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On the Cover: North bank of the Miami River, ca. 1899. On the front, to the right,
is the St. Lucie steamer coming into the Miami River. The property of Flagler's
Royal Palm Hotel, which opened 100 years ago, is on the back. (HASF x-93-1)
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Editor's Foreword

This has been quite a year for history in Miami and South Florida. The number, quality and variety of events, exhibits and publications surrounding the City of Miami's one-hundredth birthday observance far exceeded what many of us had anticipated. I felt the excitement throughout the year from enthusiastic tour-goers, the institutions I had the good fortune to visit and speak before, and the wonderful persons who called to share a special memory or to offer an item of memorabilia. The birthday itself was one for the books, with so many meaningful happenings coming together on a beautiful weekend filled with celebration. Clearly, the centennial observance provided the beleaguered city of Miami with a great lift at a critical juncture in its history.

Appearing in the centennial year, this issue of Tequesta, a journal that has been offering quality articles to readers for more than one-half of Miami's corporate existence, represents one step toward attaining my goal of broadening its offerings to include, in addition to Miami, other parts of south Florida and even points south. With this in mind, we offer readers an important article by historians Canter Brown and Larry Rivers on African American leaders in late nineteenth-century South Florida, defined here as the area from Tampa through the Florida Keys. This topic has come under little scrutiny until now. One of the men profiled here is Alexander C. Lightbourn, Sr., who was a prominent figure at the City of Miami's incorporation meeting, the founder of Greater Bethel AME church, Miami's first African-American congregation, and a leader in a host of other matters both here and elsewhere in Florida.

Peg Niemiec’s article on Elliott Key, the longest in a chain of islands in south Biscayne Bay, traces its “many lives” and legends. With its rich array of legendary characters, hardy and industrious settlers and layered history, Elliott Key has intrigued many south Floridians for more than a century. Niemiec’s essay examines these elements in an interesting, informative manner.

William Brown and Karen Hudson have made splendid use of the rich archives found within the Special Collections section of the University of Miami’s Otto G. Richter Library. In examining the massive records of Henry M. Flagler’s Model Land Company, authors Brown and Hudson have provided us with a behind-the-scenes peek at the marketing strategies and developmental activities of the Flagler organiza-
tion in regard to the vast acreage it received from the state of Florida for extending the railroad south to the tip of the peninsula and beyond. The Model Land Company pursued an extremely ambitious agenda with this land, which sometimes gave rise to complicated legal problems over its disposition.

Finally, we are excited over the increasing number of articles coming into Tequesta from graduate students, professionals and the general public eager to share their love of the area's history with readers of this journal. I encourage you, the history-loving public, to continue to send articles to Tequesta for consideration. We will be only too happy to work with you in this enriching endeavor.

Paul S. George
Tequesta Editor
African Americans in South Florida: A Home and a Haven for Reconstruction-era Leaders

by Larry E. Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr.

Dating from 1528 when the slave Estevanico landed at Tampa Bay with the Panfilo de Narvaez expedition, African Americans have contributed substantially to South Florida’s rich and diverse heritage. Unfortunately, memories of their lives and efforts too often have dimmed or flickered to extinction when placed in the care of historians of previous generations who sought to justify or, at least, not challenge Jim Crow society and its reading of the past. Compounding the problem, South Florida has grown so dynamically during the past century that wave after wave of newcomers has arrived with little understanding that permanent settlers toiled to make their livings in the area long before Henry Plant’s railroad tracks entered Tampa in 1883 or Henry Flagler’s trains arrived at isolated Miami thirteen years later.

Two aspects of South Florida’s African American history may prove especially surprising to today’s residents. During Florida’s Reconstruction period and, in some cases, for decades thereafter, black leaders held public office in the region, participating in decisions and political initiatives that had state and national, as well as local, implications. Further, as restrictions upon black political involvement became increasingly severe after the late 1880s, South Florida offered a home and retirement haven to some of the state’s most-dynamic black leaders. Just as do today’s retirees, they came to love the area, where their remains rest to this day.

Larry E. Rivers is Professor of History, Department of History, Political Science/Public Administration, Geography, and African American Studies at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. Canter Brown, Jr., is Historian in Residence, Tampa Bay History Center, Tampa.
To set the context for the story of South Florida’s nineteenth-century African American political leadership, perhaps a brief historical and demographic overview might prove helpful. The Civil War ended in 1865, but not until the advent of Congressional or Military Reconstruction in 1867 were Florida’s adult black males afforded the vote and a chance to participate in the state’s political life. Republican rule then commenced in the summer of 1868 and lasted until January 1877. Subsequently, African American leaders strove for over a decade to regain their lost statewide power, while exercising substantial influence within many municipal governments. Passage of a state poll tax in 1889 thereafter effectively undercut their base of support and presaged black disfranchisement.\(^2\)

South Florida at the time of Reconstruction comprised all of the peninsula’s southern half, organized as the counties of Hillsborough, Polk, Brevard, Manatee, Dade and Monroe. In 1880 their combined population totalled only about 25,000. Of that number over 40 percent resided in Monroe County where lay the state’s largest city, Key West. Blacks made up just under 20 percent of the regional total, ranging from a low of 4 percent in Polk and Manatee counties to 26 and 29 percent, respectively, in Dade and Monroe. In the succeeding two decades area population quadrupled, in recognition of which legislators carved out new counties of Osceola, DeSoto and Lee. Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century approximately 96,000 individuals called South Florida home. African American population totals had climbed by then to 22 percent, with Hillsborough, Polk, Dade and Monroe exceeding the average. In Monroe’s case, 32 percent of the 1900 population total represented black residents.\(^3\)

From the vantage point of the first year of the new century, African Americans in South Florida could look back upon thirty-three years during which members of their race had held some, and sometimes numerous, political offices in the area. The era had opened after the passage of the Congressional Reconstruction acts in 1867 with the appointment of three-man boards of voter registrars for each county, one of whose members had to be black. State registrar Ossian B. Hart named the respected Washington Clarke to Monroe’s board. In Polk he turned to ex-slave Stepney Blount Dixon, for Manatee he chose Robert Taylor (1867) and Union army veteran John Lomans (1868), and in Hillsborough he placed Frederick Newberry on the panel. For Dade, where but fifteen individuals (two of whom were African Americans)
would register to vote in 1867, he asked Key West’s future postmaster Nelson Francis deSales English to serve.4

From these beginnings black political involvement blossomed in South Florida. The liberal Florida constitution drafted in 1868 permitted the governor to appoint virtually all county officials except for constables and state legislators. From 1868 until the Democratic Redemption of 1877, Republican governors Harrison Reed, Ossian B. Hart, and Marcellus Stearns designated hundreds of African Americans to local positions. Although Polk, Manatee and Brevard counties saw no African Americans called into county office, the story evolved differently elsewhere in South Florida. In Hillsborough County five black men sat on the county commission, including Mills Holloman, Cyrus Charles, Robert Johnson, John Thomas and Adam Holloman. At one time in 1871 they comprised the body’s majority. Meanwhile, Frederick Newberry and Peter W. Bryant presided as justices of the peace. In Dade, Andrew Price sat as county commissioner during 1869-1873 and again from 1874-1876.5

Monroe County deserves individual attention due to the numbers and prominence of its African American officials. By gubernatorial appointment, James D. English, Benjamin W. Roberts and Robert W. Butler served on the county commission and, during 1874-1877, James A. Roberts executed the responsibilities of sheriff. Local voters also placed black leaders in office. They elected James A. Roberts and Charles Brown as county constables in the early 1870s. Even after Reconstruction ended, they persisted in favoring some black candidates. In 1879 Robert Gabriel represented the county in the state legislature, as did Charles Shavers in 1887. In 1888 county residents chose the state’s first popularly elected black sheriff, Charles F. Dupont, and Florida’s only nineteenth-century African American county judge, James Dean. The achievements of Dupont and Dean merit a closer look at these two remarkable individuals.6

Sheriff Charles F. Dupont’s story reflects a true Horatio Alger rise in life. Born a slave at Tampa on September 3, 1861, he learned carpentry skills from his father Rome Dupont, who had relocated the family to Key West by the Civil War’s end. By the mid-1880s the young man had involved himself in the city’s Republican organization and, seemingly, also had joined with many fellow islanders in support of the Knights of Labor national labor organization, which had gained significant political influence in Monroe County. Elected sheriff on the
Knights-endorsed Republican ticket in 1888, Dupont served a four-year term in a manner that earned him community respect. On one occasion in 1891 his personal courage and presence of mind saved a prisoner's life from the demands of a local mob. Dupont died at Key West on September 29, 1938.7

Judge James Dean's life offers a somewhat more-refined counter-point to that of Sheriff Dupont. Born at Ocala on February 14, 1858, he attended some of the best of Florida's schools founded after the Civil War for African Americans. Beginning in 1874 he studied at Jacksonville's Cookman Institute, from which he graduated in 1878. By 1883 he had received the degree of Bachelor of Law from Howard University, and, in the following year, he achieved admission to the District of Columbia bar. In 1887 he successfully sought a license to practice in Florida courts. Active in Florida politics from the late 1870s, Dean was described by one correspondent in 1884 as "courteous, thoroughly posted in parliamentary law, and eloquent withal." His 1888 election as Florida's first black county judge provoked demands by white conservatives for his removal from office by Governor Francis P. Fleming. Fleming complied in 1889. As a Key West man put it, "[Dean] was ousted from the position by members of his own party, because of his intelligence and his refusal to be whipped into line, and because he was in their way." Later, Dean practiced law in Key West and Jacksonville. During the period he also joined the clergy of the AME church. He passed away at Jacksonville on December 18, 1914.8

While South Florida counties benefitted from the service of men such as Dupont and Dean, two regional towns witnessed black involvement in municipal government. At Tampa, Cyrus Charles achieved election to the town council in 1869, followed by Joseph A. Walker in 1887. Key West's African American officialdom dwarfed that of Tampa. At least ten men—William M. Artrell, Benjamin W. Roberts, Jose Juan Figueroa, James A. Roberts, Robert Gabriel, Charles R. Adams, Frank Adams, Washington A. Cornell, R. M. Stevens and Charles Shavers—labored as aldermen at some time between 1875 and 1907. Additionally, John V. Cornell served as city clerk (1875-1876) and Frank Adams acted as assessor (1886-1887, 1888-1889).9

The accomplishments of these men deserve modern recognition and respect, but South Florida played a further and important role in the lives of the state's black leadership by offering the possibility of a
African Americans in South Florida

haven from the onset of legally enforced racial discrimination and bars to political participation. That it did so rested upon several foundations: regional race relations patterns; the availability of United States government jobs; and the possibilities for ministers, educators, and other professional men in Florida’s largest city and at some other area locations.

As to race relations patterns, the region retained at least some flavor of the more-tolerant racial mores of Spanish colonial Florida. Writing from Tampa in 1857, future Union army general and Freedmen’s Bureau head Oliver O. Howard noticed the atmosphere. “Slavery here is a very mild form,” he remarked. “You wouldn’t know the negroes were slaves unless you were told.” Similarly, in 1853 at Key West a newspaper correspondent observed:

The negroes, in a very large proportion [seemingly] outnumber the whites, and are possessed of such freedom as renders their living in juxtaposition a matter almost of impossibility, and the day does not beam far distant in the horizon when the African sceptre will sway supreme.

Despite incidents of racial violence during and after Reconstruction, the patterns persisted to some extent — particularly in coastal areas, and especially at Key West. When Monroe County voters chose a black county judge and sheriff in 1888, Lemuel W. Livingston boasted to the New York Age that Key West was “the freest town in the South, not even Washington excepted.” He continued:

There are no attempts at bulldozing and intimidation during campaigns and at elections here. No negroes are murdered here in cold blood, and there are no gross miscarriages of justice against them as is so frequently seen throughout the South, to her everlasting shame and disgrace.

Livingston concluded, “A vigilance committee here would meet with the warmest kind of reception and a ku klux clan would be unceremoniously run into the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean.” Unfortunately, Livingston did not recognize the threat posed at Key West by a minority of white residents who, within a short time, had colluded with
Democratic state officials to oust Judge James Dean from office and to place municipal government for a time in the hands of gubernatorial appointees.\textsuperscript{13} Still, his remarks honestly reflected circumstances as he observed them in 1888.

Even with state government in the hands of white, conservative Democrats after 1876, some government positions remained available for African Americans. Except for President Grover Cleveland’s two administrations (1885-1889 and 1893-1897), the White House rested in Republican control until 1913. Party incumbents through the period appointed blacks to offices of responsibility in Florida. Prime jobs included postmasterships, customs service inspectorships and internal revenue service positions.

Other jobs also beckoned. During the late-nineteenth century Baptist and Methodist churches enhanced their positions within the black community, and, reacting to South Florida’s tremendous growth, the denominations expanded their networks to encompass new and larger African American congregations in the southern peninsula. Key West and Tampa churches, because of their cities’ prominence as the state’s largest and soon-to-be largest urban centers, became prestige assignments. Ministers often had emerged to lead Florida blacks in politics, as well as in matters spiritual. The involvement continued after the end of Reconstruction, although another trend became discernable as politicians began moving into the ministry in a search for acceptable alternative employment. Accordingly, South Florida’s churches became home for many ex-officeholders from other areas of the state, and Key West and Tampa would host the elite of the political clergy.\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, South Florida schools and the need for businessmen to service black communities permitted employment to some of Florida’s one-time black officeholders. In the former case, Key West’s Douglass School provided the most-coveted area position. Founded in 1870, the institution was led in its formative years by Nassau-born educator William Middleton Artrell, who sat on Key West’s city council in 1875-1876. Artrell used the Douglass School position as a platform from which to urge the temperance cause upon black and white Floridians. He later served as principal of Jacksonville’s Stanton Institute before returning to the island city, where he died in 1903.\textsuperscript{15}

As Artrell offers an example of politically active educators, Owen B. Armstrong illustrates how former officeholders could retire to a South Florida business. A Pennsylvania-born Union army veteran, Armstrong
fought in Florida during the Civil War and remained in the vicinity of Tallahassee as a teacher and a carpenter. He attended the 1868 constitutional convention as a delegate from Leon and Wakulla counties and occupied a seat on the Leon County commission during 1869-1870. By the mid-1880s he had relocated to Punta Gorda, where on December 7, 1887, he served as one of the town's incorporators. Through the 1890s he conducted a grocery business that catered to white and black customers, and afterward he entered the restaurant business. All the while Armstrong remained a firm activist within the Republican party, attending district congressional nomination conventions, for instance, as late as 1904. He died at Punta Gorda on July 4, 1914.16

The experiences of the following individuals show how a combination of the factors already mentioned drew many other former officeholders to South Florida and kept a good number of them as area residents.

