett, Peter	Millbrook, Jake
Davis, W.D.	Manning, Hal
Daniels, Peter	Miniard, T.M.
Davis, Alfred	Moor, Marnard
Delapree, Chas.	Mingo, T.H.
Dickson, J.E.	Murphy, J.W.
Deerham, F.	Marshall, Jessie
Dukes, Gw. S.	Mack, Anderson
Evins, J.W.	Miller, Thomas
Evins, M.W.	Mathis, Herman
English, W.M.	McWilliams, Thos.
Foster, Berry	Payne, S.C.
Fashaw, R.F.	Philbrick, J.H.
Frazier, Lewis	Pope, Ivy
Fennel, Henry	Reynolds, Frank
Granberry, Gw.	Ruffing, Robt.
Green, Gw. H.	Richardson, Albert
Gorsby, F.G.	Ross, John
Griffin, Gw.	Reddick, W.S.P.
Griffin, Jim	Richardson, E.W.
Gilbert, Thomas	Richardson, A.G.
Green, Dave	Stevens, M.
Griffin, Sabr	Stewart, W.A.
Games, H.C.	Stokes, Allan
Gavin, Sam	Smith, John H.
Harris, H.H.	Scott, C.C.
Hartley, Dave	Steed, Jessie
Harris, Lucius H.	Stark, D.E.
Howard, J.H.	Settle, J.E.
Hammond, Jas. F.	Shine, T.B.
Head, R.M.	Stringer, Samuel
Hunter, J.J.	Steward, Wash.
Hawkins	Smith, Mike
Hall, J.D.	Scott, Gw.
Hamer, M.R.	Strode, Lewish
Hurd, J.J.	Turner, Gw.
Hamilton, J.H.	Tramwell, J.M.
Henry, Charles	Turner, Charles
Henderson, Nat	Taylor, C.D.
Johnson, Bradish W.	Tyner, Lindsay
Jones, Sam	Tony, John
Jones, Charlie	Teete, Austin
Johnson, C.J.S.	Travis, Ed.
Jones, J.T.	Williams, Albert
Jackson, Abe	Williams, J.E.
Jackson, D.J.	Worthy, Ben
Joe, Smokey	Willis, A.
Kidd, Lewis	West, W.M.
Lightburn, A.C.	Wilkins, D.A.
Lewis, W.L.	Walker, Sam
Long, George	Wilson, Jessie
Lewis, J.J.	Wallace, P.M.
Lewis, Harry	Williams, Jas. H.
Mabry, D.B.	Williams, Gw.
Mangram, R.	Whalen, Hampton
Mickins, H.	Warn, Wash.
Mitchell, M.T.	Williams, Brist
Merriday, Warren	

The chairman then ascertained that more than two-thirds of the qualified electors residing in the proposed corporate limits were present at the meeting; he declared that it was now in order to proceed to the further business: deciding upon a corporate name, corporate seal and corporate limits of the municipality, and to elect officers.

Prior to the election John Sewell admits to campaigning and to stacking the ticket with Flagler's men. Dan Cosgrove, Tom Lymmus and John Sewell appointed themselves as an executive committee with the thought of making one of the Flagler men the first mayor of Miami. Only one or two of the minor offices were contested. One of Sewell's candidates either forgot about its being election day, or went fishing. Just

before election time a one-armed water boy was noticed electioneering for himself. Sewell had to get busy as he had in reserve what he called his black artillery. He had about one hundred negroes registered and qualified to vote, and he held them in reserve for emergencies. He brought in the artillery and saved the Flagler candidate by a large majority. A mayor and seven aldermen were elected.

THE HARVEST

Nov. 6 and 7

A Real
Country Fair



SEE PAGE 2

Continued from Page 8

ing adjacent to it 15,000 acres of palmetto, a total of 45,000 acres of raw material all in one body, a fifty-year supply". In addition to the tannic acid production, the company planned to use the crushed pulp of the palmetto for fuel, collect the ashes from it to extract potash, make a dye from the residue of the tanning extract and make a series of brushes from the fiber which nature had wrapped so carefully around the base of the palmetto leaf stem.

Information as to just what happened to Paltonic is missing — perhaps someone reading this will know — but, no doubt, as with the Manetta Company, increased cheap supplies from the Far East and Africa when shipping was resumed at the end of World War I, tolled the death knell for the local tannic acid operations.

CASTOR OIL HELPED TO WIN THE WAR



Castor oil is valuable for lubricating gasoline engines, since its properties do not change much under a great range of temperature and pressure. In fact, castor oil has been widely used for lubricating racing-car engines at Indianapolis and elsewhere.

