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THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

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On the Cover—Luis Ares, one of the children of Operation Pedro Pan, looks out on to
Biscayne Bay from the sea wall at Mercy hospital, 1963. Luis, age 13, left his parents
and two sisters in Cienfuegos. Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Miami.
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Editor’s Foreword

In the expansive era following World War II, Greater Miami, like communities elsewhere in America, experienced rapid population growth triggered by explosive suburban development. However, the tremendous influx of Cuban refugees, the shifting fortunes of tourism, and the ultimate emergence of a New World Center helped set the area apart from other urban centers. Each of the articles in this issue of Tequesta examines, to varying degrees, elements of mid-twentieth century Greater Miami. Indeed, the time has arrived for an examination of that era since enough years have elapsed to bring the proper historical perspective to a watershed period in the city's and region's history.

No one has paid more attention to the issues, events, processes, and personalities of mid-century Miami and southeast Florida than Raymond Mohl, one of the profession's preeminent urban historians, as well as a prolific chronicler of Florida history. In a series of seminal articles appearing in a wide array of scholarly journals and focusing on Miami's African American communities, the impact of I-95 on inner city neighborhoods, local labor and political radicalism, and the civil rights movement, Mohl has brought the scholarly study of Miami's rich history up to the recent past. In “Elizabeth Virrick and the 'Concrete Monsters': Housing Reform in Postwar Miami,” Mohl, a professor of history and chairman of the department of history, University of Alabama, Birmingham, provides the reader with a perceptive article on a remarkable reformer and the causes she espoused in her lengthy career as a civic activist in the Magic City.

Tequesta readers may recall the illuminating article by Francis Sicius, a Professor of History at Saint Thomas University, entitled, “The Miami-Havana Connection: The First Seventy-five Years,” which appeared in this journal in 1998. With “The Miami Diocese and the Cuban Refugee Crisis of 1960-1961,” Dr. Sicius focuses on the critical role of the fledgling Roman Catholic Diocese of Miami, which, almost alone in the early 1960s, answered the cries for assistance from thousands of refugees fleeing Castro's Cuba for Miami. In “Chapman Field—The Evolution of a South Dade Army Airdrome,” Raymond G. McGuire explains the vicissitudes in the uses and fortunes of a widely-coveted parcel of real estate in south Miami-Dade County. Readers will marvel over the plans for that parcel, as well as its actual utilization,
since the era of World War I. Dr. McGuire, who holds a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, served as a research scientist at the United States Department of Agriculture’s Subtropical Horticulture Research Station at Chapman Field before turning to teaching. Presently, he teaches biology at South Dade Senior High School.

Earlier this year, the Florida Historical Society, which traces its origins to 1856, presented the 2001 Hampton Dunn Award for Print Media to Tequesta, as the state’s top history journal. The Historical Association of Southern Florida is both proud of and humbled by this award. We are also gratified by the warm responses of many of our readers to the 2000 issue of Tequesta.

Paul S. George
Editor, Tequesta
To the casual visitor, postwar Miami had all the appearances of a dreamlike tropical paradise. This glitzy resort capital of the nation seemed perpetually bathed in warm sunshine and gentle ocean breezes, an urban landscape buried in lush foliage, blooming hibiscus, and bougainvillea, and tall, stately palms. Its beautiful beaches, fishing grounds, golf courses, country clubs, racetracks, and illegal gambling casinos attracted the rich and famous each winter season. Endless promotional extravaganzas, intense national media attention, and the Miami-based popular television shows of Arthur Godfrey and Jackie Gleason all kept the public spotlight focused on the tropical resort image of this emerging Sunbelt city well into the 1950s and after.

But there was trouble in this winter paradise, trouble stemming from Miami's "Deep South" racial divide. From Miami's origins in the 1890s,
the city’s African American population had been subjected to second-class citizenship, denied equal educational and job opportunities, and confined residentially to a few segregated areas of mostly run-down rental housing controlled by politically powerful slumlords. As Miami Mayor Perrine Palmer put in a 1947 speech on Miami’s low-cost housing needs, “Even though Miami is the youngest of the metropolitan cities, it is already rotting at the core, like the older ones.” It was a shocking admission, coming from the leading public official of America’s number one tourist and recreational playground. At the time, Mayor Palmer was pushing for Congressional passage of the hotly debated Taft-Ellender-Wagner bill, which provided federal funds for slum clearance, public housing, and urban redevelopment. Congress eventually approved the legislation, known as the federal Housing Act of 1949, but its full implementation remained problematic, especially in southern cities such as Miami.

In the late 1940s, Mayor Palmer and other Miami advocates of public housing and urban redevelopment found an unlikely ally in a citizen’s movement for housing reform led by a diminutive, middle-class, middle-aged white woman named Elizabeth Virrick. By the early 1950s, when she had become Miami’s “number one slum fighter,” community organizer, and housing advocate, Virrick was a force to be reckoned with in the city’s highly contested political landscape. Throughout the postwar era, she fought the slumlords and the speculative builders who were squeezing tremendous profits from what Virrick called the “concrete monsters”—the newly built two- and three-story apartments that densely covered Miami’s inner-city.

In the early 1950s, the City of Miami began razing substandard dwellings, such as this one, in its black neighborhoods.

Black ghetto. She challenged the implementation of urban renewal programs that benefited landowners and developers but ignored low-income housing needs. In the late 1950s and 1960s, when inner-city expressways threatened to decimate Miami's Black neighborhoods, Virrick launched a virtual one-woman anti-freeway movement. By the 1960s, Virrick was deeply involved in "Great Society" fair housing, job opportunity, and social service programs. Most Miamians generally agreed that for their city, Virrick "fired the first shots in the war on poverty." Urban change is generally a slow and tedious process, but through her relentless social activism over four decades, Virrick demonstrated that human agency could make a difference in urban policy, municipal politics, and community life.

A native of Winchester, Kentucky, and the daughter of an attorney, Elizabeth Landsberg was born in 1897. She attended the University of Wisconsin and then Columbia University in New York City, where she studied architecture but never graduated. At Columbia she met Vladimir E. Virrick, a young architect from Russia who had been serving in the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C. when the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917. He never returned to his native country and soon went on to the Columbia University School of Architecture. The Virricks married in 1925 and traveled to Miami on their honeymoon. At the time, Miami and Miami Beach were in the midst of the astonishing but short-lived South Florida real estate and housing boom. It must have seemed a promising time and place for a young architect to begin building a professional career, and the Virricks never left South Florida. Vladimir established an architectural practice in Miami, while Elizabeth kept house, raised a daughter, and for several years ran a stenography business in Miami Beach. The family lived in Haiti for a time in the early 1940s, when Vladimir worked as the chief architect for the Societe Haitienne Americaine de Development Agricole, but otherwise their life in Miami remained uneventful until Elizabeth's conversion to housing reform and political activism in 1948.

Elizabeth Virrick's emergence as a housing reformer coincided with dramatic changes in American cities. Indeed, as World War II came to an end in 1945, urban America stood at the brink of unprecedented change. Over five million rural dwellers had migrated to the cities for wartime factory jobs. Many cities experienced severe housing shortages, intense social service demands, and some nasty episodes of racial conflict.
Perhaps most significantly, many American city dwellers came to share the view that the postwar era would be a time for a massive “reconstruction” of the American city—a view promoted by big-city mayors, urban planners, downtown civic leaders, and urban real estate interests.

Ambitious plans for urban reconstruction surged to the surface in postwar America. The urban housing stock often dated to the industrial era of the late nineteenth century, slums needed to be cleared, and new housing built. The coming of the automobile posed still another kind of challenge, since urban street systems built for pedestrians, horses, and electric streetcars were now outdated; cities needed to rebuild their transportation systems to accommodate the automobile. At the same time, several demographic and economic transformations were underway. The Black migration from the rural South to the industrial centers of the North, Midwest, and West Coast had already begun to swell the central cities. Simultaneously, postwar urban America was on the verge of spilling out its white population into burgeoning postwar suburbs. The beginnings of “de-industrialization”—the abandonment of the urban core by American industry—also could be found by around 1950. These powerful transformations quickened the pace of urban change after 1945.