Alexander C. Lightbourn, Sr.'s journey to the southern peninsula began in Nassau and took him through most of Florida. Born in 1846, he was working twenty-three years later as an assistant teacher in Tallahassee. That year — 1869 — and the following year, he served as sergeant-at-arms of the Florida House of Representatives. Soon Governor Harrison Reed had appointed the young man as a justice of the peace in violent Gadsden County, in which capacity he worked until 1874. At Quincy he helped found the AME church and also emerged as a county Republican leader. Becoming a railroad postal employee in 1877, he remained in Gadsden until the mid-1880s, when he removed his family to Jacksonville. His Republican involvements continued there and evolved into a close association with the Knights of Labor. In the 1890s his work, still probably related to the postal system, took him to Cocoa and Palm Beach.17

Subsequently, Lightbourn moved to Miami, the intensity of his commitment to public affairs still evident. In 1896 he helped to achieve the incorporation of his new hometown. Almost one half of the men involved in the July 28 incorporation of Miami were African Americans, but, as one diarist recorded of the event, "Lightbourn delivered the best speech."18 The same year, Lightbourn represented Dade County at the state Republican convention and sat also as its representative on the state Republican executive committee. In 1897 he supervised the "Colored Schools of Miami" and urged local leaders to provide ad-
equate school facilities for black children. Lightbourn was also a founder of the Greater Bethel AME church, Miami’s first African-American congregation. At the century’s turn he continued to live at the family home on Fourth Street. He died in Miami in October 1908 and is buried there.  

Unlike Lightbourn, John Willis Menard did not remain in South Florida, but as an area resident he profoundly influenced state and national affairs. Menard was born free at Kaskaskia, Illinois, on April 3, 1838. Educated in local schools and at Iberia College, he labored during the Civil War in the United States Department of the Interior. In 1865 he moved to New Orleans, and voters there elected him to the United States Congress in 1868, although its white membership declined to seat him. Menard became a Jacksonville resident in the early 1870s. He sat in the Florida House of Representatives in 1874 and presided as a Duval County justice of the peace during 1874 to 1877. His book of poems, *Lays in Summer Lands*, was published in 1879.

By the time Menard’s poetry book came into print, Bourbon Democrats were consolidating their control of Florida government and the former legislator found himself seriously in need of employment. Within months of the publication, he accepted a Republican patronage position as inspector of customs at Key West. In 1882 Menard took control of the *Key West News*, later renamed the *Florida News*. As its editor he denounced the Bourbons and advocated the Independent movement’s call for coalition of good men from both races. Historian Jerrell H. Shofner has noted, “Menard was the most influential black editor [in Florida] speaking for and to blacks in the 1880s, and his vigorous editorials were aimed at the political, economic, moral, and educational improvement of his race.” President Grover Cleveland’s administration removed Menard from his Key West customs inspectorship in 1885. He relocated the *Florida News* to Jacksonville and continued it there as the *Southern Leader*. He died at Jacksonville on October 9, 1893, remembered — the *Florida Times-Union* declared — as “a man of brains and education” and “a good friend and wise counsellor to his race.”

Willis Menard’s South Florida sojourn launched him on a successful career as an editor, but Peter W. Bryant’s search for professional standing led him into law. Entering the world in Thomas County, Georgia, on October 18, 1853, he became a Floridian three years later when his family was taken to Tampa. In the Reconstruction days he organized Hillsborough County blacks for the Republican party, and
Governor Hart commissioned him a major in the state militia. He attended the Republican national convention as a delegate in 1876 and, eventually, sat on the First District Republican executive committee for twelve years. During 1877 to 1879 he acted as a justice of the peace. Afterward, he achieved a patronage position in the Key West Customs House.2

Bryant’s course shifted once the Democrats regained the White House. During the Cleveland Administration he attended Howard University’s law department with the support and encouragement of two South Florida white leaders, Judge James W. Locke of Key West and Joseph B. Wall of Tampa. He graduated in 1889. Bryant returned to Key West, still active in Republican political affairs, and opened a law practice. “The only colored lawyer in the city is Hon. Peter W. Bryant,” observed the state’s principal African American newspaper in 1895, “a young attorney at the bar, but who is rapidly building up a large practice.” The account added: “Mr. Bryant practices in all the courts — State and Federal, and has a large clientage. He is one of the most affable of men, ever ready for a business or social confab and numbers his friends by the hundreds.” Poor health limited Bryant’s activities after the turn of the century, and he sought medical care in New York City. He died there July 30, 1912, and was returned for burial to Key West.23

Although Peter Bryant left Hillsborough County in the late 1870s for better prospects at Key West, by the late 1890s growth had opened opportunities that drew numerous former public officials to Tampa. Two, in particular, came to hold federal positions of real authority and would remain in those offices well into the twentieth century.

The first of the two African American officeholders was Joseph Newman Clinton, the son of AME bishop Joseph N. Clinton. He was born at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1854, and graduated from Lincoln University nineteen years later. A teacher by profession, he came to Florida to work in the schools of Alachua County, but he soon accepted a position in the federal land office at Gainesville. Afterward, Clinton worked for a time as an inspector of customs at Pensacola. He won a two-year term on the Gainesville town council in 1883 and claimed a seat in the Florida House of Representatives in 1885.24

Following his legislative tenure, Clinton maintained a political interest while spending time with church, business and educational con-
cerns. In 1891 he joined the ministry of the AME church and, the next year, affiliated as well with the AME Zion church. Within four years he had become an AME presiding elder. As a distinguished and proven public servant and civic leader, the administration of President William McKinley turned to him in 1898 to run federal internal revenue collection operations at Tampa. Subsequently, Clinton occupied the position until 1913, when he was dismissed from office by the Democratic administration of President Woodrow Wilson. At the time, the *Tampa Tribune* related of him,

Clinton has been in charge of the office for 15 years, and its patrons give him credit for being efficient and polite. He has handled at least $10 million of the government’s money during his administration, and at no time has there been cause for questioning his honesty.

Never to return to federal office, Clinton tended his business investments at Tampa until his death on September 6, 1927.25

Henry Wilkins Chandler’s career took a similar path. A native of Bath, Maine, he was born on September 22, 1852. After graduating from Bath High School, he earned a bachelor’s degree from Bates College. During 1874 to 1876 he taught at Howard University while pursuing studies there in law. When his course of study was completed, he accepted a teaching position in Ocala. The Pennsylvania native achieved admission to the Florida bar in 1878. Within two years he had won election to the state senate, where he served two four-year terms. Chandler represented Marion County in the Florida constitutional convention of 1885. At Ocala he acted as city clerk in 1883 through 1884 and remained on the town council from 1886 to 1893. The senator attended every Republican national convention from 1884 to 1908 as a Florida delegate. In 1888 he was the Republican party’s nominee for Florida secretary of state.26
The availability of a federal patronage position at Tampa caused Chandler's departure from Ocala. In 1908 he accepted appointment as inspector of customs, from which — just as had happened to Joseph N. Clinton — the Wilson administration fired him in 1913. Chandler had purchased property in Tampa and managed it for a number of years. Declining health compelled him in 1926 to relocate to Polk County, where his daughter and son-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. D. J. Simpson, then lived. He died at Lakeland on March 27, 1938, and was buried there. Chandler's obituary in the *Lakeland Evening Ledger and Star Telegram* recognized his accomplishments, while properly noting his service from previous decades in numerous positions of "honor and trust."  

Two other individuals of renown — whose lives intertwined and who rose to positions of great power in Florida — also found themselves South Floridians when their political careers had ended. Each had grounded himself in the AME church; each had built political strength out of the turmoil of Jefferson County politics; and each arbitrarily would be frustrated in his desire to represent the state in the United States Congress. And, the memory of each would be revered among Florida's African American community.

Robert Meacham held position at the forefront of Florida's political scene when George Washington Witherspoon yet remained a boy. Meacham had been born in May 1835, his mother a slave and his father a white Gadsden County physician and planter. Asked later of his status before emancipation, he observed, "I do not know how to answer that exactly, for my father was my master and always told me that I was free." Learning to read and write from his father, young Meacham emerged from the Civil War as Tallahassee's first AME minister. Soon he was transferred to nearby Jefferson County, where ten percent of Florida's registered electorate resided during Congressional Reconstruction. Meacham labored as voter registrar in 1867 and 1868, served in the constitutional convention of 1868, and later in the year took a seat in the Florida Senate. He continued to act as senator until 1879, while also serving at various times as Monticello's postmaster and Jefferson County's clerk of the circuit court and superintendent of schools. On several occasions he was denied the Republican nomination for United States representative only through the chicanery of white carpetbaggers. He survived numerous death threats and at least one attempted assassination.
Following his legislative career, the senator struggled to secure remunerative employment, particularly during the years of the Cleveland administration. By 1887 he was living at Key West, where he ministered to the town’s largest black congregation, the Zion AME church. Already, though, Meacham’s connection with the AME church had weakened, and, if he had not done so earlier, he then transferred to the AME Zion clergy. That body apparently posted him to Punta Gorda and, in 1888, to Fort Myers. The following year Republican president Benjamin Harrison assumed office, and, at the urging of Punta Gorda founder Isaac Trabue, Harrison in 1890 named Meacham as Punta Gorda’s postmaster. Local whites joined in an indignation meeting, and the community newspaper referred to the appointment as a “studied insult to the people of that town.” Meacham’s stewardship of the local post office soon turned the negative sentiment around. He returned to preaching early in 1892, and the same newspaper later proclaimed that “notwithstanding his color and his politics, he stood high in the esteem of the white people.”

The one-time Republican powerbroker’s connections with South Florida persisted after leaving the Punta Gorda post office. By 1894 Meacham was preaching within the “Colored Conference” of the Methodist Episcopal church from an appointment at New Smyrna. While visiting Tampa in 1896 he was gunned down by a black policeman, seemingly because of the minister’s support for the policeman’s estranged girlfriend. Meacham again survived the attempt on his life but decided not to leave the city. He engaged in business as a shoemaker in West Tampa until his death on February 27, 1902. “Meacham’s death,” reported the Punta Gorda Herald, “is regretted both in Tampa and Punta Gorda.”

George Washington Witherspoon’s rivalry with Robert Meacham began because of a split within the AME church. Born in Sumter District, South Carolina, on December 15, 1845, he was brought to Florida by his master at the age of nine. Having lived since that time in Franklin
and Gadsden counties, soon after the Civil War’s end he came under the influence of AME presiding elder Charles H. Pearce, who had assumed the Tallahassee AME pulpit when he transferred Meacham to Jefferson County. Soon Pearce and Meacham were “warring” over church leadership and policy, and the presiding elder was grooming Witherspoon as a strong right arm. In 1872 Pearce dispatched his protege to Jefferson County. By his action, the church and political feud was served up on Meacham’s doorstep.31

Witherspoon’s preaching and political skills within a few years destroyed Meacham’s career and launched his own quest for a congressional seat. He offered a more-aggressive approach to religion and politics and stirred passions that Meacham no longer could kindle. “Witherspoon [became] the most popular colored man in the country districts in the state,” one newspaper recalled, “and whenever it was announced that Witherspoon would preach anywhere in the state, the roads would be full of women, children, horses, and wagons.” He achieved election to the Florida House of Representatives as early as 1874 and sat in the body as late as 1883. In the meantime, in 1880 he probably was elected to the Congress, but a combination of Democratic fraud and carpetbagger duplicity denied him the seat. Angered at Republican whites, within five years he had acquiesced to Democratic Governor Edward A. Perry’s legislative seizure of Pensacola’s Republican city government. At Perry’s appointment, Witherspoon served on the city council until 1889.32

In the aftermath of his Pensacola experience, Witherspoon set his sights on South Florida. He arranged employment as an inspector of customs at Key West and also secured designation as Meacham’s successor as the town’s AME minister. Though suffering from ill health, his ministry flourished while he attempted to help African Americans organize statewide resistance to the onset of Jim Crow discrimination and disfranchisement. He died at Key West on January 2, 1892, while his rival Meacham yet served as Punta Gorda’s postmaster. “The funeral cortège was the largest ever seen in this city, being fully a quarter of a mile in length,” noted a Key West correspondent. “It was headed by the Key West band, which played one of its most solemn funeral dirges.” He added, “Three white and three colored ministers acted as pall-bearers.” Of a subsequent memorial service held at Jacksonville, a mourner declared, “All are requested to turn out as a mark of respect and honor to this Christian brother and co-worker, who is sadly missed from the ranks.”33
These men made significant contributions to their respective communities in South Florida through and after the Reconstruction period. During their lifetime, some were politicians, entrepreneurs, educators, ministers, and lawyers. They had learned to work with other citizens for the common good of South Florida and the state. Some held influential political positions at the state and local level. Others embraced their communities as public school teachers, business owners, religious leaders and law enforcement officers. Much like these men, others contributed to the building of South Florida during this period. Perhaps most will remain unknown to the public due to the lack of retrievable data, fading memories and simple lack of knowledge of this rich past. Nonetheless, out of “respect and honor,” the preservation of the accomplishments and contributions of them all remains important for our world and for posterity.

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Notes


5. Appointment records are contained, primarily, in Record Group 156, Records of the Department of State, at the Florida State Archives in Tallahassee. See, particularly: Commissions, 1827-1978, series, 259; Appointments, series 1284; Oaths and Bonds, series 622; Removals from Office, 1869-1885, series 261; and Resignations from Office, 1868-1975, series 260.


13. Browne, Key West, 55; Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, July 11, 24, August 7, 1889.

14. On Florida’s black churches, see Charles Sumner Long, History of the A.M.E. Church in Florida (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Con-


16. Owen B. Armstrong biographical notes, collection of Canter Brown, Jr., Tallahassee; Vernon Peeples historical files, Punta Gorda; Owen B. Armstrong military pension record, certificate #783295, NA.