Before 1917 the United States imported, mostly from India, a million bushels a year of castor beans and nearly a million gallons of oil, but a shortage of shipping during the first world war made this long haul difficult. Since the castor bean, a fast-growing, weed-like plant, is common in the tropics, the War Department, to insure a supply of castor oil, contracted with Helm & Walker, a local partnership, to promote the cultivation in Florida of the castor bean. With an allotment of ten thousand acres for the east coast of Florida, the contractors advertised in January 1918, asking farmers to apply for contracts. Seed would be supplied, not only to farmers but to business men, school teachers, and in fact anyone with a plot of ground. Cultivation and fertilizer programs would be recommended and a

guarantee of \$3 per bushel made by the War Department.

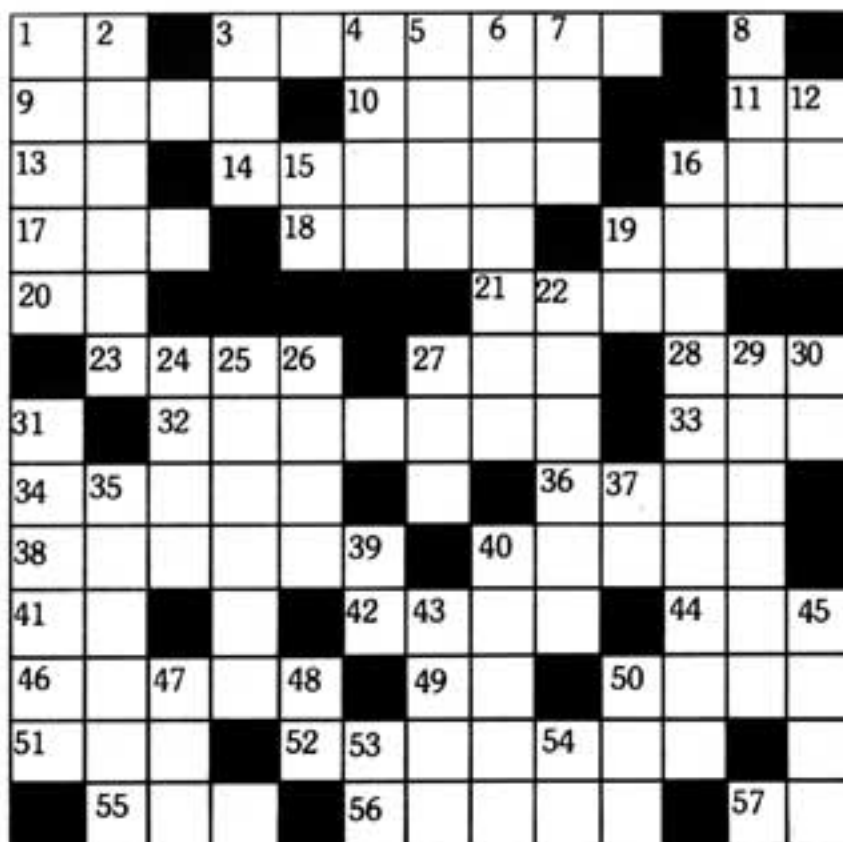
Estimates were that a crop large enough to permit tractor cultivation could be brought in for \$40 an acre, including soil preparation, planting, fertilizer, cultivation, and irrigation. At \$3 a bushel, the farmer could expect a return of \$90 to \$120, not the greatest return in the world but a guaranteed one. Evidently government red tape was well known even then, since hints were dropped that standards for the crop would not be impossibly strict.

Castor beans are embedded in a coat which must be penetrated by moisture before the seed will germinate. This takes two weeks in moist soil, but the process can be hastened a great deal if the seed is first soaked in near-boiling water, which is then allowed to cool down for twenty-four hours. The use of a corn planter set to deposit two seeds every eight feet, in rows eight feet apart, was recommended. It was also pointed out that castor beans could be planted between the rows of citrus trees or other crops that might be near maturity.

The castor bean is a warm-weather crop, hence planting was recommended about the middle of February, after serious danger of frost, to bring the crop to maturity in early summer. The pods were to be cut off and threshed, removing the beans from the husks. This threshing was normally done by hand in India, accounting in part for the much lower cost of imported castor beans.