Throughout this era of growth and change in American cities, political leaders, business interests, and citizens groups fought to achieve alternative visions of the urban future. Elizabeth Virrick’s reform activities in Miami are best understood in the context of these battles over the direction of national urban policy. The national Housing Act of 1949 represented the first major effort by the federal government to address the needs of cities in the postwar period. After a protracted debate that began in the early 1940s, a compromise housing measure eventually garnered sufficient votes for Congressional passage. The new legislation sought to satisfy interest groups with deeply contradictory aims. In the first place, appeasing the liberal housing lobby, the 1949 housing law stated as its goal the realization of “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.” To reach that admirable goal, Congress authorized 810,000 units of public housing over the next six years, primarily funded by the federal government. It also provided for a program of slum clearance and urban redevelopment. Using the power of eminent domain and with two-thirds of the funding coming from Washington, city redevelopment agencies could
purchase slum properties and then resell the assembled land parcels to private developers at a lower price. One key requirement held that the land acquired in this way had to be “predominantly residential,” either before or after redevelopment. This permissive loophole made it possible for private developers to condemn low-income housing areas and redevelop the land for other, more lucrative purposes—shopping centers, business buildings, expensive apartment houses, and the like.³

The real estate and building lobby found much to its liking in the slum clearance and redevelopment provisions of the Housing Act of 1949. It promised a profitable subsidy to the real estate developers. By contrast, public housing advocates initially viewed the slum clearance section of the law as a necessary compromise that would speed Congressional approval of the housing provisions. “Public housers,” as the reformers were called, took seriously the stated legislative commitment to provide decent housing to all. They expected that cleared and redeveloped land, or some of it anyway, would be allocated for new low-income housing projects. But in actual practice, that rarely happened. According to one study, of the initial fifty-four urban redevelopment projects in the early 1950s, only three included any public housing. Considerably more low-income housing was demolished under the redevelopment provisions of the law than was built under the public housing provisions. By 1954, fewer than 200,000 of the promised 810,000 units of public housing had been built. Also, the real estate interests conducted a bitter campaign to undermine local implementation of the public housing provisions of the Housing Act of 1949, causing more frustration to the housing reformers.

Congressional legislation a few years later further shifted national urban policy away from public housing. The Housing Act of 1954 sought to speed up redevelopment activity, now renamed “urban renewal.” It also added provisions encouraging rehabilitation of existing properties, requiring relocation of displaced families, mandating citizen participation, and insisting that redevelopment projects fit into city-wide zoning and land-use plans. However, practically speaking, the legislation once again favored developers over public housing advocates. Indeed, special exemptions freed builders from even the permissive “residential” provisions of the 1949 law. Consequently, urban renewal soon came to be labeled “Negro removal,” as low-income Black communities were cleared for inner-city redevelopment projects that
included little replacement housing. Moreover, in the implementation stage, agencies such as the Federal Housing Administration failed to enforce the law, and local housing and urban renewal agencies often ignored provisions for rehabilitation, relocation, and public housing. Finally, throughout the 1950s, a conservative-dominated Congress cut back on annual appropriations for public housing. In short, postwar federal housing legislation seemingly promised much, but left a legacy of failure. In the process, cities across the nation became battlegrounds between real estate developers and housing advocates.

As varied plans for postwar urban redevelopment unfolded, urban places and spaces became contested arenas. In the South, where hostility to federal activism and intervention persisted unchecked into the 1950s and 1960s, urban reform that depended on federal largesse or that challenged entrenched racial segregation remained problematic. The real estate industry—especially private builders and slumlords—fought bitterly against any form of public or subsidized housing that threatened their profits. Moreover, the anti-Communist fervor unleashed in the late 1940s by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his ilk confused the national debate on urban issues. In Florida and in the South, McCarthyism had the unfortunate consequence of linking housing reformers and civil rights activists with socialism, communism, and un-American activities.

The national and regional battles over public housing and urban renewal were replayed in Miami in the late 1940s and 1950s. Southern attitudes still endured in postwar Miami, and the anti-Communist crusade resonated widely in this South Florida tourist spa. Thus, urban
Elizabeth Virrick & the “Concrete Monsters” 11

reform that focused on public housing, federal programs, and a fair deal for African Americans faced an uphill battle. Convergent ideologies in business and politics—anti-communism, pro-segregationism, and hostility to federal social programs—dominated Miami’s political landscape throughout the period. Under such circumstances, grass-roots social and housing reformers such as Elizabeth Virrick faced formidable challenges.

Elizabeth Virrick’s political awakening took place in 1948. The instigating issue did not seem especially momentous at the time. The place was Coconut Grove, one of the oldest communities in Miami. A self-contained village within the city, Coconut Grove had expensive waterfront villas, neat blocks of middle-class white homes, and a sizable Black community. Black immigrants from the Bahamas and their descendants made up most of the residents of Black Coconut Grove. White landlords owned a large portion of the Black Grove’s tiny wood-frame homes and small apartment buildings. A compact and badly overcrowded area of about forty blocks, heavily planted with gardens and fruit trees, Black Coconut Grove suffered from inadequate municipal services such as water supply, police protection, and garbage collection; few houses had both running water and indoor toilets. The one large tract of empty land that still remained in the Black Grove—the so-called St. Albans tract of about seventeen acres—had recently been purchased by two well-known Miami speculative builders, John Bouvier and Malcolm Wiseheart. Already active in Miami’s Black housing market, Bouvier and Wiseheart saw potential profit in Coconut Grove and planned to build apartments and duplexes on the St. Albans tract.

Announcement of these plans stirred passions in the Coconut Grove community. Nearby white residents had mixed views, most arguing that the land should be reserved for expansion of an adjoining elementary school or for white housing, a few others accepting the need for Black housing but not in the form of multiple units. Some Black spokesmen made the case for additional Black housing, although not necessarily large-scale apartment units. For their part, Bouvier and Wiseheart noted that the St. Albans tract, and indeed all of Black Coconut Grove, was zoned for commercial and industrial uses and that legally they could do what they wanted with the land.

Enter Elizabeth Virrick. She and her husband had just invested in a small, newly constructed apartment building in a white section of Coconut Grove. When the lily-white Coconut Grove Civic Club held a public meeting in August 1948 to protest the Bouvier-Wiseheart
plan to put multiple units of Black housing on the St. Albans tract, Virrick attended to see what all the commotion was about. Also invited to attend was the Reverend Theodore Gibson, a Black Episcopal priest from the Grove, who gave an electrifying speech about the desperate living conditions in the Black community. A deep-voiced and stirring orator with roots in the Bahamas, Gibson proclaimed that “My people are living seven deep.” He demanded that the white community take some responsibility for lack of enforcement of municipal sanitation ordinances and for the uncontrolled activities of the white slumlords. It was a transforming event for Virrick, who felt at the time that Gibson was speaking directly to her. As she later remembered in a set of autobiographical notes, Virrick went to see Gibson at his church the next day, asking what could be done. Consequently, they organized a second meeting, this one focused on conditions in Black Coconut Grove and attended by over two hundred people, both Blacks and Whites, which in itself was a remarkable event in deeply segregated Miami. Converted by now to grass-roots activism, Virrick came to the meeting with a reform agenda and a plan of action. One observer reported what happened: “Father Gibson spoke.

Elizabeth Virrick with Reverend Theodore Gibson, 1969. Father Gibson was Dade County’s foremost Civil Rights leader and an outspoken critic of the city of Miami’s failure at code enforcement, and the uncontrolled activities of white slumlords. HASE, Miami News Collection 1989-011-0821.
Mrs. Virrick spoke. Some people spoke who seemed aroused only by a fear of Negro encroachment. But there were many others who were shocked into action for improvement.” This memorable mass meeting ended with the formation of the Coconut Grove Citizens Committee for Slum Clearance, with Elizabeth Virrick as chairman.

With her newly formed institutional base, Virrick became a human dynamo devoting her energies toward social reform and social action. She had already begun exploring Black Coconut Grove, discovering living conditions and social problems for herself. Her friend Marjory Stoneman Douglas, a well-known writer and Florida environmentalist, described Virrick’s voyage of discovery in an unpublished essay from 1953, “Slum Clearance, Community Style”:


Virrick’s forays into the Black Grove provided her with insight and information, which she quickly transformed into a program of action for the Coconut Grove Citizens Committee.

With Virrick at the helm, the Citizens Committee wasted little time in getting down to the work of neighborhood improvement. She appointed subcommittees on sanitation, rezoning, and exorbitant rents. She convinced the Miami city commission to conduct a survey of sanitation and public health in Coconut Grove. She persuaded the city to
collect garbage regularly and prompted the local water company to extend water mains to every street in the Black Grove. Virrick successfully used her contacts in the press and local radio to publicly pressure Grove landlords to reduce rents to the same level paid by white families for comparable housing. Powerful opposition to sanitation and rent reform came from Miami slumlords, mostly represented by Luther L. Brooks, who managed a large rent collection agency for apartment owners. Nevertheless, the Citizens Committee prevailed upon the Miami city commission to enact several ordinances in October 1948 requiring every Coconut Grove residence to have running water, flush toilets, and septic tanks, replacing the outdoor wells and privies that were commonplace throughout the area. When Citizens Committee members showed up en masse at the city commission debate on the new ordinances, the crafty Virrick reportedly said: “We have not come to insult your intelligence by pleading with you to sign these [ordinances]. We are merely here to give ourselves the pleasure of witnessing your unanimous affirmative vote.” When some landlords refused to comply with the new rules, the Citizens Committee got the city health department to initiate legal action. To assist Black homeowners, a low-interest loan fund was created to facilitate compliance with the new ordinance. Successful passage of the city sanitation ordinances seemingly empowered Virrick and her reform colleagues.