17. The 1900 Dade County census suggests Lightbourn was born in 1852, but an earlier Gadsden County census gives the 1846 date. Manuscript returns, Ninth United States Decennial Census, 1870, Leon County, and Twelfth United States Decennial Census, 1900, Dade County; Office of the Clerk, *People of Lawmaking in Florida*, 57; School report, Tallahassee, June 16-July 16, 1869, American Missionary Association Papers, Florida, roll 1 (microfilm available at Florida State University Library); Lists of territorial, state, and county officers, 1827-1923, 1960, Record Group 151, series 1284, vol. 2, 90, Florida State Archives (hereafter, FSA); Jacksonville *Daily Florida Union*, May 3, 1877; Jacksonville *Evening Telegram*, June 3, December 13, 1893; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, July 24, 1884, July 26, 1888, September 21, 1891.


22. Peter W. Bryant to John F. Horr, August 26, 1889, General Records of the Dept. of the Treasury, Records Relating to Customs Service Appointments, Key West, Record Group 56, entry 246, box 069, NA; Peter W. Bryant biographical materials, collection of Julius J. Gordon, Tampa; Jacksonville *Daily Florida Union*, August 14, 1876; *New York Globe*, June 16, 1883.

23. Bryant to Horr, August 26, 1889; Peter W. Bryant biographical materials, collection of Julius J. Gordon; Pensacola *Florida Sentinel*, 1895 Special Edition; *New York Age*, August 1, 1912.


28. Canter Brown, Jr., “‘Where are now the hopes I cherished?’ The Life and Times of Robert Meacham,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 69 (July 1990), 1-30; “Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire Into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States,” House Report No. 22, pt. 13, 42d Congress, 2d sess., 101, 105, 108; Manuscript returns, Twelfth United States Decennial Census, 1900, Hillsborough County, Florida.


Site plan of the Sweeting Homestead on Elliott Key, Florida, 1882-1930. This site plan is a composite of information recalled by former residents of Homestead. (Courtesy of Peg Niemiec)
Elliott Key off the Florida coast is a place of exquisite beauty and rich history. The long slender island, eight miles long and one-half mile wide, lies between Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean twenty miles southwest of Miami. Early Indian tribes hunted and fished here, and pirates once roamed the area. In the late nineteenth century, Elliott Key’s pristine environment attracted many pioneers. On this coral-reef subtropical island, they found a luxuriant, jungle-like hardwood forest. These adventurers settled this remote frontier while precariously perched on an island racked by tempests. They built thriving pineapple plantations and established a close-knit community. Typical of these pioneers was the Sweeting family, whose small settlement flourished for nearly twenty-five years. Then one tragic day in 1906, a severe hurricane struck and destroyed all they had worked to attain. Undeterred by this misfortune, they continued to live on the island for another twenty-five years.

Two important factors contributed to pioneers settling on the South Florida coastal regions in search of land and livelihood. The Homestead Act of 1862 offered 160 acres to any citizen who agreed to cultivate, improve and live on the land for at least five years. Two years before the Act was passed, Captain Benjamin Baker’s experimental patch of pineapples on Plantation Key proved that there was money to be made off the rocky land of the South Florida Keys. The warm subtropical climate provided the plants with frost-free temperatures. The porous coral bedrock retained moisture and provided nutritious phosphate for pineapples. Baker’s successful endeavor proved so profitable that the industry grew rapidly. By 1890 it extended into the famous

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east-coast pineapple belt from Fort Pierce to the Florida Keys. Kirk Munroe, an author and well-known resident of Coconut Grove, wrote in 1896, "... there is no better pineapple land in the world, and none from which the fruit obtains so fine a flavor."

The Sweeting family was representative of English Bahamian settlers who immigrated to Key West. Asa Sweeting and his family sailed from Harbour Island in the Bahamas to Key West in March 1866. While in Key West they learned about the opportunities offered by the Homestead Act and the new pineapple industry, and set out in search of land to settle.

In April 1882, Asa, age 64, and his two sons, George, age 36, and Thomas, age 30, sailed north from Key West along the sparsely settled Florida Keys. They looked for a place that resembled the land they left in the Bahamas, and found it on Elliott Key. After looking the land over, Asa and George sailed to Fort Dallas in Miami to claim 154.4 acres on the island. After claiming the homestead they returned to Key West, packed their belongings, and sailed with their family to their new home. Later, in 1896 they purchased an additional 85.4 adjacent acres for a total of 239.8 acres.

They built a temporary wood-frame dwelling called the "old house" that measured sixteen by twenty-four feet. From Key West they hauled timber and other supplies. With no fresh water on the island, barrels of water from springs in Biscayne Bay or water from the mainland were brought to the island. Eventually, a 6,280 gallon cistern was built. It

View of Elliot Key from offshore, ca. 1900. Pioneers settled this desolate frontier where coconut trees looked like an oasis surrounded by the rocky soil and scrub. (HASF, Ralph Munroe Collection, 1977-146-48)
measured twelve by fourteen feet, was five feet deep, had walls one-foot in width made of cement and coral rock, and was covered with a wood-gabled roof. Wooden gutters from the house channeled rainwater into the cistern.⁸

Later, on the ridge facing the Atlantic Ocean, George and Mary Sweeting built a two-story New England colonial style frame house, painted white with dark-green louvered shutters and sash windows. Key West pink roses, white and pink periwinkles, and hibiscus grew in the garden. Clusters of date and coconut palms surrounded the house.⁹ As George and Mary Sweeting’s six children reached adulthood and married, some built houses on the homestead. In time, six homes with docks stood on the ridge along the shore. Several other buildings constructed to accommodate their needs included a one-room school house used also for church services, a general store, cabins for the farmhands, and packing houses. A small house nestled in the forest in the center of the island provided a retreat for the family when hurricanes threatened the island.¹⁰

By 1887 thirty acres of land were cultivated and planted in pineapples, key limes and tomatoes.¹¹ Eventually, the family’s pineapple fields covered 100 acres.¹² Kirk Munroe eloquently described the pineapple fields on the Florida Keys during harvest time:

In May and June the coloring of these ten, twenty, forty, and sometimes one hundred acre fields is wonderfully beautiful. Scarlet, bronze, orange, green, yellows, and browns are blended in glowing masses, while the whole picture is framed by the encircling forest and arched with cloudless blue. The landscape is oppressively still; for a gale of wind could hardly impart movement to the stiff bayonet-like leaves of the ‘pines’ and even the great glossy fronds of the bananas, that are set here and there in crowding clusters like dark green islets in a sea of color, stand motionless in the lee of the protecting wind-break.¹³

While harvesting the pineapples, “cutters” wore heavy shoes, entire suits of canvas and stout gloves that protected their hands from the sharp spines of the pineapple leaves. Since harvest time was also mosquito season, the men wore net head coverings to protect themselves from the swarming myriads of the bloodthirsty menacing insects. The
The United States of America,

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING:

Whereas there has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States a CERTIFICATE of the Register of the Land Office at Tallahassee, Florida, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress approved 20th May, 1862, "To secure Homesteads to actual settlers on the public domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of Asa Sweeting has been established and duly consummated in conformity to law for the Lots numbered two, three and five of Section eighteen in Township fifty-three South, Range forty-two East of Tallahassee Meridian, in Florida, containing one hundred and fifty-four acres and forty-four hundredths of an acre.

Homestead patent for Asa Sweeting, June 29, 1889. (National Archives)
“toters” cut and placed the pineapples in a mat basket woven of palmetto, and carried them to the shore. At low tide the baskets were placed on a large barge which carried them through the shallow water to the moored schooners off shore. The fruit was then sailed to New Orleans and to northern ports as far away as Boston.\textsuperscript{14}

As the pineapple yield increased, George needed more sailing vessels to ship his fruit. When needed for large yields, he chartered a three-mast schooner to transport his pineapples to Boston and New York.\textsuperscript{15} In Key West in 1898, he purchased the Two Brothers, a new 36-foot, 12-ton schooner.\textsuperscript{16} George hired ship carpenters from Key West to build the hulls for a pair of two-mast schooners on Elliott Key. Madeira mahogany from the island’s dense forest provided material for part of the construction. The carpenters went into the forest, cut the timber with axes, and used roots of large trees to get the type of crooks for the knees and other parts. They completed the hulls of the ships on the island, rigged them with temporary sails, and sailed them to Key West for completion.\textsuperscript{17} The Mt. Vernon, built on Elliott Key in 1901, weighed 49 tons and measured 65 feet long.\textsuperscript{18} It was probably the largest schooner built on the Florida Keys outside of Key West.\textsuperscript{19} The Mt. Pleasant, built on the island in 1902, weighed 25 tons and measured 50 feet long.\textsuperscript{20} The Centennial, bought in 1910 in Key West, weighed 18 tons and measured 36 feet long.\textsuperscript{21} In 1918, George’s son, Abner, bought the Vole, a gas engine boat used for coastal trading and for family trips to the mainland.\textsuperscript{22}

A pineapple field with thousands of pineapple or “pines,” as the settlers called them. When picked green, the pineapples could usually survive the trip by boat to the northern ports of Boston. (HASF, Ralph Munroe Collection, 1977-146-57). Inset: Detail of a pineapple plant. (HASF 1986-167-2)
During the growing season, businessmen from New York visited the pineapple fields and sometimes bought the entire crop on sight. Before Henry M. Flagler extended his railroad to Miami in 1896, the farmers transported their farm produce only by sea. After 1896 the railroad provided the farmers another means of transporting their produce: shipping it to Miami by schooner, loading it on trains, and carrying it to northern cities. Shipping by railroad had its drawbacks, though, and the growers paid dearly for the convenience it offered. It charged high rates and paid rebates to favored customers growing produce in the West Indies. Because of this unfair practice, the Key's plantation owners complained to the Florida State legislature, who tried to regulate the rates, but without success. Consequently, many of them who were dependent on the railroad to transport their produce went out of business because the high railroad rates increased their costs and reduced their profits. Since George Sweeting owned several schooners to transport his produce, he was not dependent on the railroads. Fortunately, he avoided the financial ruin that befall many of his neighbors.

In addition to transporting their farm products to the mainland, the Sweeting men engaged in coastal trading. They transported merchandise and mail, and carried passengers around the southern coast of Florida. George and Mary Sweeting's eldest son, Abner, sailed the Mt. Vernon and the Centennial between Lemon City, Coconut Grove and Key West, from the early 1890s until he moved to Miami in 1924. Sailing vessels were the lifeline to those living in the Florida Keys. Whenever the schooners announced their arrival by blowing their conch-shell horn, everyone who heard ran to the waterfront to pick up mail, get the latest news or greet someone they knew. Once, while George Sweeting was sailing his schooner from New York to Key West, actors on the boat performed for people on the docks.
grounding the ship. Since it was impossible to extricate the ship from the reef, the men agreed to save the cargo. The salvors unloaded the cargo onto their schooners, sailed it to the port of Key West, and delivered it to the Master Consignee for disposal and sale.29 One of the last wrecks off the Florida coast, the S.S. Alicia still lies on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean off Long Reef.

Even though the Sweetings homesteaded on Elliott Key, they never broke their ties with Key West. Their activities shifted from the homestead to Key West depending on the farm crops and the economics of the time. During most of the nineteenth century, Key West was the wealthiest city per capita in Florida. The town offered cultural activities and was the hub of a bustling maritime center. The family maintained two homes and several businesses in Key West. Between 1870 and 1914 George engaged in several occupations there. U.S. Census records and the Key West city directories list him as a seaman and a farmer. He also owned a coffee-shop, a grocery store and a ship chandler’s business.30

Like Key West, Elliott Key flourished, though on a much smaller scale. The island’s pineapple plantations expanded, and its families grew larger. The growing number of children needed a school. Consequently, in 1887, the Dade County School Board established School District Number 4 to serve Elliott Key and the adjacent islands. The School Board named Henry Filer as trustee for the District. One half acre of land was donated by Robert Thompson, and a frame building was built in the center of the hammock.31 Later, another small school house, Seaside School, was constructed near the oceanfront on the Sweeting property. Music for school activities and church services was provided by an organ transported by schooner from Key West. Dade County sent one school teacher each year to Elliott Key to teach all twelve grades. She
boarded with the families, who shared the cost of her salary.\textsuperscript{32} The 1896 school census for the school district lists the following students and their ages:\textsuperscript{33}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Thompson</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arena Thompson</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert E. Thompson</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mame Thompson</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abner W. Sweeting</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asa C. Sweeting</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Sweeting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella F. Sweeting</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellie B. Sweeting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva S. Sweeting</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George E. Demerit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horace M. Albury</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland S. Albury</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flossie B. Albury</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian Johnson</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealy Sweeting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the children grew older, some attended schools in Key West. The 1906-07 Key West City Directory lists Nellie and Geneva Sweeting as students.\textsuperscript{34} Elliott Lowe's 1929 sixth grade report card from Seaside School shows Inez Chipman as teacher and principal.\textsuperscript{35} Charles Theron Lowe remembers the school teacher boarding with George and Mary Sweeting. School segregation at the time affected a black family who lived on Porgy Key just south of Elliott Key. Israel Lafayette Jones, known as Parson Jones, and his wife, Mozelle, had two sons, King Arthur and Sir Lancelot. Since the boys were not allowed to attend the school on Elliott Key, their parents taught the boys at home until they were fourteen years old, when they were sent to live with an uncle in Jacksonville to attend a black high school. There, the Jones brothers continued their education at a junior college in St. Augustine.\textsuperscript{36}

Young children who lived on the island considered it a paradise. When not in school they enjoyed the beach and the forest. Katherine Sweeting Roberts said:

While growing up on the island, we spent many hours playing with our small boats. In the early evening we hung a lighted kerosene lantern on the front of our dinghy and went out into the shallow water off shore. The light from the lantern lit up the clear water so that we could see the lobster crawfish on the bottom. We picked them up out of the water, placed them in the boat, and took them home to eat. We roamed in the hardwood forest, looked for bird's nests, and caught butterflies and insects.\textsuperscript{37}
Charles Theron Lowe recalls:

There were so many fun things for kids to do on the island. We learned to swim at a very early age and often played our favorite water sport. We turned our skiff upside down in the water, dove in under the boat, and raised our heads in its hollow. Then we would shout, make loud noises, and eat mangoes and key limes under the boat.\textsuperscript{38}