Continued on Page 12

HISTORY IS A MYSTERY



ACROSS

1. Measure of type
3. Flagler St. before 1919
9. Festive event
10. Gloomy
11. Price trend
13. F. E. C. or A. C. L.
14. Miami's first mayor
16. One thousand two
17. To strain at making a living
18. In book or on tree
19. Leak slowly
20. Served by Cuban host
21. Popular Florida trees
23. Something owed
27. Collecting agency
28. What? in Little Havana
32. Hunting ---- (Later Cutler)
33. Indian (not a Seminole)
34. Anew
36. Sign on I-95
38. Protector of Florida forest
40. Get together
41. Six
42. Negative contraction
44. Recent Dade mayor
46. Growing out of
49. Mountain time
50. Money in Mexico
51. Resident
52. Disavowals
55. Pronoun referring to Mrs. Tuttle
56. ---- Mettair, early sheriff
57. -- Pierce or Myers

DOWN

1. Feather valued like gold, 1905
2. Tagged
3. Sailor
4. Girl's name
5. Girl's name
6. Early town-- today's N. Miami Beach
7. Attempt
8. Question
12. Eat it at Seybold's, 1910
15. -- Portal
16. Summer nuisance
19. All right
22. Agree
24. Owned land which became Miami
25. Partner of Mr. Curtiss
26. Quality of sound
27. Office holders
29. Speaks
30. Electrical engineer
31. School in Coconut Grove
35. ---- Wilson, founder, HASF
37. Eleven
39. Lincoln or Red
40. Up to
43. Big Neighbor to Jordan Marsh
45. Usable part of coontie
47. One kind of can
48. -- Romfh, Miami mayor
50. Strand of knitting yarn
53. -- Douglas, Burdine's rival
54. Notorious -- Capone

Answers on Page 12



HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA
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History Is No Longer A Mystery

Continued from Page 7

Across

- 1) EM
- 3) TWELFTH
- 9) GALA
- 10) DOUR
- 11) UP
- 13) RR
- 14) REILLY
- 16) MII
- 17) EKE
- 18) LEAF
- 19) OOZE
- 20) TE
- 21) OAKS
- 23) DEBT
- 27) IRS
- 28) QUE
- 32) GROUNDS
- 33) UTE
- 34) AGAIN
- 36) EXIT
- 38) RANGER
- 40) UNITE
- 41) VI
- 42) DONT
- 44) ORR
- 46) ENATE
- 49) MT
- 50) PESO
- 51) RES
- 52) DENIALS
- 55) SHE
- 56) BILLY
- 57) FT

Down

- 1) EGRET
- 2) MARKED
- 3) TAR
- 4) EDIE
- 5) LOLA
- 6) FULFORD
- 7) TRY
- 8) QUIZ
- 12) PIE
- 15) EL
- 16) MOSQUITOES
- 19) OK
- 22) ASSENT
- 24) EGAN
- 25) BRIGHT
- 26) TONE
- 27) INS
- 29) UTTERS
- 30) EE
- 31) CARVER
- 35) GAINES
- 37) XI
- 39) RD
- 40) UNTIL
- 43) OMNI
- 45) ROOT
- 47) ASH
- 48) ED
- 50) PLY
- 53) EB
- 54) AL

that coontie starch could not be sold as arrowroot. The true arrowroot is made from maranta, a cigar-like tuber that can be planted under cultivation.

Some of the Bahamian diggers had told George Muller that coontie was available in the islands. In 1925 he hired a 60-foot boat from the H. J. Heinz Company for 30 days at \$25 per day. In Bimini they picked up a cook and a pilot, Percy Cavill, an Australian swimmer who had gone on the beach but was still an excellent pilot. They covered the Bahamas but found nothing worthwhile. They tried St. Croix and St. Thomas unsuccessfully and

then heard that arrowroot was being manufactured at St. Vincents. This turned out to be a mill manufacturing true arrowroot in small volume. Morningstar did not buy the plant, but acted as consultant, modernized the plant, located outlets and advertised in the States. Mr. Muller worked with the St. Vincents arrowroot mill until 1965.

A metal marker commemorating the A. B. Hurst Mill was erected at the Kendall site in 1956, donated by the Greater Miami Industrial Exposition. John B. Hurst, son of the founder, was present along with Thomas W. Hagan, President of the

Historical Association of Southern Florida, and Randolph Bailey, chairman of the exposition committee. A few years ago for some reason the marker was moved to the tennis entrance of Dante Fascell Park, but it is no longer there.

Continued from Page 11

At the end of the war in November 1918, attempts were being made to develop a combination castor-bean crushing mill and fertilizer factory, which would not only release the oil but also use the castor pumace, in combination with fish meal and other locally available raw material.