The Citizens Committee soon initiated a variety of other programs and reforms. A new system of block clubs mobilized the Grove’s Black residents in behalf of community betterment. As a result, a massive clean-up campaign was initiated, complete with parades, bands, speeches, and prizes for the best lot improvements. Neighbors banded together to clean up and transform empty spaces into small parks and playgrounds. Plans for a community center, a health clinic, adult education programs, and a day nursery were implemented. The health department began a campaign of rat, fly, and mosquito extermination. For the first time, the city hired Black policemen to patrol the Grove area. Within a year, through persistent local action, Virrick’s Citizens Committee had sparked a remarkable transformation of Black Coconut Grove.

These early achievements of the Coconut Grove Citizens Committee represented a modest beginning. Coconut Grove, after all, was a small neighborhood. The slumlords still owned most of the rental housing. Little had been accomplished on the issue of rezoning Coconut Grove
from commercial and industrial to single-family residential. The speculative builders had already begun putting up some new apartment blocks in the Black Grove. The slumlords represented by Brooks and apartment builders such as Bouvier and Wiseheart had much to lose and were more intransigent on the zoning issue, and they used their collective influence to stave off city commission action. The rezoning issue became Elizabeth Virrick's next big battle for urban reform.

The rezoning campaign pitted the increasingly relentless Virrick and the Citizens Committee against the locally powerful real estate lobby and their political allies. Several prominent architects worked with an interracial subcommittee of the Citizens Committee to develop a new zoning plan for Black Coconut Grove that would prevent the further construction of multiple housing units. They sought to retain the primarily small home, single-family character of the neighborhood. Residential densities in the area surpassed forty-two persons per acre; more multiples would intensify the overcrowding that had already created severe social problems. Moreover, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) routinely rejected mortgage insurance for single-family homes in areas zoned for other purposes. Virrick anticipated, perhaps unrealistically given official federal government support for racially segregated housing, that FHA mortgage insurance approvals would follow a rezoning of the Black Grove. Time constraints also motivated the zoning reformers, since construction had already begun on several new apartment projects. In addition, Bouvier and Wiseheart were seeking approval of their extensive building plans for the St. Albans tract.

In January 1949, after numerous hearings and much-heated debate, both the Miami planning board and the five-member Miami city commission voted down the Citizens Committee rezoning plan for Coconut Grove. Further debate a month later on compromise proposals providing a mix of single-family and duplex units also met defeat, despite the large crowds of rezoning supporters who jammed into city commission hearings. Only two of the five commissioners, Mayor Palmer and H. Leslie Quigg, had consistently supported housing and zoning reform. Virrick had lobbied vigorously for the rezoning plan, working the phones, chairing meetings, talking to people in the streets, getting people out for commission hearings, using her new-found political clout, pushing for favorable editorials in the local press, even
threatening to campaign for a seat on the city commission—but ultimately to no avail. After the vote against the new zoning plan, Virrick publicly blasted the offending commissioners: “You have dedicated yourselves to those who exploit the Negro,” she declared. Coconut Grove, Black and White, seemed united in support of the plan. In numerous editorials, the *Miami Daily News* lashed out at recalcitrant public officials as “willing tools” of the land speculators and ghetto builders. But, the builders and landlords came away from the political debate over zoning with a free hand to put up their “concrete monsters,” as Virrick began calling the planned multiple apartment units.

The Coconut Grove reformers did not give up. Defeated by the builders, the slumlords, and the city commissioners, the Citizens Committee decided to use an initiative petition to force approval of the rezoning ordinance. Under Florida law, petition signatures of at least 10 percent of the city’s registered voters would compel the city commission to approve the ordinance or submit it to a referendum in the next general election. As Virrick noted at the time, “The issue is whether a civic group, backed by almost all the citizens of an area, is to have a voice in deciding an issue they feel is vital to the welfare of the community.”

Between February and June 1949, Citizens Committee activists canvassed Miami neighborhoods and set up tables outside stores, banks, and movie theaters, collecting over eleven thousand signatures, considerably more than the required 10 percent. Two local newspapers, the *Miami Daily News* and the Black community’s *Miami Times*, endorsed the Citizens Committee rezoning petition. The reformers seemed encouraged by the progress of the petition drive.

The speculative builders fought back in a variety of ways, however. They were able to get a favorable editorial in the *Miami Herald*, supporting their multiple apartment project on the St. Albans tract. At several points during the petition campaign, Bouvier and Wiseheart sought a compromise with the Citizens Committee permitting fewer multiple apartments. The reformers refused, holding out for the best zoning plan. Later, unidentified burglars broke into the committee’s office, rifling through desks and file cabinets, apparently seeking to thwart the petition drive. The burglars overlooked the accumulated petitions stored in a small cabinet obscured by other paperwork. A few days later, the *Miami Herald* ran a photograph of Elizabeth Virrick handing over a two-foot stack of petitions to the Miami city clerk. The petition drive
was successful, but on a split vote in July 1949 the Miami city commission refused to endorse the Coconut Grove rezoning measure, sending it instead to a referendum vote in the November election.

The rezoning referendum campaign heated up in the fall, replaying the earlier petition drive. Once again, the debate pitted the Citizens Committee against the speculative builders and slum landlords. Once again, the real estate interests worked actively against the rezoning proposal. Bouvier and Wiseheart, for instance, spent heavily on full-page newspaper ads, some of which "attempted to mislead the public into thinking that Mrs. Virrick...was endorsing their plan."\(^1\) The Citizens Committee countered that claim in a last-minute newspaper ad of its own. On election day, apparently swayed by Virrick's reformist vision of better housing for all, Miami voters approved the rezoning plan by a large majority. It was the first time in Florida history that the initiative and referendum method had been implemented successfully. In the aftermath of the two-year Coconut Grove struggle, Virrick received local and national recognition for her community work, including the Dade County "Woman of the Year" award.

For Elizabeth Virrick, the Coconut Grove zoning battle of the late 1940s turned out to be a mere beginning. In the months and years that followed, the Citizens Committee carefully monitored activities of the city planning board, which had the authority to approve zoning variances. Miami planning officials and city commissioners, not to mention the builders and slumlords, remained hostile to housing reform, even after passage of the national Housing Act of 1949, which promised federal assistance to cities for slum clearance and public housing. Many southern cities and states rejected federal assistance of any kind because of a narrowly held conception of states' rights. Such views were still powerful in Miami in the 1950s, when federal support for public housing seemed to many an opening wedge to take control of local programs. Moreover, the real estate lobby, nationally and in south Florida, portrayed public housing as dangerously un-American and socialistic. At the same time, they soon recognized the huge profit potential in slum clearance and urban redevelopment activity. Virrick's next big battle sought to secure, against powerful opposition, local implementation of the public housing provisions of Housing Act of 1949. She also began shifting her focus from the small and compact neighborhood of Coconut Grove to the larger and more complex arena of metropolitan Miami.
The reformers sparked a protracted struggle in early 1950, a struggle that lasted more than a decade, when the Miami city commission rejected federal funding for slum clearance and public housing. As noted earlier, the Housing Act of 1949 had authorized 810,000 units of public housing and provided the mechanism for a widespread program of slum clearance and urban redevelopment. The trouble, as might be expected, lay in local implementation of the new legislation. Poorly constructed "shotgun shacks" and more recently built multiple apartments—Virrick's overcrowded concrete monsters—covered Miami's largest inner-city Black neighborhood, then called the "Central Negro District" and later known as Overtown. Located just northwest of the city's relatively small central business district, the area had been targeted for destruction by Miami's civic elite since the 1930s. Many downtown business and political leaders sought to eliminate Overtown and move all the Blacks outside the city limits, thus paving the way for expansion of Miami's business center. An early housing project, Liberty Square, completed in 1937 about five miles from downtown Miami, was conceived locally as the nucleus of a new Black community that ultimately would siphon off Overtown's population. Some white civic leaders believed that more public housing for Blacks, if located in unincorporated Dade County, would speed the process of Black dispersal from the center city. However, slumlords and builders involved in Overtown felt threatened by any federal programs that might diminish their profits and their control of inner-city Black housing.

The issue came to a head after Congressional passage of the Housing Act of 1949, signed by President Truman on July 15. Subsequently, the Miami city commission (ironically, the same commission that had opposed the Coconut Grove rezoning) authorized the Miami Housing Authority to apply for federal slum clearance and public housing funds under the new law. However, a snag in completing the appropriate paperwork delayed submission of the federal housing application until after the November 1949 city commission elections. The outcome of the voting altered the political landscape, as two newly elected commissioners, along with one holdover commissioner, stood firmly opposed to public housing. Obviously, differing positions on public housing reflected a deep split within Miami's civic leadership, with some adamantly opposed to any federal funding and others willing to use federal funds to achieve long-term goals of racial separation. In any
case, Miami city commission meetings once again became a battleground between housing reformers and the real estate owners and their attorneys, as well as among the commissioners themselves. In March 1950, after hours of heated oratory and by a three to two vote, the new Miami city commission formally voted to reject federally assisted slum clearance and public housing.