Responsibilities of men and women on Elliott Key were clearly divided. While the pioneer men sailed the schooners, worked the land and built the houses, the pioneer women provided the amenities of a comfortable home and fostered the social life of the community. Mary Sweeting trained at Mrs. Cate’s boarding house in Key West to be a “homemaker and proper lady.” She used the acquired skills in her homes on Elliott Key and in Key West.\textsuperscript{39} She was proud to be the wife of George, a prosperous and well-known sea captain. When he returned from his sailing trips, she served him meals at a special table set for him with fine linens in their dining room.\textsuperscript{40}

George and Mary Sweeting were described in an article in \textit{The Miami Herald} in 1925 as people of exceptional force and activity and were for many years considered “leaders of the key colony.” Mary, 67 years old in 1925, was described as strong and hearty. Because of her forceful character, broad-minded views, deep sympathy and great hospitality and graciousness, she might be called the “queen of the key.” Her welcome to everyone was always most cordial. She had six children, twenty-four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren who gave her great joy.\textsuperscript{41}

Charles Theron Lowe described how his grandmother, Mary Sweeting, began her day: “She arose in the morning, walked downstairs to the kitchen, threw some wood in the stove, sprinkled it with a little kerosene, lit a small piece of paper and threw it on top of the wood.” In about ten minutes after the stove heated, she prepared freshly ground coffee.\textsuperscript{42} At 5:30 A.M. she served coffee and molasses cookies for those who worked in the fields. At 8:00 A.M. the workers came in from the fields and ate a hearty breakfast. Mary served the main meal of the day at 1:00 P.M., a snack in the afternoon and a light meal in the evening around 7:00 P.M. During pineapple harvest time, besides cooking for her large family, Mary planned and supervised meal preparation in her kitchen for the farmhands — as many as forty at one time.
These photographs show the different styles of early houses built on Elliott Key. Above: A typical Elliott Key planter's home, 1890s. The layout of the house included one story and a loft for sleeping called a "jump." A rain barrel was kept outside to catch rain for their drinking water supply. (HASF, Ralph Munroe Collection, 78D) Below: Home of Abner W. Sweeting, Sr., and Cornelia Russell Sweeting, both pictured with seven children. Inset: Full view of their home. (Both photographs courtesy of Katherine Sweeting Roberts)
Every week or ten days a sailboat left Elliott Key for Key West or Miami to take family members shopping and for provisions. When in Key West they stayed in their home on Elizabeth Street. When in Miami they stayed in boarding houses on the Miami River. Food purchased in bulk included 100-pound bags of flour, 25-pound bags of sugar, smoked hams, grits, rice, barrels of salt pork, spices and herbs. The pioneers thrived on the abundant tropical fruits and vegetables grown on the land and seafood off shore. Childcare and domestic chores occupied the women's time from dawn to dusk. Each day had its routine. In addition to daily meal preparation and baking bread, other chores included laundry, cleaning and sewing. The women spent at least two days each week on laundry tasks. Three large galvanized tubs stood next to the cistern. Beginning early in the morning the women used buckets of water from the cistern and filled the three tubs. Clothes and bedding were scrubbed in one tub, boiled in another, rinsed in a third, wrung by hand and hung on the line to dry. They heated heavy metal irons on the wood stove and ironed nearly everything laundered, including sheets and pillowcases. Laundry soap contained fat and lye boiled at a certain time of the month, depending on the lunar cycle. Superstition had it that soap made on the waxing of the moon retained its volume, but if boiled on the waning of the moon, it shrunk. Mary Sweeting, as a meticulous housekeeper, scrubbed her wood floors on hands and knees. She used the skin of the turbot fish that was rough like sandpaper, and lime juice, which whitened the floors. The women used Singer and New Home treadle machines for sewing.

At the turn of the century, most married women in their childbearing years gave birth about every two years. Since there were no doctors or midwives on the island, the pregnant women traveled to Key West about a month before giving birth. Before the railroad was extended to Key West in 1912, they sailed directly to Key West, staying at their home on Elizabeth Street where one room was set aside as a birthing room. Katherine Sweeting Roberts, who lived on Elliott Key between 1910 and 1924, remembers her experience when she was a young child. She and her mother sailed to Miami, where they boarded Flagler’s overseas railroad train to Key West. In the birthing bedroom her mother, with a doctor in attendance, gave birth to her sister in 1914 and to her brother in 1915. When a doctor was not available, a midwife delivered the babies. A month after each birth Katherine, her mother and the baby made the return trip by train and sailboat to Elliott Key.
When urgent medical care was needed on the island, its absence was felt acutely. George and Mary Sweeting’s daughter, Nellie, received severe burns over her body when a gas lantern exploded in her face. Members of the family covered her burns with cellophane, and sailed her for the three hour trip to Miami for medical care. 

Sunday — a day of rest — was strictly observed for attending religious services conducted by visiting ministers who came from a nearby Key or from the mainland. Families on the island rotated their hospitality. When there were no ministers attending, some of the older men on the island conducted church services. Sunday school provided the children with their religious instruction, which was planned and directed by one of the women who served as Sunday School superintendent. The families were of various Protestant denominations, but got along well. After Sunday morning services, the Sweetings gathered in George and Mary Sweeting’s parlor, used only on Sunday, where they spent a lively afternoon socializing. They sat in rocking chairs around the room, and in the middle of the room the family Bible lay on an ornate table. A wagon-wheel chandelier hung in the parlor and held six or eight kerosene lamps. Pulleys raised and lowered the chandelier for lighting the lamps.

Social gatherings at various homes, functions at the school house, swimming, boating, fishing and trips to Miami or Key West provided respite from their daily laborious work. Family and friends from Key West and the mainland visited Elliott Key for birthdays, holidays and wedding receptions with lively celebrations and large feasts. On occasion, they sailed a few miles north to Boca Chita Key for community holiday celebrations, picnics and parties.

Despite the comfortable lives the Sweetings and their neighbors had carved out for themselves on the island, the weather was a constant cause for concern. Life’s steady tempo came to a halt when hurricanes ravaged the island. Hurricane predictions were primitive at the time since there were no methods of communication. Barometers were helpful for forecasting basic weather conditions, but they did not warn of impending hurricanes. Whenever the air pressure reading on the barometers fell to a certain level, indicating potential stormy weather, the men moved the schooners and other boats to the leeward or bay side of the island and moored them securely to the mangrove trees. The shutters on the homes were closed and the family retreated to the hurricane house. The small house, sparsely furnished, was located on higher
The Sweeting Homestead on Elliott Key came to an abrupt halt on Thursday, October 19, 1906, when a fierce tropical hurricane blasted the southeast coast of Florida and hit Elliott Key broadside. A Miami Herald reporter visited Elliott Key in 1925 and related the following information about the 1906 hurricane. "The storm broke in all its fury at 4:00 a.m. October 19, though at 9 p.m. the previous midnight all was as calm as on the fairest day." During the night the winds increased. When the Sweetings realized there was a threat, the ocean tide water had risen too high for them to get their boats secured to the bay-side of the island. The Sweeting family retreated to the hurricane house to wait out the storm.

With their boats damaged they were unable to sail to the mainland for provisions, leaving the family marooned for three days without food or water. During this time they ate only coconut meat and drank coconut milk. The storm surge flooded the island, and all the houses were damaged or destroyed. The hurricane lifted George and Mary Sweeting's house off its foundation, and moved it intact fifteen feet away from its original location. The extended kitchen received structural damage and had to be removed from the main part of the house. The house suffered extensive damage, and was later repaired.

In addition to the destruction of their homes, the storm surge, which was eight feet high in some places on the island, swept over the family's 100-acre pineapple plantation, wiping out their main livelihood. The ocean water salted the ground, leaving the soil unsuitable for the pineapple plants.

Others in the South Florida area also were unaware of an approaching storm. The steamboat St. Lucie left the terminal dock in Miami Wednesday, October 18, at 7:00 p.m., on her way to Key West, with 100 passengers on board. According to Captain Bravo, "The barometer had been showing low, but not more so than it had for the last two weeks, and was steady when we left." After the steamboat left the channel, the captain turned the boat over to his first mate, Robert Blair, and directed him to call if necessary. The steamship was seen at 10:00 p.m. near Ragged Key and was well on her way. At 3:00 a.m. Thursday morning, when they reached Featherbed Banks, which is located in Biscayne Bay between Black Point on the mainland and Boca Chita Key, Blair called Captain Bravo, who came immediately on deck. He found a strong gale blowing from the east, and without delay the captain headed the boat for Elliott Key and anchored off the key in seven
feet of water. The winds grew stronger and the waves grew higher. He saw Elliott Key being washed with waves and it appeared that everything on the key was being swept away. At 6:00 A.M., the sea washed over the boat and the captain ordered the engineer to rev up the steam so that they could make a run for it if necessary. At 7:00 A.M., the shutters of the gangways blew out. At 8:30 A.M. they were fighting for their lives. Captain Bravo ordered all passengers to put on life preservers with the help of the officers onboard. Even though the passengers and crew were frightened, the captain reported that he had never seen such brave people.

The lull in the eye of the storm came; the barometer read 28.80, the lowest the captain had ever recorded. He knew that the lull was a prelude to something worse. The other side of the hurricane arrived soon, with the wind blowing from the west in gusts of 120 miles an hour. The boat began to quiver and vibrate. Captain Bravo saw that the St. Lucie would not hold together long and ordered out the lifeboats.

Passengers filled three life boats, which were lowered into the pounding surf, following the directions of the captain to try to make a landing on Elliott Key. They headed toward Elliott Key, which was under seven feet of water. The frightened passengers found their way to a partly washed-away building on the island and held on until they were rescued. Those who remained on the steamer huddled on the hurricane deck blinded by the rain. As the wind came out of the northwest, the St. Lucie broke into pieces from the force of the wind and waves. Some passengers tried to hold onto the debris and ride it to shore. The ship’s hurricane deck flew off and those remaining fell into the mountainous waves of water. Some who were battered by debris died in the treacherous sea. Those who arrived at the shore on Elliott Key held onto the mangrove branches until the water subsided, and were later rescued. Twenty-six of the St. Lucie passengers died on Elliott Key.
The Miami newspapers reported another hurricane calamity south of Elliott Key. Construction of Henry M. Flagler’s overseas railroad to Key West was in full swing. The *Miami Metropolis* told of the tragedy and bravery of the employees on the railroad extension. Hundreds of men who worked on the project lived in quarterboats near their work sites. Quarterboat No. 4 was moored near Long Key with 160 men onboard. She broke her seven-inch moorings chain, drifted in the water, hit some rocks and broke into many pieces. One hundred of the men perished in the treacherous waters. Many others lost their lives on the temporary structures of the railroad extension as the high seas washed over the Keys. Only the permanent structures held through the storm. Despite this setback, Henry Flagler completed the overseas railroad to Key West in 1912.

For several days after the 1906 hurricane, little had been heard from the inhabitants of the Keys. The islands from Elliott Key to Lower Matecumbe were inundated by the tidal wave which destroyed houses, washed away trees and demolished crops. Every pineapple plantation on Elliott Key was devastated.

In the few hours that the hurricane blasted Elliott Key, the Sweeting family’s main livelihood disappeared, but they continued to live on the island. They still possessed their land, their homes, their schooners, their key lime groves, and abundant seafood in the surrounding waters. The schooners continued to sail around the coast transporting key limes, tomatoes, crawfish, merchandise, passengers and mail.

Key limes and tomatoes continued to provide the island planters with abundant crops to sell. By 1925 Elliott Key’s most important crop was key limes. Lime groves, ranging in size from one-and-one-half acres to forty acres, covered a total of 150 acres. The annual lime crop for the island was approximately 7,500 barrels, selling wholesale for $25 a barrel. The price fluctuated between $5.50 and $60 a barrel, depending on the demand and size of the crop. No fertilizer was used on the lime trees until 1920, when dieback and decreased yields were noticed.

*Captain Bravo*  
(HASF 1974-40-5)
J. S. Rainey, County Agricultural Agent, was consulted. After inspecting the lime groves, he advised using the same fertilizer formula recommended for other citrus fruit trees. He also suggested that the groves be mulched rather than weeded. This led to healthier trees and increased production. Good quality tomatoes grew luxuriantly in the constant sunshine, and derived moisture from rains and from crevices in the rocky soil.

By the beginning of the 1930s, the effects of the Great Depression were spreading throughout the country. Produce and seafood prices plummeted, and those who remained on the island could no longer earn a living. By 1932 all the Sweeting family had moved to the mainland.

The elder Asa Sweeting died on Elliott Key in 1897 at the age of 79 and was buried on the island behind the Seaside schoolhouse. On November 23, 1920, George, age 74, died at the Edith Coville Hospital in Miami. His body was sent by train to Key West and buried in a walled-in...
grave site in Key West’s “old cemetery.” In 1924 George and Mary’s son, Abner, and his family moved to Miami. In 1925 Mary Sweeting was still living on the island with two of her children. In 1930, when the last boat left Elliott Key and the children moved to Miami, she reluctantly left Elliott Key and her beloved island home of fifty years.

The original homesteaders sold their property and the new owners built vacation homes. In the 1960s developers planned to build a causeway and bridge to the mainland connecting the islands. Oil companies anticipated building oil refineries in the area. However, environmental factors were carefully considered and plans for development were abandoned. In 1968 the U.S. Congress established Biscayne National Monument to preserve the ecology of the area, including the living coral reefs off shore and on the northern Florida Keys, among them Elliott Key. In 1980 the Monument became Biscayne National Park.

Walking on the island today, one sees the same subtropical wilderness of exquisite beauty with its jungle-like hardwood forest that greeted the pioneers in the late nineteenth century. Approaching the shore at low tide, the clear turquoise water still breaks on the white sandy beach that the settlers saw when they sailed there looking for land. On the spot where Mary Sweeting planted her garden over 100 years ago, the progeny of her pink and white periwinkles still bloom. The only visible clue that pioneers once lived here is the first cistern that was built for the “old house” on the Sweeting homestead. It stands alone among the cluster of date and coconut palm trees that rustle softly in the warm gentle breeze.
Notes


3. Passenger List for Port of Key West, Quarter ending March 31, 1866, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


6. Deed of Sale from John Lowe, Jr., and Mary E. Lowe to Asa Sweeting and George Sweeting, July 9, 1896 (Recorded October 10, 1896), Dade County, Fla., Deed and Mortgage Index, Beginning to 1900, A-Z, Reel 1, Deed Book Q-Z, 284-285, Dade County Record Center, Miami, Fla.


11. Homestead Testimony of Claimant, Asa Sweeting, Nov. 12, 1887.


13. Munroe, "Pineapples in the Florida Keys."


16. License of Sailing Vessel, Two Brothers, March 19, 1898,
Collector of Customs, Key West, Fla., Official File No. 1457622, Record Group 41, Civil Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


18. License of Sailing Vessel, Mt. Vernon, April 6, 1901, Official File No. 93114, Record Group 41, Civil Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


20. License of Sailing Vessel, Mt. Pleasant, May 3, 1902, Official File No. 93253, Record Group 41, Civil Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

21. License of Sailing Vessel, Centennial, Sept. 9, 1910, Official File No. 125479, Record Group 41, Civil Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

22. License of Vessel, Vole, August 9, 1918, Official File No. 161662, Record Group 41, Civil Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

23. Oral History Narrative, 8.


27. Viele, 13.


35. Elementary Pupil’s Report, May 15, 1929, Elliott Lowe, Seaside School, Elliott Key, Board of Public Instruction, Miami, Fla. (Original report card in file at Biscayne National Park, Convoy Point Headquarters, Homestead, Fla.)
41. C. Clinton Past, “Elliott’s Key Famed for Its Fine Limes and Crawfish,” The Miami Herald, April 5, 1925, Magazine Section, 1.
48. Nordt, 8.
52. Past, “Elliott’s Key Famed,” 1.
54. Oral History Narrative, 8.
55. “Steamer St. Lucie Went Down Near Mouth Caesar’s Creek; Twenty-five Were Drowned,” The Miami Metropolis, Oct. 20, 1906.

57. The term “quarterboats” was taken directly from the 1906 *Miami Metropolis* report of the hurricane. A quarterboat was a boat on which the men working on the overseas railroad lived — their quarters. The type of boat used is not specified.


62. C. T. Lowe, interview.

63. Petition by William Lowe regarding death of Asa Sweeting, Probate Record, April 12, 1898, Case #60, Clerk, Circuit & County Court, Probate Division, Dade County Courthouse, Miami, Fla.; Also C.T. Lowe, interview with author, April 7, 1991.


66. C. T. Lowe, telephone conversation.

Map of the Florida East Coast Railway, taken from an FEC timetable, ca. 1930. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)
Henry Flagler and the Model Land Company

by William E. Brown, Jr. and Karen Hudson

Henry Flagler, founder and president of the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC), created the Model Land Company in 1896 to manage his expanding real estate holdings in Florida. Flagler first arrived in Florida in 1885 and soon launched a railroad system that extended the length of Florida's east coast, from St. Augustine to Key West. The railroad spurred the economic development of Florida, and Flagler was encouraged in this endeavor by the state's offer of free land to anyone who would finance construction of a railroad line. The surviving records of the Model Land Company, largely unexplored to date, provide an underutilized avenue to explore the economic, political, social and cultural history of southeast Florida.

Flagler acquired several million acres of real estate between 1885, the year he purchased two short-line St. Augustine railroads, and 1912, which marked completion of the Key West railroad extension. To encourage Flagler's railroad plans, the state of Florida offered approximately 2,050,000 acres of public lands. Flagler received the customary 3,840 acres per mile allotted to railroads for his work in northern Florida. The State legislature also passed a special land grant law to award Flagler 8,000 acres per mile for the extension of his line south of Daytona.

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The Swamp Land Grant Act of 1850 authorized the federal government to “patent” or “deed” selected swamp lands to the State of Florida, provided that the state grant these lands to developers interested in drainage and reclamation. The revelation that the state legislature awarded valuable lands to railroads, however, led the federal government to terminate the land grant program. As a result, the state did not provide a great deal of the land promised to Flagler.

A protracted legal battle with the Internal Improvement Fund (IIF) — an entity that exercised jurisdiction over swamp and overflow lands awarded the state of Florida by the federal government — ended in compromise as Flagler accepted 260,000 acres, nearly ten percent of his original grant. The location of Flagler’s property varied; portions were located in Broward, Dade and Palm Beach counties, but the largest portion, 210,000 acres, belonged to the swampy Cape Sable area. Ultimately, Flagler obtained the bulk of his real estate through financial relationships with other Florida corporations. Two corporations, the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company and the Boston and Florida Atlantic Coast Land Company, received abundant public lands, yet faced financial difficulties in canal construction and business ventures. The railroad baron subsidized the Canal Company for $100,000. In return, Flagler received debenture bonds and a note for the difference in the two amounts. He was also named head of the company, although he did not own any large block of stock. Flagler then financed dredging projects and promised to transform these lands into valuable real estate by building a railroad.³

By 1895, Albert P. Sawyer, head of the Boston and Florida Company, feared a takeover of the Canal and Transportation Company and attempted to force Flagler out. Although Flagler would not relinquish his power entirely, he agreed to exchange a subsidy note for land in southern Dade County, at a rate of six dollars per acre. To entice Flagler to build the railroad on their land, the Canal and Transportation Company and the Boston and Florida Company also “donated” lands to Flagler. The Canal and Transportation Company promised 1,500 acres per mile for the extension south of Lake Worth, and the Boston and Florida Company agreed to provide 10,000 acres for the Miami extension. Other individuals and corporations made similar pledges.⁴

Rather than provide the FEC Railway an outright land grant, the Boston and Florida Company donated land in the form of a one-half interest in its planned immigrant communities. George Miles, a Com-
pany official, proposed this plan to protect the Boston and Florida Company from "being discriminated against by ... the railroad company ... if they decided to offer advantages to settlers which we would not be in a position to parallel." The Boston and Florida Company and the FEC Railway began their joint venture in 1896, and organized the colonies of Modello and Hallandale. Disputes soon arose over the freight rates charged by the FEC Railway. By 1902, Miles suspected the FEC Railway of financially suppressing the Boston and Florida Company to prevent construction of a canal along the east coast. Although no evidence exists to support this suspicion, Miles urged against the appointment of joint land agents. However, the Boston and Florida Company's lands continued to be sold through Flagler's corporate enterprises until the 1920s.5

As Flagler received land titles from the IIF, the Boston and Florida Company, and other companies and individuals, he established a special "Land Department." James E. Ingraham, former president of Henry S. Sanford's South Florida Railroad Company, served as Land Commissioner. Ingraham, a Wisconsin railroad engineer, came to Florida in 1874. In 1892 he surveyed the Everglades for a possible railroad route for Henry B. Plant's railroad system. Ingraham caught Flagler's attention when he reported that the east coast would serve as a more practicable route. Flagler immediately hired Ingraham and eventually placed him in charge of all land holdings.6

Ingraham soon made Flagler's real estate holdings as profitable an enterprise as the railroad and his hotels, which included superb hostelries in St. Augustine, Ormond Beach and Palm Beach. The key to Ingraham's early success proved to be advertising. Ingraham dis-
tributed booklets, pamphlets and a magazine, the *Florida East Coast Homeseeker*, in which he described the attractions of Florida’s east coast as well as the lands for sale at most points along the railway. By 1896 the Land Department was incorporated as the Model Land Company (MLC), and Ingraham appointed its president.7

Henry Flagler established the Model Land Company as a separate corporation for “business and bookkeeping purposes.” In 1902 Flagler’s auditor began the transfer of titles of FEC Railway lands to the Company. In addition, financial transactions appeared as “the true and proper sums received, paid and due by each of the said companies.” This separation and transfer of titles also had the advantage of improving the financial status of the railroad company for purposes of borrowing on bond markets. In 1909 Flagler instructed his auditor to place all lands “for farming or for other than railway purposes” in the Model Land Company account. Accordingly, in 1911 the FEC Railway transferred lands in Dade, Palm Beach, Brevard, Volusia, St. Lucie and Monroe counties to this account.

Flagler also created three subsidiary land companies to sell lands in specific areas, with a central office in St. Augustine to oversee administration of the land companies. The Fort Dallas Land Company, created on March 17, 1896, sold Miami-area lands; the Perrine Grant Land Company, organized on May 6, 1899, sold Perrine lands; and the Chuluota Land Company, established 1912, sold Chuluota (Central Florida) lands.8 The four companies, together with the FEC Railway and the Federal East Coast Hotel Company, constituted the Flagler System. The land companies assumed control of the majority of Flagler’s real estate holdings, and the Hotel Company and the FEC Railway retained property pertaining to their respective businesses.

The three subsidiary land companies differed in the types of property sold, in dates of operation, and levels of success. The Fort Dallas Land Company possessed the most valuable property. Flagler purchased eighty per cent of the Company’s stock for $8,000; he divided the remaining twenty per cent between two FEC Railway vice presidents, Joseph R. Parrott and James Ingraham. Ingraham, as president of all the land companies, controlled Fort Dallas sales. Fort Dallas sold lots for $50 to $100, and constructed cottages which sold for $1,500. By 1899 business was booming, and in 1902 property sales totaled approximately $182,600. The Fort Dallas Land Company operated until 1908, when it was “amalgamated with the Model Land Company” to
“simplify the work and reduce the operating expenses.” Fort Dallas profits, totaling $248,000, and several Miami lots and buildings, were transferred to the Model Land Company.9

The Perrine Grant Land Company managed valuable farmlands located along Biscayne Bay, eighteen miles south of Miami and extending six miles west. Information compiled by George Robbins, an FEC Railway attorney, who had extensive correspondence with the Perrine heirs, as well as an abstract of title, allowed Miami attorneys Hudson and Boggs to trace the title of the Perrine Grant for the Model Land Company in 1914. Their research revealed the circumstances that enabled Flagler to acquire an interest in the Perrine property.

In 1838 the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida granted land to the Tropical Plant Company of Florida, directed by Dr. Henry Perrine, J. A. Webb and Charles Howe. During that same year, the Congress of the United States also granted a township of land to Dr. Perrine, provided that every section in the tract have “an actual settler engaged in the propagation or cultivation of useful tropical plants” by 1846, eight years after the passage of the act. If Perrine failed to meet this condition, the land would be forfeited to the United States. After Perrine was killed by Indians during a war with the Seminoles, Congress renewed the conditions of the grant in 1841 for the benefit of Perrine’s widow and his children.10

Mrs. Ann Perrine requested the aid of Charles Howe, a former associate of Henry Perrine, and promised a twenty per cent interest in the land. Howe surveyed the land and brought thirty-six Bahamian families as settlers. Conflicts with the Seminole Indians, however, soon drove these new settlers off the land.11

In spite of the Perrines’ failure to meet the conditions of the grant, heirs attempted to secure a land patent in 1862. Their efforts bore no success until 1896, when the FEC Railway intervened on behalf of the Perrines, obtained the patent, and settled claims with independent homesteaders already living on the land. The FEC Railway assisted the heirs in a second lawsuit initiated by the American Contract and Finance Company, a New York corporation assigned the interest of Charles Howe and others. The Supreme Court of Florida decided in favor of the Perrine heirs in 1899. According to Model Land Company records, “After securing the patent, the [Perrine] heirs, ... undertook to convey an undivided one-half interest in the grant ... to the Federal East Coast Railroad Company [sic].”12 To FEC Railway representatives the deed was
“open to serious and fatal objections as to certain of the grantors.” The deed was ineffective to convey the claims of one heir “as her signature and her husband’s lack witness;” the sanity of another grantor at “the time of conveyance” was “extremely doubtful” and a third did not sign the document “at all.”

Litigation concerning the title to the Perrine land continued. James Thomas Walker, for example, sued the Model Land Company and the FEC Railway in 1911 for his interest in the grant because the companies had negotiated the purchase with Walker while he was in the New York State mental asylum. Ingraham was notified of a suit filed in the United States Court in the State of Rhode Island and instructed his Miami sales agent to “simply reserve the lands set aside in the suit with Mr. Walker and not to make any explanation of it to anybody.” There are no records of the suit in the Company Records, although the Model Land Company sold the Walker lands in 1913.

In spite of early legal problems, the Perrine Grant Land Company was profitable and survived into the 1960s, longer than the other subsidiaries. The Chuluota Land Company, the third subsidiary company, was unable to sell the 11,000 central Florida acres allotted it by the Model Land Company, and was phased out of the Flagler system during the 1930s.

The main office of the Model Land Company, located in St. Augustine, managed all these lands, although numerous sales agents operated throughout the state. The practice of employing agents began during Ingraham’s administration of the Land Department. Occasionally, railroad agents doubled as Model Land Company representatives and provided information on soils, crops and farm production on lands. The original Model Land Company sales agents included Frederick S. Morse, Miami; F. J. Powers, Homestead; J. B. McDonald, West Palm Beach; Austin and McNeil, Okeechobee; C. D. Brumley, Chuluota; Miller Hallowes, Ft. Pierce; and others. The original Miami agent, Frederick Morse, maintained extensive files, which help to clarify the role of the local sales units within the larger corporation.

The relationship between the Miami agent, Frederick Morse, and the Model Land Company began in 1907, with Morse acting as “special agent for the Railway Company during the time it was building in and out of Miami.” Morse purchased much of the right-of-way and other properties between Miami and Key West for the FEC Railway. The agency, officially titled, Frederick K. Morse Real Estate and Fire Insurance, “was
planned and developed for the sale of MLC land jointly with the Boston Company Land,” which Mr. Ingraham formerly sold in his St. Augustine office. Like other agents, Morse worked on a commission basis.\textsuperscript{15}

Morse’s successors, Frank J. Pepper and Burr S. Potter, began working with the Morse agency in 1910. Pepper came to Miami in 1907 and worked for the Engineering Department of the FEC Railway and on the construction of the Key West extension, until he became a partner with Morse. After Morse’s death in 1920, Pepper “took Mr. Burr S. Potter in as a partner.”\textsuperscript{16} “Pepper and Potter” became the official sales agent for Model Land Company real estate in territory designated as:

That part of Palm Beach County South from South line of Boynton Canal, Broward County, and Dade County to West line of Range 37 East and to South line of Twp. 61 South including Key Largo Lands, excepting and reserving there from all lands and lots in the City of Miami.\textsuperscript{17}

Pepper and Potter devoted “practically all their time and attention to the sale of company lands.” They made sales, collected payments on contracts, attempted to prevent the expansion of city limits to keep taxes

\textbf{IF YOU Want Orange Groves, Pineapple Plantations or Fruit and Vegetable Lands see Fred’k S. Morse MIAMI, FLORIDA}

Agent For Lands of

Florida East Coast Railway Co.
Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company.
Boston and Florida Atlantic Coast Land Co.
Model Land Company.