Politically charged conceptions of free enterprise lay at the heart of the Miami housing debate. In April 1950, under Mayor Wolfarth’s prodding, the city commission enacted a slum clearance ordinance of its own, one that did not rely on federal funding. The new ordinance required more rigorous self-enforcement of sanitation and building codes by the slum landlords themselves. Parrying the public housers, Wolfarth also contended that the local private housing industry could build all the low-income housing that was needed, which is what the builders themselves maintained. The new mayor claimed to be interested in slum clearance and better housing, but he argued that the private real estate industry was best positioned to achieve these goals.

Virrick publicly scoffed at these claims. The mayor’s housing plan, she wrote, was “merely a patchwork job of slum perpetuation.” The new Miami slum clearance ordinance “had no more chance of accomplishing this end than a jack rabbit.” She also linked Wolfarth and the local real estate interests: “This ordinance was dreamed up by the opponents of public housing as a panacea,” and then put into place by the politicians. The Miami Herald agreed with Virrick this time, editorializing in March 1950 that, “Free enterprise has nothing to do with the issue. Yet it has been the slogan which has been used as the sandbag to beat to its knees every slum clearance proposal which has dared to show its head to the public in the last twenty years.” The landlords and builders waved the flag of Americanism and free enterprise to advance their financial
interests, and the politicians went along. It was a carefully calculated strategy in 1950, in the midst of the anti-Communist crusade we have come to know as McCarthyism.  

The feisty Virrick ominously noted that “the storm clouds [are] now gathering,” but she did not shy away from another fight. There was immediate talk of a recall campaign directed against the anti-housing commissioners. Virrick wrote to a Congressional committee investigating the housing lobby, inviting a probe of the Miami situation. Virrick also pressed Mayor Wolfarth, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to freeze building permits in Overtown, pending a proper zoning plan for the area—a move to stave off the landlords and builders who had begun replacing shotgun houses with concrete monsters.

However, these approaches soon gave way to another strategy. Emboldened by their earlier success, the housing reformers resurrected the initiative and referendum petition process that had worked so well in Coconut Grove, hoping in this way to implement a city ordinance on slum clearance and public housing. Reformers established an ad hoc Miami Citizens Housing Improvement Committee, with Virrick and Abe Aronovitz, a local attorney, playing major roles to challenge the Miami commission’s rejection of federally financed public housing. The new housing reform committee launched the petition campaign in early April at a mass public rally at Miami’s downtown Bayfront Park that drew over two thousand people, although not all of them were housing supporters. Aronovitz made an impassioned pro-housing speech, sarcastically attacking the “big-belied builders.” Over the next two months, Virrick, Aronovitz, and other housing advocates spoke at innumerable gatherings, including at least one meeting of unfriendly real estate brokers and builders. Debates were held at local club and association meetings, as well as on
Miami radio and television shows. Bus tours of Miami's inner city areas were conducted for leaders of the city's many civic and religious organizations. As with the earlier Coconut Grove campaign, the reformers sought to engage the public on housing issues.

The builders and landlords, with profits at stake, defended their position aggressively. They formed a Committee Against Socialized Housing, with the appropriate acronym of CASH, to parry Miami's public housers. The group had the backing of the Miami Board of Realtors, several leading bankers, and top politicians, including the new mayor, William Wolfarth. CASH distributed printed leaflets, brochures, pamphlets, and cartoons against public housing. These materials had been sent to Miami by the national real estate lobby, composed of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, the Mortgage Bankers Association, the National Association of Home Builders, and the U.S. Savings and Loan League. Newspaper ads, some the expensive full-page variety, trumpeted the builder and landlord position. Public housing, CASH contended, represented the first “step toward the socialistic state.” One CASH newspaper ad suggested that the reformers’ expressions of concern about “poor slum dwellers [was] a mere sentimental smoke screen to close the eyes of the sympathetic American people, while socialism takes over this country.”

Similar battles against public housing were underway in other cities, using, as Virrick noted, “the same slogans, the same billboards, the same distorted and untruthful arguments.”

Thanks to Virrick’s earlier work in Coconut Grove, public consciousness on housing issues had been raised substantially in Miami by 1950. Consequently, opponents of housing reform often found themselves on the defensive. Newspaper columnists attacked the builders and landlords as heartless, selfish, and greedy, seeking only to maximize profits from building and renting in the slums. Miami News columnist Bill Baggs, a big supporter of Virrick’s movement (he fondly called Virrick “my ol’ Kentucky babe”), labeled CASH as “an outrageously stupid and dangerous group.” In several columns, he suggested collusion and payoffs between the real estate people and some city commissioners. Columnist Jack Bell of the Miami Herald considered as laughable the builders’ claim that they would supply all the needed low-income housing and accept lower profits. “Altruism isn’t exactly running rampant among that group,” Bell wrote in a column dripping with sarcasm.
Investigative reporter Luther Voltz of the Herald demonstrated that the builders' private redevelopment plan was simply "rebuilding" new slums, replacing older shotgun shacks with multiple-unit concrete apartment houses that quickly became overcrowded, but that also produced greater income. Leaders from the Black community similarly condemned CASH's motives. Typically, the Reverend Edward Graham, Miami's leading Black Baptist minister, attacked opponents of public housing as "persons seeking to profit from their own rental units at the expense of human misery." Harry Simonhoff, editor of the Jewish Floridian, strongly endorsed public housing, but blasted Miami's white establishment: "The treatment accorded to Negroes in metropolitan Miami is a blot upon American civilization."

And so it went through forty-six days of the petition campaign in the spring of 1950. By early June, over thirty-two thousand Miami voters had signed the initiative petition, forcing the city commissioners to either accept the slum clearance and public housing ordinance or call a special election. The commissioners chose the latter path, scheduling the election for later that same month. Meanwhile, attorneys for the builders and landlords went to court seeking an injunction to halt the election, but their suit was dismissed. A few days later, the housing reformers won a sizable vote of confidence, as the referendum endorsed federal slum clearance and public housing in Miami by a vote of some fourteen thousand to ten thousand. But the victory was short lived. Housing opponents went to court again seeking to declare the referendum vote illegal, and this time they were successful. The Florida Supreme Court voided the referendum election on the grounds that the ballot did not contain the full text of the reformers' housing ordinance and that, therefore, the voters were insufficiently informed of the issues. Virrick was incredulous, later writing that "in truth and in fact no matter that had ever been before the people of Miami up to this time had ever received as much attention in the press, on the air and been discussed as widely and as thoroughly." But the Court had spoken. It was another victory for the landlords and ghetto builders.

Bowed but unbroken, the housing reformers pressed for another election with a more explanatory ballot. In early 1951, Miami's city attorney ruled that the 1950 petitions remained valid, and eventually the public housing ordinance was placed on the ballot for the November 1951 city
elections. The housing issue simmered through most of the year, but by
the beginning of November, things heated up once again, with a new
ad hoc committee, the Miami Citizens Committee for Slum Clearance,
orchestrationg the publicity campaign. Virrick wrote a series of pro-housing
articles for the *Miami Daily News*, focusing on "The Slum Disgrace." The
columnists cranked back into action, while numerous public
meetings aired the issue. The new reform committee publicly vetted
candidates for the city commission on their stance on public housing,
refusing to accept evasive answers.

The opposition remained active, as well. Just a few days before the
election, Mayor Wolfarth used his appointment authority to pack the
Miami Housing Authority with anti-public housing members. At the
same time, the landlords were still trying to keep the housing question
off the ballot. They went back to the Florida Supreme Court, this time
claiming that the ballot question was too long and too time consuming.
However, a few days before the election, the Supreme Court ruled that
the referendum could take place. The election on November 20, 1951
represented another major victory for Miami's housing reformers, as
voters supported the slum clearance and public housing ordinance by a
convincing two to one margin—20,563 for and 10,461 against. A
run-off election the following week put a pro-housing majority on the
city commission, as well. Three years of housing activism had put
Elizabeth Virrick at the center of urban reform in Miami.

Virrick's initiative and referendum victories between 1949 and 1951
demonstrated that Miami's voters were ready for housing reform.
Unexpectedly, more legal entanglements soon prevented any immediate
public action on urban redevelopment. In August 1952, Miami's hous-
ing and redevelopment plans were thrown into disarray by a Florida
Supreme Court decision in the case of *Adams v. Housing Authority of
the City of Daytona Beach, Florida*. The ruling declared that using the
eminent domain process for federally funded redevelopment was
unconstitutional in Florida. This legal decision delayed public redevelop-
ment and urban renewal programs in Miami by more than a decade.

Virrick spent a good part of the 1950s trying to get an amendment
to the Florida constitution through the legislature that would authorize
urban renewal. Failing that, she actively promoted four separate efforts
to put urban renewal enabling legislation on the Florida statute books.
She sponsored public forums to educate the public, but also denounced
the Florida legislature at every opportunity. As Virrick told a Miami reporter: “We have officials who are supposed to be leaders, but who don’t have any common sense. They talk about sin and motherhood, but everything they utter shows they don’t know anything about urban renewal.”

Not until 1959, when the state supreme court upheld a Tampa redevelopment law, did Florida join other states in accepting urban renewal funds from the federal government. Political and jurisdictional disputes in the early 1960s between the city of Miami and the newly established Dade County metropolitan government, now known as Metro, delayed implementation of urban renewal still further.

There were other battles in the years and decades to come. Throughout the 1950s, Virrick hammered away on the issues of slum clearance, public housing, and building and zoning controls in Miami’s expanding Black neighborhoods. However, none of these housing reforms did anything to diminish racial segregation in Miami neighborhoods or public housing projects. Dating back to the early twentieth century, official housing policies in Miami and Dade County established and preserved residential segregation. In particular, racial zoning was used to maintain physical distance between Blacks and Whites, even though that practice had been outlawed by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917. Miami’s housing reformers accepted residential segregation as a given in the 1950s, but sought better housing for Blacks and expansion areas for new Black housing developments. Miami’s Black civil rights leaders at the time, notably preachers Theodore Gibson and Edward Graham, also worked for housing reform within the context of a racially segregated society. Elizabeth Virrick was not a civil rights activist, but instead sought to expand housing availability through public housing and urban renewal. Later, by 1960, perhaps influenced by the emerging Black freedom struggle, Virrick came to recognize that ending slums depended on ending racial segregation: “It is a plain hard fact,” she contended in 1960, “that we will never get rid of slums if we have segregation, and vice versa, if we did not have segregation, we could get rid of slums.”

Maintaining the status quo seemed to be the official watchword throughout the 1950s. Federal redevelopment funding was banned at the time, but city and county officials did little to develop alternative slum clearance plans. Miami established a Department of Slum Clearance and Rehabilitation in 1952 after Virrick packed city commission meetings
with hundreds of supporters, but eventually the new department came to be headed by an ally of the slumlords. Building codes went unenforced for years; repair notices and condemnations were ignored by landlords. The Miami Housing Authority, controlled for a time by anti-housing appointees, made little progress on new public housing until the mid-1950s, when a single new project was completed. Minimal as this effort was, given the city’s need for low-cost housing, the Miami Board of Realtors went to court to halt construction. In the late 1950s, Miami city commissioners were still undermining the efforts of the Miami Housing Authority to build new public housing. As Virrick put it in 1958, “The opposition to any change in the status quo here is unbelievable and is carried on by the very influential and wealthy so-called respectable people who own the extensive and profitable Negro slums.” Not only did the slumlords have friends in government, but as Virrick bitterly suggested, “Almost none of our officials [seems] to be interested in anything from which they cannot profit.”

During the 1950s and 1960s, Virrick engaged in a long running battle with Miami builders, realtors, and slumlords. Most of Miami’s housing problems, Virrick sarcastically noted in 1958, could be attributed to “the number of real estate people to the square inch.” These were the people who were reshaping Miami’s residential landscape in a major way in the 1950s. By the time Virrick’s petition drives were taking place, residential transitions were already underway, as white neighborhoods gave way to African Americans seeking better housing. Segments of the local real estate industry facilitated the process of neighborhood turnover. For instance, builders Bouvier and Wiseheart moved Black families into Knight Manor, a white apartment complex they owned on Miami’s north side, changing the name of the complex to Carver Village. Nearby White residents protested, demonstrated, and demanded that city officials protect White neighborhoods from “Negro encroachment.” Punctuating these demands, on three occasions in late 1951 dynamite bombs blew up several empty apartments in the complex—bombs almost certainly planted by local Ku Klux Klansmen. The bombings brought national media attention to Miami’s housing problems, with critical articles blaring such sensational titles as “Miami: Anteroom to Fascism” and “Dynamite Law Replaces Lynch Law.”

City and county officials sought to contain the racial fallout from the bombings. Hoping to prevent black migration to an established white
neighborhood, the Miami city commission asserted its intention to buy Knight Manor and turn it into a public housing project for Whites only. Around the same time, the Dade County commission set up a “Negro housing committee” to seek out undeveloped properties in distant fringe areas where the private sector could build new Black housing. The idea of maintaining residential segregation remained a powerful imperative in Miami, and the corollary idea of moving all the Blacks beyond the city limits had not died out either. In Miami’s Overtown, slumlords were moving quickly to replace thousands of small, wooden houses with the much larger and ultimately more lucrative concrete monsters.

Despite Virrick’s persistent warnings about the spread of slum conditions to new areas, things seemed to get worse in the 1960s. In August 1965, the Miami Herald reported on a wave of new apartment house construction all over metropolitan Miami, a trend fostered by inadequate zoning laws and the weakness of planning controls. “Big blockbusters wedged on tiny plots of ground and surrounded by asphalt are cropping out all over,” reporter Juanita Greene noted. Greene traced this construction pattern back to the mid-1950s, when the city of Miami began granting more building permits for apartments than for single-family houses or duplexes. By 1963, the movement had “engulfed” all of Dade County. Up to that point, the concrete monsters had been mostly confined to the inner-city Black community of Overtown. But, Greene went on, “in the past three years the monster has migrated from his original habitat.” Virrick had been throwing out caution signs about the multiple-unit apartments since the late 1940s, but the ghetto builders had continued and mostly prevailed.

Luther Brooks, owner of the Bonded Collection Agency and Miami’s chief slumlord, emerged as the special target of Virrick’s scorn during these years. By the late 1950s, Brooks’s company collected rents from over ten thousand rental units in Miami, making it one of the largest rental firms in the country. Brooks was politically connected, and said to be “chummy” with four of the five Miami city commissioners. Press reports in 1958 and a subsequent grand jury investigation linked Brooks to city officials charged with enforcing building and sanitation codes. Records on over five hundred already condemned Brooks properties were somehow “lost” by Frank A. Kelly, Brooks’s friend and head of Miami’s Department of Slum Clearance and Rehabilitation. Reported violations in hundreds of other Brooks properties were never followed up.
An outspoken opponent of public housing, Brooks cleverly used the furor over slum clearance to benefit the slumlords, and his own company as well. Using the slogan of “free enterprise,” Brooks took the lead in encouraging property owners to replace aging wooden slum houses with new concrete monsters. In doing so, he argued that the private real estate sector was able to provide for the housing needs of low-income families. Later, when urban renewal and expressway building destroyed thousands of Overtown rental units, Brooks essentially managed the process of “block-busting” by which displaced Blacks moved into transitional White neighborhoods. Trading barbs at city commission meetings, in the newspapers, and in radio debates, Virrick and Brooks engaged in a bitter sparring match that lasted more than two decades.

Although a consistent advocate of public housing, Virrick eventually became a hard-edged critic of urban renewal in the 1960s. The Housing Act of 1954, by using eminent domain to assemble land parcels for private developers, had become nothing but a massive “real estate promotion.” The program, she said, was “rigged in favor of the slum owners,” who profited from government purchase of their rental properties. The builders and developers “eat a rich meal and we grab the check and pay it,” she wrote with her typical flair for the dramatic phrase. Unless revisions were made to urban renewal enabling legislation in Florida, the program would simply create more permanent slums. Virrick was vehement: “Why should there be a profit for anybody in clearing slums? Why should a sugar tit be given to the slum owners or the real estate and home builder people to pacify them so they will permit us to clear our slums?”

She wanted safeguards built into Miami’s urban renewal plan that would provide decent, low-income housing and that would guarantee appropriate relocation provisions for those dislocated by redevelopment. Equally important, she promoted the idea that all urban renewal housing should be built by philanthropic or non-profit organizations—a means of insulating urban renewal from the real estate speculators and slumlords.

Virrick enjoyed word games and had a habit of writing clever, doggerel verse, which she often recited at meetings. One such piece, titled simply “Housing,” skewered urban renewal:

Said Congressman Botch to Congressman Bungle
Let’s give a thought to the darn slum jungle;
Previous bills gained their authors fame
And there are votes galore to be had from same.

So off with their notebooks went Bungle and Botch
To speech-make and hand-shake, to pry and to watch.
Their erudite study of five days or so
Conclusively proved that slums had to go.

The Congressmen thrilled to the challenge before them;
The bills and amendments would surely restore them
To office again when their terms had expired.
With campaign hopes high, they worked and perspired.

Bill number X was proposed forthwith
To care for poor people and all their kith.
Filibustering went from morn till night
And they finally agreed that right was right.

Just as success seemed forthcoming at last,
From the town’s leading hostess, they felt a cold blast.
To her gala occasions they weren’t asked to come.
The reason uncovered was: she owned a slum.

The real estate lobby howled with rage
And the bill went into the amendment stage.
“All right,” said Bungle, so gay and witty,
“We'll let them have their hands in the kitty.”

We’ll buy up the slums with taxpayers' dough
And sell it for less than it costs us, you know.
Then enterprise private will grab at the deal
Because it has a big business appeal.