Advertisement in the \textit{Florida East Coast Homeseeker} for Frederick S. Morse, the Miami agent for the Model Land Company, July 1910. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)
down, and kept local records and surveys.  

In 1927 the agents relocated to the Ingraham Building in downtown Miami. The agency prospered during the real estate boom of the 1920s, and subsequently struggled through the Great Depression of the 1930s. According to Pepper,

> Miami banks began to fail in 1928, with the Southern Bank and Trust Company, and in 1930, with the Bank of Bay Biscayne. Then is when our troubles began. Our bank accounts became frozen and real estate stopped moving, and of course, our income (commissions) likewise stopped.

During the 1930s the agency lost its northern clientele, while local sales grew increasingly difficult. Local farmers began to suffer from tariff laws and poor markets, and they could not afford to buy new land or make payments on the farmlands. A lack of quality farmland compounded the problem. By 1939, Pepper reported “all our best lands for farming purposes in Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade Counties have been picked over and sold out ...”

With the return of prosperity to the nation, conditions improved by the 1940s. Another former associate of Morse, Milo Coffrin, assumed Potter’s place within the agency, and Pepper and Coffrin, Inc. acted as the Model Land Company’s local agency. The agency changed its name in the late 1940s to Frank J. Pepper and Son, Inc., and again in the 1960s to Frank J. Pepper, Inc. Over the years, the agency assumed a number of extra duties and came to exercise influence in local politics. Pepper wrote that members of the agency could be found:

> attending council meetings ... and also County Commissioner Meetings in Broward and Dade County in connection with which we are positive thousands and thousands of dollars have been saved the Flagler Companies because of our close attention to these matters and our personal friendship and influence with these officials. We have made it a rule to go over our territory at least once a week ... visiting the Court Houses, City Halls, etc., along with our other business to keep up our friendship, acquaintances, and political prestige with these officials, so that when matters come up affecting
taxes, zoning, condemnation, or anything else in which your companies are interested, we are informed and in a position to get satisfactory results.\textsuperscript{20}

The agency also participated in Drainage District meetings from Lake Worth to Naranja, and assisted in foreclosure suits by collecting affidavits, testifying, and gathering witnesses. Agents maintained records of all these activities, in addition to records of surveys, taxes, sales and other transactions and information on significant local events.

With its ability to influence local development, the Model Land Company supported Flagler's intention, "... to work in sympathy with the plans of the FEC Railway for building up along its line, thriving settlements and increase the revenues ... from freight and passengers" utilizing the line. Flagler once remarked, "Every new settler is worth $300 a year to me. He has to bring in everything he uses and send out everything he produces over my railroad." The power of the MLC also helped the subsidiary land companies as they sought profits from land sales. One MLC sales agent, writing in 1911, reported that "Mr. Ingraham ... instructed me to sell the land at the best possible advantage to the company on the basis that the company is now working for profits in land rather than traffick."\textsuperscript{21}

The activities of the Model Land Company grew to encompass sales and the promotion of Florida throughout the country. The Company focused on advertising the agricultural and industrial potential of the land, and employed agriculturalists, horticulturists and stockmen to attend to the development of the East Coast. The Model Land Company influenced the development of the South Florida region from a subtropical frontier to a modern civilization, and the Company has maintained a lasting impact on the area. Through a myriad of activities as a corporate land enterprise, the Model Land Company affected the economic, agricultural, political and social growth of the area. The accomplishments and shortcomings of the Company, many of which are documented in these records, offer a unique view of this region's history.

The Model Land Company Records include the administrative and financial records of the Company's Miami-based land agent, Frederick S. Morse, and successor agencies including: Pepper and Potter; Pepper and Coffrin, Inc.; Frank J. Pepper and Son, Inc.; and Frank J. Pepper, Inc. The files date from around 1907 to 1967, and are housed in 159 boxes and total sixty-six cubic feet of files. The files do not
represent the comprehensive records of the Model Land Company, as the records of the central office in St. Augustine were destroyed by office personnel between 1963 and 1967.

The files document three major areas: real estate transactions, general company business and topical files. Files contain a variety of documents including correspondence, memoranda, maps, blueprints, clippings, publications, photographs and other materials. These documents also include documentation on tax matters, incorporation of towns, alterations of city limits, surveys, company and agency policies and sale prices of lands.

Tax issues were of great concern to Company officials, and the files document negotiations with local officials to lower taxes. Tax agents had success in arranging for the Company to pay regular taxes on smaller properties and limit taxes on larger, more valuable properties. The Company used other means to reduce taxes, including efforts to prevent the expansion of city limits. City lands bore greater tax rates, so the Company sought to prevent the incorporation of most towns. The agency maintained files on efforts to determine the city limits of the following communities: Deerfield, Pompano, Oakland Park, Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood, Perrine, Hallandale, Miami, Homestead and Florida City. The Company also kept records on the incorporation of the following towns: Princeton (1915-16), Hallandale, (1921), Redland County (1925), Pompano (1927-33), and Floranada.

With the exception of the 1930s, the Model Land Company abided by a policy of selling — never renting — land. Sales contracts bound farmers to their property, and prevented farmers from moving to new lands. Typical files contain requests for land and correspondence between the buyer and the agency on price, location and description of lands, followed by the negotiation of terms for sales contract. Extensions were often granted to farmers during hard times. Occasionally, the Company allowed farmers to forego interest payments if payment of the principle was possible.

Mortgages replaced sales contracts during the 1920s and constitute a large portion of the records. Occasionally, one contract holder would agree to exchange land with another, requiring certain paperwork. Deeds of easement allowed a company or individual to use land owned by another for a specific purpose. Easements were granted for the purpose of constructing canals, bridges and power lines. Options were granted only in cases of large purchases.
Files contain requests for land, information on the availability of land, and the price and quality of land. A contract holder sometimes assigned responsibility for fulfilling the contract, as well as the land, to another individual or company. Men serving in the Armed Forces in World War I assigned their contracts to others, as did farmers unable to complete the payments on their lands. Surveys created to map plats of Model Land Company holdings, useful to settle disputes over boundaries, are scattered throughout the files. The failure to receive a contract extension often resulted in the voiding of a contract and the return of the land to the Model Land Company. Property was leased only in rare cases, but hardly ever to homeowners. The Company granted leases to certain groups, such as the Veterans of All Wars and the National Soil Fertility League. Once a contract holder had completed payments, a deed was issued and the property was recorded.

Topical files document important economic, political and social aspects of South Florida’s development. Topics represented in the files include: Chicken Key, immigration/colonies, legal cases, land drainage, the Everglades, housing projects, the Miami Country Club, migratory labor, parks, public relations and World War I.

**Chicken Key**

The acquisition of “Chicken Key” proved a complex process. Charles Deering, a wealthy industrialist, expressed interest in Chicken Key, an island in Biscayne Bay. Frederick Morse undertook the numerous steps involved in securing the property. Morse applied for a “Special Certificate of Location” to provide a legal claim on the land. He placed a “Notice for Publication” from the U.S. Land Office in local newspapers for five weeks. The notice described the location of the land and instructed “any and all persons claiming adversely the lands described, or desiring to object because of the mineral character of the land or for any other reason, to the disposal to applicant,” to file an affidavit of protest in that office. Morse also posted this notice on the island and obtained an affidavit stating so.22

Prior to approval of the application, the government was required to survey the land, and Morse had to prove that the island existed prior to the 1850 Swamp Land Grant. The island, if underwater at that time, would be considered the property of the State of Florida. Morse gathered affidavits asserting that the land was “not in 1850 swamp and overflowed land.” Experts were consulted in this matter, including John K. Small,
Head Curator of the New York Botanical Garden, and a close friend of Charles Deering. Small, who had conducted “a special study of the plants and the vegetation of Southern Peninsular of Florida and the Keys,” submitted photographs of mangrove trees located on the island, estimated at 200 years old. These photographs, preserved in Company files, substantiated claims that the island existed for centuries.

After Morse succeeded in protecting his claim to the Key, he was forced to contest a second adverse claim made by Mr. Thomas A. Walsh of Brooklyn. Walsh had purchased the Key from William Fuzzard, an early settler of Cutler, South Dade’s first community, in 1904 for five-hundred dollars, but neither man had a title to the property. Since Fuzzard was a friend of Morse, the latter agreed to pay Walsh five-hundred dollars for the land.

Afterwards, Morse took the final step and filed legal notice of the plat of the Key for five consecutive weeks. This notice stated that a detailed map had been filed by the land office of both Chicken and Commodore Keys, making the land available for purchase. Morse presented the warranty deed for the property to Charles Deering in 1920, concluding the transfer of the property. Although Walsh continued to pay taxes on the island and to claim title to the property, the land was securely in the hands of Charles Deering.

**Immigration/Colonies**

The FEC Railway planned “colonies” and encouraged immigration to increase the population and settlement rate along the east coast. A number of cities and towns began as “colonies,” planned or supported by the railroad. Flagler’s “Land and Industrial Department” encouraged the immigration of colonists from Norway, Sweden, Japan and other countries. On occasion, the FEC Railway Land Department played an active role in facilitating their migration to southeast Florida. Flagler aided in the development of a Danish colony, White City, after the death of its founder in 1893. The Model Land Company and the Boston and Florida Company cooperated in organizing Modello and Hallandale, colonies for Swedes and Danes. The FEC Railway also participated in the establishment of the Japanese colony at Yamato, near present-day Boca Raton. Company files document attempts to arrange similar immigration projects in the Lake Worth area during the 1920s.

Subjected to annual floods, the Lake Worth district proved extremely difficult to promote as a settlement. Yet, several farmers settled
on the Company’s land anyway by 1920. Pepper’s description of the area included grim observations, such as a notation of a family surveying their property from their porch, which was surrounded by water. To improve the potential for agriculture, the Model Land Company organized a drainage district to drain the lands of excess water and improve farming opportunities.

Initially, the Model Land Company considered a joint drainage project with the Boston Company in order to remedy the situation and to improve the value of the lands. The Company also explored the establishment of a Company Farm, to disprove the growing belief that the land could not be farmed. Changing the farmers’ attitudes had become imperative. In a letter to Ingraham in 1922, Pepper reported that “There is one thing for certain and that is we are not going to get local farmers interested in the district, at least until others have gone in there and demonstrated a success.”

Many farmers expressed reluctance to “put any more labor and fertilizer in the ground” until they saw results from even one successful farm in the area. The farmers experienced many seasons of over drainage during the cropping season and flooding during the winter season. They also complained of the burdensome drainage tax. Although the Company Farm idea is discussed in correspondence, there is no indication of its creation. Other alternatives that Pepper suggested to Ingraham included colonization of the land and the sale of the property. He wrote that the Company “should either colonize it ourselves by Japanese or others whom we might find desirable,” or put it on the market together with the Boston Company’s holdings. Pepper was already in contact with Syrians and with Japanese in California.

Ingraham responded to Pepper’s letters, stating:

As to the colonization by the Japanese ..., or Syrians I have never seen in any of our relations with the Japanese at Yamato, anything that was objectionable. They are hardworking, intensive, and persevering. As far as I know, the Japanese are more self-assertive as to their social rights than any of the others that you discussed with me.

No indication is given of whether this quality was a desirable one in prospective colonists; however, Ingraham suggests the English as a second, preferred possibility. He wrote:
I am inclined to think that if a properly sustained effort to was made, that we could reach a class of young Englishmen and Englishwomen, and perhaps good Irishmen and Irishwomen, good educated people, who want to make a new start, and these people make the very best colonists in the world. They assimilate readily, they are socially acceptable, and they don’t know what failure means.28

Subsequent correspondence between Ingraham and the Miami agency called for a meeting between Pepper and Potter, as agents responsible for much of the Lake Worth lands, and Mr. J. B. McDonald, an agent operating in Palm Beach County, and the British Consulate. The purpose of the meeting was to “discuss the matter of encouraging some British immigration of high class.”29

Although the progress of this idea beyond this point is unknown, another colonization plan materialized a year later when Alfred Minssos of Norway approached the Model Land Company with his own immigration plan. Minssos, “who had lived in the U.S. for ten years, and who in 1916, was a member of a commission sent to this country to study and investigate the cooperative features used by our manufacturers,” proposed to bring one hundred Norwegian families to the Lake Worth area. Each would be required to possess $2,500 in cash in addition to the funds necessary to purchase their houses and five acre lots. Minssos promised to construct a community center, streets, a store and clubhouse, and to improve the area by planting shrubs and flowers.

The Company agreed to provide several acres after Minssos demonstrated the viability of his colony by successfully settling the majority of the families. The company was cautious, but expressed its hope that “... this colonization improvement will prove to be only the beginning of a permanent setting up of that back country by a substantial set of farmers and good citizens, and to this end, it goes without saying, that everybody is interested.”30

**Legal Cases**

The files also contain correspondence and records concerning U.S. Government and Seaboard Airline Railway condemnation suits, foreclosure suits and suits against squatters and trespassers. Three significant cases occurred between 1911 and 1915 concerning the settlement
Suits settling homestead claims were brought by homesteaders who contested Model Land Company titles to certain lands. The homesteaders or individuals who settled on the land argued that the property was public land owned by the federal government and therefore open to claims. The Company had to prove to the court that the federal government transferred the lands in question to the state under the Swamp Land Grant of 1850. If the state owned the land, the homesteaders could have no claim upon it, and the Company titles would be protected. Although only one of these cases determined a Company title to be invalid, the homestead suits proved to be lengthy ordeals which damaged the reputation of the Model Land Company.