So they wrote and rewrote until finally they had
A masterful bill that made nobody mad.
After all this ado, is it naughty to wonder
If the whole blessed thing has been one great, big blunder?
Cause people who need housing are left in the lurch,
Going hither and yon in search of a perch.
They haven't the money to pay the high cost
So the cause of the people seems dismally lost.

Is it possible, really, in this day and age
That we haven't the people sufficiently sage
To solve this slum problem that gnaws at our core
And spreads in our vitals, a cancerous sore?

It takes courage and vision and thinking it through
And not caring a whit what the lobbyists do.
No, Botch, no, Bungle, you have not succeeded
In giving the people the housing that's needed.\(^{33}\)

By the mid-to late 1950s, expansive plans for interstate highway construction in downtown Miami complicated Virrick's campaign for housing reform. Interstate planning called for an expressway that traversed the heart of Overtown. A contemplated downtown interchange would eventually level twenty square blocks, including densely populated Black housing and the entire Black business district in Overtown. As these expressway plans became public in 1956 and 1957, Virrick immediately recognized the devastating consequences for Black Miami. As she wrote to Wilbur Jones, director of the Florida State Road Department, "the pathway of the new expressway will cause great hardship to the Negroes in the Central Negro area, both home owners and tenants, who will be displaced."
She urged the creation of a relocation agency that would survey available housing in Miami and provide assistance to those displaced by expressway construction. Without such relocation assistance, Virrick argued, population densities in the Overtown area would rise rapidly, “aggravating the miserable slum conditions that already exist.”

Virrick did not get very far with the state road department, because the business of that agency was highway building, not relocation housing. In fact, the Florida road department provided only a thirty-day eviction notice to those in the path of the Miami expressway. This policy conformed to federal Bureau of Public Roads guidelines on housing relocation. Federal policy required relocation assistance for those displaced by urban renewal activities but not by interstate highway construction.

Construction of the south leg of the Miami expressway through Overtown and into the central business district began in 1964. Influenced by the writings of urban critic Jane Jacobs, Virrick intensified her attack on the highway builders. As Virrick framed the issue, “the helter-skelter spewing out of expressways without proper forethought and planning” would destroy the urban fabric. In a series of hard-hitting articles in her monthly newsletter, Ink: The Journal of Civic Affairs, she mounted an assault on a new type of monster—the inner-city expressways (she called them “great Frankensteinian monsters”) that destroyed neighborhoods and parks, disfigured the city, and created new slums. Virrick painted a harsh picture of the consequences of expressway building in Miami:

With shocking ruthlessness, the expressways slash through our city without regard to the grim results...building an impenetrable wall that will cut the city in half, separate many stores from the people who deal there, [and] uglify pleasant areas and make bad areas worse. We are told to take it or leave it. In our over-anxiety to move automobiles faster, we bow our heads to this dictatorship and take it...Hasn’t anyone heard of San Francisco where the road program was stopped and replanned because an alert citizenry demanded it?

Miami was suffering badly from “bulldozitis followed rapidly by asphaltitis.” As Virrick phrased it with typical sarcasm, “The theme appears to be: never mind about anything, but Woodman, spare those
Elizabeth Virrick & the “Concrete Monsters”  31
twelve lanes for the automobile!” Echoing the national outcry against urban expressways that had emerged by the early 1960s, Virrick pleaded often for “a fresh evaluation of the entire expressway system.”

Throughout the expressway-building era, Elizabeth Virrick was a lonely but publicly respected voice speaking out on the necessity of linking highway construction with public housing and relocation programs. But it was not to be. Virrick was the closest thing Miami had to an anti-expressway movement, but a one-woman crusade was not enough. The Miami expressway system was completed by the late 1960s, but at the cost of uprooting most of Miami’s inner-city Black community. A formerly vibrant community despite its poor housing conditions, Overtown soon became a rubble-strewn urban wasteland left in the shadows of an elevated expressway.

By the end of the 1950s, Elizabeth Virrick had become highly expert on housing issues. She kept up with housing issues in cities around the country and developed a large correspondence with the nationwide community of housing officials and reformers. She attended meetings of the National Housing Conference and the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, published articles in the public housers’ Journal of Housing, contributed chapters to scholarly books on housing, and toured European cities with others investigating alternative models of housing reform. With her friend Marjory Stoneman Douglas, she began researching and writing a book on slums and housing in American cities—a project left unfinished. In the mid-1950s, she began publishing her own Miami housing and slum clearance newsletter, Ink: The Journal of Civil Affairs, which became an influential vehicle for her monthly critique of city officials, housing bureaucrats, slumlords, and the local real estate industry. In the mid-1960s, the Coconut Grove Citizens Committee became the Dade County Conference on Civic Affairs, reflecting Virrick’s wider urban interests and involvements. She became something of an institution in Miami, and she seemed to be everywhere, serving on over a dozen advisory boards and committees from the 1950s through the 1970s. Serving on the Dade County Community Relations Board in the 1960s, for instance, put Virrick at the center of emerging conflict between Miami’s African Americans and the growing community of Cuban exiles.

Virrick demonstrated her political savvy in three successful initiative and referendum campaigns. Her appeals to blacks and whites and across
social and economic boundaries reflected extremely effective interpersonal and organizational skills. She quickly developed persuasive powers as an articulate and impassioned speaker, soft-spoken but confident and powerful nevertheless. Her writings for local newspapers and later for her own newsletter were hard-hitting, known for impatient criticism and biting sarcasm, but also for sensible analysis and carefully crafted policy prescriptions. Her ability to connect with powerful voices in the media, especially local newspaper columnists and radio and TV newsmen, cemented her position as Miami’s trusted voice on housing matters.

Virrick was the gadfly, the crusader, the militant watchdog, operating outside the official power structure, badgering city commissioners and planning and housing officials into action. Politicians learned that to cross swords with Virrick might shorten their careers in office. Slumlords, builders, and attorneys for the local real estate lobby hated to see her show up at hearings and meetings. She often made public officials squirm at those open forums, as she demanded full public accountability. As one observer put it, “No one could storm into city commission meetings and lay ’em low so effectively with invective.”

Her opponents called her a communist for advocating public housing, but Virrick easily turned that argument around, often making the case that “slums are the most fertile soil for the seed of communism.” She was knowledgeable, unintimidated, impatient, tenacious, witty, and sarcastic—and she made good press copy. “She mostly battles in the open,” one scribe reported, “but if the need arises, she doesn’t hesitate to play a cloak and dagger role.” Perhaps most of all, Virrick’s role was one of educating the public about urban renewal and housing issues.
On these matters, Virrick wrote, “Miamians need educating, and I am the teacher.”

By the late 1960s, twenty years of community organizing and reform militancy had taken its toll. Now in her seventies, Virrick cut back on her activism, retreating to the arena she knew best—Coconut Grove. Reflecting this shift in priorities, by 1970 the Dade County Conference on Civic Affairs took on the new name of Coconut Grove Cares. The new organization engaged in various social service functions in the Black Grove, but Virrick was most proud of the Elizabeth Virrick Boxing Gym, a former Coast Guard seaplane hangar transformed into an athletic facility for Miami teenage boys aspiring to Golden Gloves fame. In the late 1980s, Virrick still came to work everyday, sitting at her desk and keeping an eye on things at Coconut Grove Cares. When she died in 1990 at the age of ninety-three, Virrick left a lasting legacy of urban commitment and accomplishment. Given the social and cultural constraints imposed on southern women in the 1940s and 1950s, Virrick established a remarkable public career. For the Miami metropolitan area and its citizens, Virrick and her reform activism made a difference at a time of dramatic urban change.

Postwar urban policy on many issues emanated from Washington D.C., but implementation took place at the local level under the direction of mayors, city councils, city and county commissioners, and local agency bureaucrats. Consequently, a full understanding of late twentieth-century urban history and urban change requires an examination of the decision-makers and opinion-shapers in cities across the nation—the activists and gadflies as well as the mayors and public officials. In Miami, Elizabeth Virrick confronted local power, appealed to a larger public, and often forced the resolution of conflict on housing and urban reform issues. Every city had such individuals, women and men who made a difference. Virrick’s public career puts a human face on American urban history, demonstrating the ways in which individual action mediated, moderated, and shaped the larger patterns of postwar urban change.
Endnotes


10 Elizabeth Virrick, “Rezoning of the Coconut Grove Negro Area,
25 Tucker, “She’s No. 1 Slum Fighter.”
26 Harris, “Coconut Grove Citizens Committee for Slum Clearance,” 17. On these issues, see also Raymond A. Mohl, “Whitening Miami: Race, Housing, and Government Policy in Twentieth-

27 Elizabeth Virrick to Arthur Field, March 14, 1958, Correspondence Files, Virrick Papers; Elizabeth Virrick to Marion Mason, August 31, 1958, Correspondence Files, Virrick Papers.