In *J. W. Blanding v. MLC* (1912-15), the plaintiff contested the Company's title to land in Homestead. According to the Company, the state deeded this land to Sir Edward James Reed who deeded it to the Land and Trust Company of Florida. The Trust Company conveyed this parcel with other lands to the Model Land Company. Apparently, the Company held reservations about the legality of the transfer and distinguished the land from regular transactions by referring to it as "Model-Reed land" in financial records. The investigation conducted on the title of these lands revealed that the lands were never transferred to the state. As J. E. Ingraham wrote, it looked "as if there might be a good mix up in these unfortunate transactions." This situation resulted in unfavorable publicity for the Model Land Company and caused some Homestead residents to become "rather excited about this rumor."

The Company's local agents gathered "swamp land affidavits," signed statements attesting to the fact "that at the date of the Swamp Land Act September 26, A. D. 1850, the greater part of each said quarter sections were wet and unfit for cultivation, and except for the artificial drains since made, the greater part of each of said quarter sections would now be wet and unfit for cultivation ..." The Company recorded the names of witnesses, records of the fees paid witnesses, and other relevant information. The case appeared to be settled in 1913, when Chief Justice Lamar of the Supreme Court of the United States issued a decision "against the homesteading of
lands conveyed by the state and to which the U.S. could be the only legal claimant." The judgement providing that homestead claims would no longer be upheld if they involved lands claimed by a state should have concluded the Blanding case. However, by 1914, the Company land still had not been deeded to the state.

In 1915 the United States government finally patented, or officially deeded, the lands to the State, completing the Model Land Company title. On January 28, 1915, Mr. Dewhurst, the FEC Railway attorney, notified Ingraham that "the Secretary of the Interior has rendered a decision in our favor for the whole SW 1/4 at Homestead." S. P. Lewis initiated a second case involving the Reed land in 1911. This case involved the land in section 12-56-39. As in the Blanding case, the Model Land Company argued that the state conveyed the land to Sir Edward Reed in 1883, and that the title came to the Company through the Florida Land and Trust Company in 1903. However, the Company attorney, Mr. Dewhurst, employed a different strategy to prove that the land should have been transferred to the state. During the course of the case, documentation in the files of the General Land Office in Washington, DC, listed the land under the description of "swamplands patented to the state." The land was, however, omitted from the list of swamp lands in the Surveyor General’s Office. Dewhurst argued that a simple clerical error had caused the misunderstanding and that the property had, in fact, been patented to the state.

The State’s title was recognized in 1912, but S. P. Lewis filed a "swamp contest affidavit" in a final effort to keep the land. He secured affidavits and witnesses to testify that the land being contested was not swampland and that it should have been retained by the federal government. In order to demonstrate that the land was not "wet and unfit for cultivation," neighbors argued that tomatoes could be successfully grown on surrounding tracts of land. In spite of this testimony, Lewis won his case and was allowed to keep his land.

A third case involving a Homestead claim occurred in 1912. MLC v. Jack Davis was settled, like the Blanding case, in favor of the Model Land Company. Although homestead claims were few, they generated a great deal of controversy and negative publicity. Flagler, with his keen business sense, foresaw the negative consequences of these legal battles. Shortly before his death in 1913, Flagler warned Pepper of the dangers of settling homestead claims in court. Flagler argued that even if the Company won all such suits, it could still lose a great deal of business:
I have a feeling that we ought not stay in the Courts and have our titles under a cloud, if we can adjust them for a reasonable amount of money or in any other way. I do not know what Mr. Dewhurst has done beyond the fact of bringing suit. There is a side of this that the lawyer should not be concerned with and that is the business side of it; and it looks to me that either you or some representative of yours might be able to reach these parties in such a way as to straighten up and clear out titles better than if this litigation is continued.37

An unfriendly relationship with the Miami Metropolis, the city’s first newspaper, contributed to Flagler’s concern. A “general belief” developed in Dade County that “the titles of the MLC are not good, due to attacks upon it by the Miami Metropolis.” An outraged Ingraham instructed Pepper to convince the Metropolis that it would be harming Miami far worse than the Company if stories on the “Homestead Affair” continued to appear in print. The Model Land Company was strong enough to withstand the attacks. “The MLC’s holdings extend from Jacksonville to Key West and will be enlarged rather than diminished, and I think it is powerful enough to protect the deeds it issues.”38 Ingraham observed that the Miami real estate market could be more vulnerable. Newspapers should be careful since “a very little thing will sometimes stop a ‘boom’ and create a panic ...”39

**Land Drainage**

A large portion of Florida land south of Orlando was originally wet lands, and drainage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries proved essential to the development of the region. The Model Land Company, and other large landowners, had an important stake in the drainage process. The Company initiated drainage operations, financed dredging projects, and attempted to influence the policies of state drainage district boards. In correspondence, Frederick S. Morse and William J. Krome, the engineer who oversaw the construction of the FEC Railway’s overseas railroad to Key West, discussed a plan to drain the prairie land of the Perrine Grant, located in today’s South Dade, into Biscayne Bay. Morse was responsible for obtaining the necessary information. Krome gave his opinion as construction engineer that the fall was sufficient for drainage into the Bay.40
Other instances of drainage projects appear in the records. In one case, Carlton Marshall of Pompano requested an option so that he could ditch the land, install drainage pumps, and determine whether his drainage method could make the land suitable for farming. The Company granted Marshall the option and agreed to sell the land at the price he named because if Marshall succeeded, "... it would no doubt be of great assistance in the sale of the balance."41

In addition to facilitating the drainage process, Flagler and his companies exerted control over the drainage district boards created by Governors Jennings and Broward. The first comprehensive drainage law established a drainage board which levied taxes, planned canal routes and ordered dredges. Flagler and the Boston Company united with other large land owners to oppose the drainage tax. They won a lawsuit against the state, and in 1906, the drainage commissioners drew new boundaries for the drainage district, excluding most of the lands of these companies.

Various state-organized drainage districts continued to supervise drainage for a number of years. The local Model Land Company office maintained files on these districts and participated in landowners leagues, organizations of large land holders who joined forces to fight unfavorable drainage board policies. Two drainage districts, the Broward Drainage District and the Southern Drainage District, posed problems for the Company. When Sidney Harrison, the secretary of the Company, learned of their organization, he complained about the "objectionable features" of the Broward organization's bill in a letter to Frederick Morse. The bill authorized the Board "to levy an unlimited amount of taxes for an unlimited amount of years." The Board possessed similar broad powers in regard to its ability to issue bonds, to change the boundaries of the district and to utilize funds. Furthermore, there was no appeal from the board.42

Harrison, however, reported that the Model Land Company succeeded in seeing all of these features altered by amendments after "considerable controversy with the Representatives and Senators introducing this bill." Harrison also informed Morse that a similar effort concerning the Southern Drainage District bill was underway and instructed him to "see the Editor of the Miami Herald and give him our side..." in case it became known that "our companies are opposing the Bill in its original form."43
Everglades Development and Preservation

The Model Land Company exercised an enormous impact over the recent history of the Everglades. Cape Sable, in the southwestern sector of the Everglades, is documented in numerous files recording land transactions and plans to develop roads, experimental farms and other facilities. James Ingraham initiated the drainage and development of the area. As an employee of Henry B. Plant’s South Florida Railroad, Ingraham explored the Everglades for construction of a railroad route to the Keys. He reported that the land was unsuitable for a railroad but had enormous potential for farming. Plant was uninterested, but Flagler pursued this information, and eventually acquired and began the process of draining the land so it could be sold as farmland.

In addition to promoting the sale of the land and encouraging the establishment of agricultural experiment centers by providing low rate leases, the Model Land Company constructed roadways and advertised hunting and fishing attractions. Records regarding the transformation of the Cape Sable area into Everglades Park begin in 1928, with Ernest Coe’s enthusiastic announcement of the campaign for “preserving this Cape Sable section of South Florida as a national park for all time.” Coe, a local landscape artist, became known as the “Father of the Everglades.”

Early correspondence reveals local landowners and land companies had no objection to the park except that they did not “consider ... all the agricultural lands in that area should be included in its boundaries or that their lands should be confiscated without proper reimbursement ...”

The bill drafted in 1929 provided that the lands could be taken by the government by condemnation, prompting the fear by land owners that they would receive less than market value for their lands. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Model Land Company continued to follow the progress of the park. The Company gathered the addresses of all landowners in November 1931, and arranged for a meeting of “all the larger landowners in order that we may be all of one accord if and when the land is purchased or taken by condemnation for park purposes.”

The files contain maps showing various proposed boundary lines, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, memos, transcripts of radio broadcasts and other materials documenting the controversy over the park. Numerous letters to congressmen and records of landowners meetings
Letter from Ernest Coe to Frank Pepper soliciting support for the promotion of the Everglades National Park, dated April 29, 1931. (Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami)
provide evidence of the Model Land Company’s effort to work with large landowners, oil companies, and land companies providing oil leases in the Everglades area. These groups opposed the park and sought to preserve oil and mineral rights for a set period of years.

In 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Enabling Act, allowing the “creation of the Everglades National Park, in Monroe, Dade, and Collier counties, ... within the boundaries to be determined by the Secretary of the Interior.” Ingraham sought out Coe, who at this time served as Chairman of the Everglades National Park Association, in order to determine the boundaries of the park and to plan future action in response to the condemnation of Company land.

The Company also compiled a report on the 270,760 acres it owned, placing their value at $5,036,800. The report describes drainage activities performed, crops raised and the industries that could be developed on these lands. The report argues that if the lands are taken for park purposes, industry and farming should not be curtailed. “If these lands ... were set aside for a park or game preserve, attractive activities could be carried on without interfering with the industrial development of the land.”

On April 2, 1947, the Secretary of the Interior finally selected the lands for the park. The Model Land Company sold the property to the government. When plans to extend the park boundaries arose in the 1950s, the Company and its local Miami agency took action. A letter from Pepper to the main office revealed that “15 interested landowners and oil men first had ... a ‘policy’ meeting, ... from which we adjourned to the Court House for a meeting with the Board of County Commissioners.” The commissioners, according to Pepper, seemed interested in the landowners views, but reluctant to “take a definite stand on their behalf due to the presence of [John] Pennekamp, a Herald reporter who supported the park.”

### Housing Developments

Throughout the early twentieth century Blacks migrated to Florida from southern states, as well as from the Bahamas and the Caribbean. Henry Flagler encouraged this trend by employing many black workers in his hotel and railroad construction projects. However, strict residential segregation affected the settlement of the Miami’s growing black population. An area on the northwest border of the downtown business
district — Colored Town, later called Overtown — was the one of the
first black residential areas. Smaller black communities had also emerged
in Coconut Grove and Homestead. Model Land Company files contain
mortgage documents for many black Homestead residents, several of
whom purchased large tracts and resold the property to other buyers.

By the late 1920s Colored Town came to be an overcrowded slum,
with the relocation of residents restricted due to policies by Miami’s
officials to keep them confined to that quarter. When the city’s business
leaders moved to enlarge the downtown business district in the 1930s,
they initiated the first steps to move blacks out of the downtown area.
“New Deal” public housing projects provided the opportunity for busi-
nessmen to implement expansion and resettlement plans. The Dade
County Planning Board also perceived the removal of blacks from the
downtown area as desirable, and discussed the creation of planned com-

Company files record the business transactions involved in two of
these housing projects. The first, the Liberty Square Project of the 1930s,
was constructed on 62 acres of land bounded by NW 12th Street (East);
NW 67th Street (North); NW 15th Avenue (West); and NW 62nd Av-


district. Work on Liberty Square began in 1935, and by 1937 the
first families had moved to the project “from an extremely congested

Liberty Square Project, ca. 1937, one of two housing projects supported by
the Model Land Company. (HASF, Miami News Collection 1995-277-6975)
colored section of the City of Miami." All of the 234 houses were soon occupied. Files contain a plat showing the project location, documents indicating the goals and operating methods of the associated consumers' cooperative, and a list of the various government agencies involved. Files also record the financial transactions between James E. Scott, Liberty Square's manager, and the Model Land Company. Scott's dedication to the establishment of Liberty Square is apparent. Although the government eventually provided a loan, Scott borrowed funds from personal acquaintances to meet initial payments. Correspondence provides descriptions of the improvements made on the property and the overall success of the undertaking.

The second major housing development documented in the files is Richmond Heights, located eight miles south of Miami and one-and-one-half miles west of Dixie Highway. Files dating from 1946 to 1955 describe this project and provide mortgage records. According to a Miami News article, former Pan American pilot Captain Frank C. Martin "spotted and selected" the location for this community after "having flown over Dade County for a score of years." Martin purchased 3,000 acres of pine land from the Model Land Company. The government occupied 800 acres for Richmond Air Base. After consulting a member of the Coral Gables Board of Realtors, Martin decided to use the remaining land to establish a planned "Negro development."

Martin's community included plans for schools, roads, parks, churches and recreation centers, in addition to housing. Construction began in 1950, and several residents moved into the area by May 1951. As in the case of Liberty City, "practically all" of Richmond Height's home buyers "came from the Central Miami or Coconut Grove Slum Districts."

Tensions between black and white residents occasionally developed in spite of segregated housing policies. Files discuss the rezoning of an area on Coral Reef Drive between Richmond Heights and white neighborhoods. A resident requested Company support for a petition to obtain business district zoning so that business facilities could be constructed between these communities, both for the convenience of the "colored people" and for creation of a "neutral buffer." According to the writer, "This is especially so when you consider that white ownership of this business property is practically assured." Another file mentions an incidence of violence against a black man who moved into a white neighborhood.
FACTS...
ABOUT THE
LIBERTY SQUARE
CONSUMERS'
COOPERATIVE
ASSOCIATION

This is a public Association
for economy and service,
NOT an organization for private profits. It is a true Cooperative enterprise designed to conduct the retail distribution of the items most important in the average family budget. Its stores will sell at current retail prices BUT its profits will be returned periodically to its members in direct proportion to their purchases at Cooperative stores.

SERVICE
THRIFT
COOPERATION

Let's pull together!

Pages from a pamphlet promoting the Liberty Square Consumers’ Cooperative Association, ca. 1940. The Cooperative sold grocery and household items at the competitive retail prices while the members of the organization, with a membership fee of $1.00 and the opportunity to buy stock at $2.00 per share, periodically received a portion of the
We Haven’t Any Big Money, Let’s Work Our Little Money Together

NOW is the TIME for ACTION
Join The
Liberty Square Consumers’ Cooperative Association
Headquarters
6302 NORTHWEST 14th AVENUE
MIAMI, FLORIDA
AND HELP BUILD A COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

STOP TALKING...THINK...
About what the "RACE" Needs
About what the "RACE" Has Done
About what the "RACE" Should Do
About what the "RACE" Should Have
NOW IS The TIME To GET TOGETHER And...