28 Elizabeth Virrick to Dorothy S. Montgomery, April 23, 1958, Correspondence Files, Virrick Papers.


32 Elizabeth Virrick to Joe O. Eaton, March 26, 1957, Correspondence Files, Virrick Papers; Elizabeth Virrick to Frederic Sherman, December 5, 1960, Correspondence Files, Virrick Papers; Draft Letter on Redevelopment, undated typescript, c. March 1957, Virrick Papers; Untitled Article Draft on Housing and Redevelopment, undated typescript, c. late 1950s, Virrick Papers.


34 Elizabeth Virrick to Wilbur Jones, May 9, 1957, Correspondence Files, Virrick Papers; “What About Negroes Uprooted by Expressway?” *Miami Herald*, March 4, 1957


39 Tucker, “She’s No. 1 Slum Fighter.”

The Miami Diocese and the Cuban Refugee Crisis of 1960-1961

Francis J. Sicius, Ph.D.

In 1959, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Miami was less than a year old, yet it grasped the reins of public service leadership when the Cuban refugee crisis paralyzed the established social welfare systems of the city. Diocesan leaders did not seek this role; it was thrust on them by events in Cuba. Initially their coreligionists in Cuba supported the revolution, but soon Catholic prelates and laity became leaders of the counter-revolution, and when that movement failed, they became refugees. Having urged and supported the counter-revolution, the Church had a moral obligation to aid its vanquished warriors, and this burden fell on the Catholics of Miami.

This story begins in Cuba, where in early 1959, the leaders of the Catholic Church hailed the revolution as a new beginning for the poor and oppressed of the island. When the revolutionary government declared a land reform act, Cuban Church leaders praised it as a document which breathed the spirit of the papal encyclicals. One Catholic intellectual compared the philosophy of Castro to that of the French Catholic social thinker Jacques Maritain. Cuban Catholic leaders, however, were not guileless. They knew that there were Communists in the Castro government, but they were not going to surrender the soul of the revolution without a fight. However, for many reasons, including the growing animosity of the American Government toward the revolution and Catholicism’s four hundred year alliance with forces of oppression in Cuba, the Church could not co-opt the revolution. Furthermore, the revolutionaries understood that they had to destroy or at least seriously weaken the Church because in Cuba it remained the only institution with powers of ideology, propaganda and organization equal to their own.
Within a year of Castro’s triumphant march into Havana, disillusionment erupted throughout the island, and the Catholic Church in Cuba became the focal point of the rapidly developing counter-revolution. By the summer of 1960, sporadic conflicts had broken out in various parts of the country. Those actively opposing Castro chose the Christian fish as the sign of their movement and this symbol began appearing on walls throughout the city of Havana as a sign of protest against the revolution. The Catholic urban and middle class represented the core of the rapidly developing counter-revolution. As one historian has pointed out, “At first the anti-Castro movement was amorphous, but as the tempo of the revolution increased and communists gained in strength, the counter-revolution took definite form. The Church provided the framework for student anti-communist activities, offering them a doctrinal alternative to Communism.”

In April 1960, the leader of the Communist party in Cuba, Juan Marinello, declared war on the Catholics, threatening to attack those Catholics who opposed communism as traitors to the revolutionary regime of Fidel Castro. By May, conditions had deteriorated to the point that José Rasco, founder and leader of the Christian Social Democratic Movement, fled Cuba under a death threat, and in June, the Christian Social Democrats announced that the termination of free speech in Cuba had ended their effectiveness and forced them to suspend their activities as a political movement. Relations between the Government and the Church finally reached a breaking point on May 20, 1960, when the Archbishop of Santiago, Perez Serants, who had long been a close friend of Castro and who had saved his life in 1953, publicly denounced the infiltration of Communists into the Castro regime. He warned Catholics not to cooperate in any way with communism. “We can no longer say that the enemy is at our door,” declared Perez, “because he is now inside and speaking loudly as though settled in his own domain.” On Sundays, churches became scenes of political clashes between pro-Castro and anti-Castro forces. In Havana, violence erupted after a number of masses following a three hour speech by Castro in which he denounced the “Fascist priests of Spain.”

The summer of 1960 represented the bloody last stand of the Church in Cuba as an organized counter-revolutionary force. In August, Cuban bishops collectively and publicly denounced the Communist takeover of the Cuban revolution and the government’s
suppression of Catholic radio and television programs in Santiago and Havana. This letter, which was read in all the churches of Cuba, marked the first time that the bishops had made a joint statement against the regime since Castro had come to power. For many young Catholics, the bishops’ declaration represented a call to arms, as bloody street fights erupted throughout the summer between predominantly Catholic anti-Castro forces and the pro-Castro militia. In August, pro-Castro militants shot a priest and severely beat six students who were attending the first annual meeting of the National Catholic Youth Conference.

Government officials arrested the injured priest and brought him before a military tribunal on charges of inciting a riot. In reaction to the violence and faced with official government indifference, the archbishop of Havana threatened to close all the churches in Cuba and considered declaring Cuba a church in silence. Official war against the Church was declared on August 11, 1960, when Castro issued a blistering attack calling on “good Christians to root out those who are turning churches into counter-revolutionary trenches.” Early in December, the bishops delivered another pastoral letter of protest against the Castro government. They accused Castro of promoting communism, conducting an all-out anti-Catholic campaign on radio and television, suppressing the Catholic press and television, and disrupting liturgical services. They also accused him of secretly attempting to create a new national church. Castro responded with another three-hour speech against the Church in which he branded the cardinal of Havana a Judas, and a supporter of the Batista regime. Priests were arrested for reading the bishops’ anti-communist pastoral letter, and three churches were bombed. In the same month, Cuban militiamen occupied ten Catholic churches and four seminaries, jailed five priests, and closed the Catholic periodical *La Quincena*, the last Cuban periodical to speak out against the government.

For two years, from the summer of 1960 until mid-1962, when machine gun bullets rained down on a group of Catholics who attempted to hold their traditional procession to Our Lady of Charity, the Castro government waged a war of words and blood against the Church. By that time, Castro’s victory seemed complete. There were less than fifty priests left in Cuba and laws restricted them to saying mass only. The government did not go so far as to forbid church membership, but those who did practice their religion could not participate in government activities nor receive any government benefits.
For those middle-class Catholics who had first supported and now fought Castro, there was nothing left to do but flee Cuba, and when they left, they carried with them a deep feeling of betrayal. Dr. Ruben Dario Rumbault, the intellectual leader of the Catholic Social Action movement in Cuba, joined those who fled Cuba that summer. He admitted supporting Castro “because he spoke in terms of Humanism, even Christian Humanism,” but by the middle of 1959, Rumbault declared, “Castro replaced that (Christian Humanism) with a new national chauvinism.”

By the summer of 1960, the Church had lost the war for the soul of the Cuban revolution. Its soldiers, the priests, religious, and laity who had dreamed of a different vehicle to social justice, created a Cold War Dunkirk as they fled their homes weary and beaten, and in fear for their lives. For the first time in the Cold War era, the United States became the initial country of asylum for political refugees, and by the accident of geography, Miami became the port of entry. Few cities could have been less prepared for such a human catastrophe than Miami. The state of Florida rivaled Mississippi as the state spending the least on welfare. And in Dade County, what little welfare existed was available only to those who had lived in the county for five years. Jim Crow still ruled society in Dade County: laws prohibited interracial high school athletic events, and suburban communities such as Coral Gables prohibited Blacks from spending the night there.

Cuban presence in Miami is as old as the city itself, and refugees from the most recent revolution had been trickling into the city since the fall of 1958. But until 1959, Cuban émigrés had always kept a low profile. They were usually bilingual, American-educated and well connected in the community. There was an attempt to maintain this image during the first days of the refugee crisis. Families that came from Cuba, normally on visitor’s visas, had enough resources or connections in Miami to maintain a respectable presence. But with the collapse of the resistance to Castro in mid-1960, the collective face of the refugee changed. If not the sheer number (between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand, depending which statistics are cited), the fact that refugees were no longer able to take anything with them when they left, transformed the image of Cuban refugee from wealthy Latin visitor on a weekend shopping spree, to the confused and desperate refugees that many had only previously seen coming out of East Berlin. And the European immigrants appeared on television news reports originating in far away places, not on Wayne Fariss’ evening report of the local news.
Initially, the Cubans took care of their own. Budgets were tightened, living rooms became dormitories for extended family, and vacation apartments became permanent family dwellings. In extreme cases, as reported in Senate hearings, there were as many as nineteen people living in a single family residence. But in the summer of 1960, as Bryan O. Walsh, Director of Catholic Charities, recalled many years later, “the roof fell in,” and desperate families had to swallow their traditional pride and seek outside help in a place where little existed. Doors were closed everywhere, but there was an old Church, Gesu, in the center of the city that offered a glimmer of hope, for there, on the side of the old paint peeled building was a sign in a familiar language that promised help. The sign read “Centro Hispano Católico.” In 1960 it represented the only source of welfare private or public, large or small, that could speak the language of the refugees.