Act Work Combine
Your energy, intellect and money with a sound, substantial
and profit earning enterprise

MEMBERSHIP FEE $1.00 SHARE UNITS $2.00
DO IT NOW!!!

Let's pull together!

association’s profits. This effort encouraged members of the housing community to take a personal interest in the development by offering patronage to the Cooperative and helping prevent the same decline that occurred in Overtown. (Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami)
Miami Country Club

Files document the history of the Miami Country Club, which contained one of the first golf courses constructed in the United States. Flagler’s magnificent Royal Palm Hotel, a hostelry in the FEC Hotel Company chain, managed these facilities and hosted numerous tournaments which generated publicity for Miami. When the Royal Palm closed in 1928, the Country Club was “organized by three hundred prominent Miami business men.” The new club administrators leased the club house and golf course from the FEC Hotel Company and kept these facilities open on a year-round basis. In 1944 the Miami Country Club concluded a purchase on an option with the Hotel Company for the club house, golf course and all other assets on the premises. Even after the Hotel Company sold this property, it maintained close ties with the owners; Frank J. Pepper became a member of the club’s board of directors so that the Flagler interests would be represented. The files contain financial and administrative records dating from 1933 to 1944, as well as information on golf tournaments and special events.

Migratory Labor

Files document two federal government efforts to locate migratory labor camps in South Florida. In 1940 a representative of the Farm Security Administration made inquiries on Company land in the Pompano, Pahokee and Homestead areas. Since a local farmer donated two eighty-acre tracts for the establishment of a black and a white labor camp, the Model Land Company was unable to sell any land on this occasion. Another camp to accommodate what one news article called “Florida’s own ‘Oakies’” was established in 1941. The government requested a tract of Company land in the Lake Okeechobee vicinity, but this piece of property was under lease.

Parks

The City of Miami leased Royal Palm Park, a popular gathering place in downtown Miami, for one year as a park, freeing the Company from an annual tax on this property. The Model Land Company attempted to persuade Homestead officials to provide a similar arrangement, but the City of Homestead could not afford to lease the down-
town property known as the “triangular tract,” sixty acres bordered by Krome Avenue. The Company, however, sold other lots to Homestead for parks, and pledged to help the city by clearing underbrush and preparing the property for “beautification.”

Files also document the establishment of the Boca Raton Park and Playground. The city’s mayor, George A. Long, provided the land for a baseball field and park but he requested that the Model Land Company donate an adjoining piece of land. The Company supported the Mayor’s project and agreed to the donation.

Public Relations

Flagler operated his railroad, hotel and land businesses during the 1890s with a policy calling for widespread national and local publicity. Flagler purchased an interest in several Florida newspapers, and he and his associates employed a variety of methods to increase demand for lands. The Travellers Information Company promoted the Flagler System in thirteen northern cities. “Florida on Wheels,” a special railroad car constructed to tour the Midwest, was another innovative idea.

By 1900 a new attitude had replaced Flagler’s initial interest in publicity. At this point, he told Ingraham that “it seems to me that the East Coast is so well known that we ought to stop all expensive advertising.” Ingraham apparently continued to advertise, but concentrated on the northern market almost exclusively.

One exception to this policy is recorded in the files. When F. W. DeCroix requested that the Company take out an advertisement in his new publication, The Illustrated Review: A Florida Magazine for Florida, Ingraham instructed Pepper to purchase space for an ad because of current circumstances. “We ordinarily do not advertise much in local papers, for the reason that we spend our money in the North, where we endeavor to draw our customers from, but I realize that the ‘fake companies,’ et cetera, are bringing about a suspicion with regard to Florida enterprises, and it therefore may be very desirable for us to put ourselves before the public in a straightforward and legitimate way.”

The local office did not engage in the business of advertising itself, but it did distribute copies of “Lure of the South Land” to northern agents when requested. It also gathered photographs of Miami to be compiled into albums “used in soliciting homeseekers.” Ingraham requested pictures of “the different buildings and improvements in and
around the Miami area as contained in the ... Miami booklet issued by your board of trade ... or ... any other cuts showing the developments in and around Miami.'\textsuperscript{56} The Company collected photographs, including \textit{Miami Herald} prints of a successful tomato farm, \textit{Everglades Magazine} photos of a cattle farm, and other views of Biscayne Bay and the Dixie Highway.

The only other evidence of agency advertising is information on a sign advertising Key Largo lands. The Company had to submit extensive paperwork to obtain a permit to maintain the sign, eventually destroyed in a hurricane in the 1940s. The agency refused to replace the sign since neither the local office nor the St. Augustine agency believed, by this time, that advertising was profitable: "This office has never yet been able to trace a sale ... directly as the result of such a sign, or similar advertisement in Northern papers ... either Mr. Ingraham or Mr. Harrison informed me that was the experience of the St. Augustine office."\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{World War I}

Files document Model Land Company cooperation with the Food Preparedness Commission to ensure an adequate wartime food supply. Ingraham realized

\begin{quote}
the necessity for a large increase of acreage in corn, sweet potatoes, and other products raised in the South, not only for the sustenance of the South during the period of the war, but in order to supply the entire country and assist to the utmost of our ability in making up the shortage of crops which is anticipated throughout the North and West, and that as much as possible surplus ... may be shipped over to the Allied Nations in Europe ...\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

From 1917 to 1918, the Company maintained records of farm crops, enabling the Food Commission to predict the various yields of produce. The Company also took land applications, ordered seed and distributed goods to farmers. The Model Land Company offered to furnish free seed to all Broward County farmers who would grow a summer crop of corn. In spite of its desire to aid the war effort, the Company would not concede to the use of its land for growing extra crops.
Ingraham asserted that “we are doing our share in furnishing free seed without furnishing free land.”

Epilogue

Whether the issue was agriculture or immigration, land sales or migrant labor, drainage of swamp lands or race relations, taxes, tourism, or housing, the Model Land Company played a major role in shaping the economic, political and social issues that dominated the development of southern Florida in the first half of the twentieth century. Henry Flagler and his corporate enterprises literally shaped the landscape of the southern half of the state through the activities of the Florida East Coast Railway and the Model Land Company. Preserved within these corporate records are the many stories that continue to shape the destiny of our region.

Notes

1. Model Land Company Records, Archives and Special Collections, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. This collection, processed with a grant from the Florida State Records Advisory Board, contains administrative, financial, property, and client files for the Model Land Company.


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 178.


7. Ibid., 130-131.

8. Martin, 240.
10. Model Land Company Records, Box 6, Folder 178, Special File 207, Letter from Hudson and Boggs to Frederick S. Morse, June 12, 1914.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
16. Model Land Company Records, Box 96, Folder 1,703, Special File 1,703, Letter from Frank J. Pepper to William Kenan, Jr., January 21, 1944.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
31. Model Land Company Records, Box 1, Folder 32, Special File
35, Letter From James E. Ingraham to Frederick S. Morse, July 3, 1911.
32. Model Land Company Records, Box 1, Folder 32, Special File
35, Letter from Frederick S. Morse to James E. Ingraham, June 27, 1911.
33. Model Land Company Records, Box 1, Folder 32, Special File
35, Copy of Affidavit.
34. Model Land Company Records, Box 1, Folder 32, Special File
35, Letter from James E. Ingraham to Frederick S. Morse, July 10, 1913.
35. Model Land Company Records, Box 1, Folder 31, Special File
36. Model Land Company Records, Box 2, Folder 72, Special File 79, Correspondence, 1912-17.
40. Model Land Company Records, Box 4, Folder 120, Special File 138, Correspondence between Frederick S. Morse and William J. Krome, 1911-13.
42. Model Land Company Records, Box 21, Folder 535, Special File 655, Letter from Sidney Harrison to Frederick S. Morse, May 19, 1919.
43. Ibid.
44. Model Land Company Records, Box 75, Folder 1,439, Special File 1,869, Memorandum, Office of Frank J. Pepper, April 30, 1929.


53. Model Land Company Records, Box 41, Folder 951, Special File 1,428, Correspondence, 1924.

54. Model Land Company Records, Box 2, Folder 68, Special File 75, Letter from James E. Ingraham to Frederick S. Morse, December 29, 1911.


57. Model Land Company Records, Box 110, Folder 1,899, Special File 2,370, Letter from Frank J. Pepper to James E. Ingraham, March 10, 1948.


Members of the Historical Association of Southern Florida enjoy a wide variety of benefits. These include free admission to the museum; subscriptions to three museum periodicals: Tequesta, South Florida History Magazine and Currents; invitations to special events; use of the Research Center; discounts on purchases at the museum store; and discounts on educational and recreational programs.

Each membership category offers the benefits as outlined above, plus additional gifts and privileges for the higher levels of support.

Membership revenues primarily cover the cost of the benefits provided, educational programs, special exhibitions and daily operations of the museum. The membership listing is made up of these persons and organizations that have paid dues since November 1995; those who joined after November 1, 1996, will be published in the 1997 Tequesta.

Life Members
Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Franklin
Mr. and Mrs. James C. Merrill
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph B. Ryder
Mrs. Sylvia Sowards

Honorary Life Members
Mr. Fred M. Waters
Mrs. Wayne E. Withers

Fellow Humanitarians
Mr. Peter L. Bermont
Mr. and Mrs. Lee Hills
Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm B. Wiseheart
Mr. Mitchell Wolfson
### Corporate Benefactors

- Bacardi Gifts & Promotions
- BellSouth
- Biscayne Greyhound Track
- Brown-Forman Worldwide
- Chrysler Corporation
- Coopers & Lybrand
- Fireman’s Fund Insurance Co.
- First Nationwide Bank
- First Union National Bank
- Haff-Daugherty Graphics
- Honeywell, Inc.
- Keen, Battle, Mead & Co.
- NationsBank
- Southern Wine & Spirits
- SunTrust Miami, N.A.
- Turner Construction Company
- WLRN Public Radio & Television

### Corporate Patrons

- American Airlines
- Barnett Bank of South Florida
- Beber Silverstein & Partners
- Capital Bank
- Curbside Florist & Gifts, Inc.
- Daniel Electrical Contractors
- De Lara Travel Consultants
- Deloitte & Touche
- Eagle Brands, Inc.
- Eastman Kodak Company
- Federal Express Corp.
- Fidelity Investments
- First Security Trust Co.
- Florida Power & Light Company
- Greenberg, Traurig et al
- Groove Jet
- Johnathans Catering
- Le Basque the Caterer
- Mercedes Electric Supply, Inc.
- Miami Dolphins Ltd.
- Mile Marker Productions, Inc.
- Morrison Brown Argiz & Company
- Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound
- Norwegian Cruise Line Ltd.
- Savings of America
- Shuts & Bowen
- Star Clippers Ltd.
- Steel, Hector & Davis
- The Raleigh Hotel
- Thermal Management, Inc.
- Therrel Baisden & Meyer Weiss

### Corporate Members

- 2K Insulation Inc
- A & A Energy Systems Corp
- A & V Refrigeration Corp.
- A Customer First A/C
- A-1 Sun Protection, Inc.
- A1 Fargo Van & Storage
- ABC Distributing
- Adco Patch, Inc.
- Advanced Services, Inc.
- AIB Financial Group, Inc.
- Allied Specialty Co.
- Associated Printing, Inc.
- Berkowitz, Dick & Pollack
- Bierman, Shohat, Loewy, Perry
- Biltmore Hotel
- Carriage House Imports Ltd.
- Chase Federal Bank
- Christy’s Restaurant
- City National Bank
- Coconut Grove Bank
- Community Air Conditioning
- Cordis Corporation
- Corporate Advisors, Inc.
- Cypress Consulting
- Deering Bay Associates
- Diamonette Party Rentals
- Diaz Nursery, Inc.
- Dolphin Insulation Co.
- Ductmasters, Inc.
- Embers of South Beach, Inc.
- Energy Cost Savers, Inc.
- Esslinger Wooten Maxwell
- Estebanades
- Farrey’s Wholesale Hardware Co.
- FEDCO, Inc.
- Fence Masters
- Flamingo Formalwear
- Florida Yacht Charters & Sales
- Gene’s Catering
- Giancarlo Jewelry Designs
- Golden Press
- Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Harrison Construction
- Hayhurst & Associates, Inc.
- HealthSouth
- Helios Ceiling Insulation
- Honshy Electric Co., Inc.
- Hopkins-Carter Company
- Hotel Place St. Michel
- Hurrican Reef Beers
- Indian Creek Hotel
- International Finance Bank
- Jack Nicklaus/Golden Bear International
- Jacobs & Carney
- JAE’s Fine Jewelers
- John Alden Life Insurance Co.
- Kendall Appliances, Inc.
- Kenny, Nachwalter & Seymour
- La Palma Ristorante & Bar
- La Tradicion Cubana
- Legal Impressions, Inc.
- Lightning Printing
- Lowell Dunn Company
- McClain and Company
- Miami Herald
- Mike’s Cigars Distributors, Inc.
- Moe’s Cantina
- Moatney Power Corp.
- Mount Sinai Medical Center
- New Era Business Group
- New Times
- Omnifax, A Danka Company
- Pan American Hospital
- Park Central Hotel
- R. Falacios & Company
- R.J. Heisenbottle Architects
- Ramar Cigars
- Rechten International Trucks
- Republic National Bank
- Reyes & Son’s Painting Co.
- Ruben’s Air Conditioning, Inc.
- Rubin Barney & Birger, Inc
- Sears Roebuck and Company
- Sheraton Key Largo Resort
- South Florida A/C and Refrigeration Corp.
- South Pointe Seafood House
- Spillis Candela & Partners, Inc.
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Broward County North Regional Library
Broward County South Regional Library
Broward County West Regional Library
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Charlotte Harbor Area Historical Society
City of Lake Worth
City of Miami
Clewiston Museum, Inc.
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Dade Heritage Trust
De Soto National Memorial
Duke University Perkins Library
ECC-USF Learning Resources
El Portal Womans Club
Florida Atlantic University Library
Florida International University-North Campus
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### Membership

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