The Spanish colonized Florida, and for most of the state’s 430 years since the Euro-African encounter, it has been populated primarily by Spanish-speaking people. But little evidence of that culture existed in 1960s Miami. Of the population that approached one million, less than 5 percent were Hispanic, the majority of whom had assimilated into the dominant North American culture. Aside from two or three hours a week of Spanish on a local radio station, a few scattered Cuban pastry and coffee shops, and a weekly Spanish newspaper, the Latin presence in Miami remained minimal and for the most part ignored. The only institution that paid any attention to the Hispanics was the Catholic Church. Since 1953, Bishop Joseph Hurley had been inviting Spanish priests into the southern half of his St. Augustine diocese to minister to the migrant Hispanic community of mostly poor Mexicans who arrived annually to harvest crops. In 1957,
Hurley appointed a young, recently ordained Irish priest, Bryan Walsh, as director of Catholic Charities in the Miami area and the Latinos became one of his initial priorities. A year later when the southern half of the St. Augustine diocese became the new Diocese of Miami, Walsh convinced the new bishop, Coleman Carroll, to address the needs of his Hispanic flock, transient as they may have seemed.

Coleman Carroll, the son of William J. Carroll of County Offaly and Margaret Hogan Carroll, of County Carlow Ireland, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1906. He was the second of three sons all of whom entered the priesthood and made an important mark on the American Catholic Church. Bishop Carroll’s brother, Walter, was a Vatican diplomat during the Second World War and continued in the Vatican State Department until his death in 1950. Another brother, Howard, served as Bishop of Altoona-Johnstown, Pennsylvania. After receiving his doctorate in Canon law from Catholic University of America, Carroll headed the philosophy department for four years at Duquesne University. Returning to parochial duties in 1943, he organized a new parish before serving as auxiliary bishop of Pittsburgh until 1958, when he was named bishop of the new Diocese of Miami by Pope Pius XII. A philosopher, who had the practical experience of starting a new parish and of working within the bureaucracy of a major university and the Catholic hierarchy, a man whose brother dined with the top luminaries of the Church in the Vatican and at the same time was the son of immigrants, Carroll was particularly prepared to be the first bishop of the new Diocese of Miami.
After listening to Walsh explain the needs of the Hispanic members of the diocese, Carroll, the son of immigrants, responded by establishing “El Centro Hispano Catolico” in the four story school building of Gesu Church. Located at 130 NE Second Street in a traditionally transient neighborhood, the center was created to provide a variety of social services for poor Latinos living in the area. But between the years 1960 and 1962, Centro Hispano provided medical care, child care, legal aid, employment service, food, clothing, and cash to over 250,000 Cuban refugees and during that period it became the focal point of Cuban refugee activity. Through services offered at Centro Hispano, the new Diocese of Miami became the first institution to address the Cuban refugee problem. Although a relative newcomer among Miami’s welfare agencies, the new diocese assumed leadership in addressing the refugee crisis. The refugee crisis presented three major hurdles for the diocese. The first challenge was the immediate relief of seventy-five thousand refugees who had flooded into Miami in the summer of 1960. Most came with only the clothes on their backs and the allotted five dollars in their pockets. Secondly, the diocese had to awaken the rest of Miami’s community leaders to the seriousness of the problem and to mobilize them. Finally, together with local leaders, the diocese had to convince the federal government that the Cuban refugees represented a national, not a local, problem.

The immediate challenge remained the spiritual and material welfare of the immigrants. Although it was originally planned as a modest pastoral center for all Hispanics, Centro Hispano quickly became the Cuban refugee center in the summer of 1960. This center collected and distributed food, helped refugees find apartments and work, started a high school and a day care center, and with help from volunteer doctors and

lawyers, established medical and legal clinics. In the first year, the Church, through its own resources and private donations, financed the entire operation. In addition to providing immediate emergency assistance, the Centro Hispano kept records, which provided the only statistics available on the first Cuban immigrants. These figures became extremely important in facing the bureaucratic and statistical challenge of convincing the federal government of the seriousness and enormity of the refugee problem.

Everyday hundreds of refugees would pass through the doors of Centro Hispano. Some came to leave their young children while they went off for a few hours of menial labor, others for a medical exam, or in search of a few cans of food. Others simply needed bus fare to get to a job. Whatever human challenge tested these new immigrants, the center attempted to solve it. By the summer of 1960, the Centro Hispano was attending to over four hundred people a day. In its first two years, the Centro Hispano recorded over 250,000 visits and spent over half a million dollars. And when costs of medical care and education were included, the diocese spent over a million dollars that first year. To put that amount in perspective, it represented about 6 percent of the entire city of Miami budget for 1959.

The most dramatic episode related to the Miami diocese's care of Cuban immigrants is the story of the fourteen thousand Cuban children who arrived unaccompanied in Miami. When people discovered that young children were put on airplanes alone from Havana to Miami with no expectation of who would meet them, the first question asked by many, including the children involved, was, “How could parents have done it?” The explanation and the story begins in Cuba, where rumors began to spread that the Cuban government was planning to take children away from their parents at the age of three. The words “Patria Potestad,” which referred to the proposed government proclamation,
were on the lips of every parent in Cuba in 1960–61. Although denounced as a forgery by Fidel Castro himself, parents continued to believe that at any moment the document being circulated by the Cuban underground would become law. Another proclamation insisting that Cuba would send children to Russia for training in language and economics actually occurred. Finally, there were many young people, especially Catholics, who were involved in the counter-revolution and their parents wanted to get them out of Cuba before they themselves were arrested.

The movement of children, whose code name was “Operation Pedro Pan,” began in December 1960, when Bryan Walsh, head of Catholic Charities, received a visit from James Baker who had been head of a school for Americans and wealthy Cubans in Havana. Baker asked Walsh if Catholic Charities could help find homes for children in Miami. Baker initially viewed Catholic Charities as one part of a complex conspiratorial plan whose goal was to get children out of Cuba and away from the Communists. Walsh’s response was that the Church would not take part in a haphazard scheme, that this was a job for a social agency that would take complete care of the children from the moment they arrived, or the Catholic Charities would not participate. Baker accepted the priest’s caveat, and, overnight, under the leadership of Walsh, the Catholic Church became responsible for the welfare of all unaccompanied children migrating from Cuba. The financial backing for the project came from American businesses whose executives had recently left Cuba. The first children arrived by plane on the day after Christmas 1960, and the exodus continued for the next two years, until there were fourteen thousand children under the care of Catholic Charities. Local convents, camps and boarding schools soon overflowed with children, and eventually the Miami diocese secured the aid of 130 Catholic Charities offices throughout the United States. “The Catholic Welfare Bureau was the source of our confidence in accepting this challenge,” recalled Walsh, “and history would testify that this confidence was not unfounded.” No children were lost in what for many agencies would have been an organizational nightmare. Many letters came into the Chancery office in the next few years regarding these children. “Dear Reverend Carroll,” one began, “I would like to inquire about the whereabouts of a niece and nephew...they were sent from Havana, Cuba, to Miami.” Within ten days Walsh had written a letter explaining
that the children were in the care of a family in Detroit and could be reached through Catholic Charities in that city. The entire story of Operation Pedro Pan, which included smuggled documents, late meetings at the State Department in Washington, spies and subterfuge cannot be told completely or fairly in this essay. Not every child was happy to be taken from their homes and placed in a foreign country in foreign surroundings. Although Church leaders in Miami did not instigate this migration of children, they alleviated many of the consequences of the decision. And as a result of diocesan action, fourteen thousand children found shelter and security in forty-seven different dioceses in thirty states. This was a monumental task for any agency, let alone one that was less than two years old.

Members of the Miami press knew about the movement of children from Cuba, but they kept quiet about the story at the request of Walsh, who feared reprisals against parents and children in Cuba. Finally, in 1962, a reporter from the Cleveland Plain Dealer broke the pledge when he included the story in an article on Cuban children being sent to Russia. After that story broke in February, the Herald reporters followed with an avalanche of human interest stories on the children of "Operation Pedro Pan." And as expected, the Castro government used the story as propaganda against the Church, the United States and the counter-revolutionaries still in Cuba. As recently as the Pope’s visit in 1998 to Cuba, Walsh was asked by a reporter about the “lost children” of Pedro Pan, to which he responded, “give me the name of one lost child.”

After caring for the immediate material and spiritual needs of the refugees, a second challenge facing the new diocese in Miami was to mobilize the community. Outside of the group of nuns and priests working at the Centro Hispano there were few in the Miami community
that knew a crisis was brewing in late 1959 and early 1960. When it exploded in the summer of 1960, and there was no system in place to deal with it, the young Diocese of Miami filled this vacuum, and mobilization began in the Catholic community. The bishop called together Catholic Hispanics in Miami and enlisted their aid in putting together a group to find jobs and solicit donations for the new immigrants. At the same time, he organized another group of leaders from the English side of the bilingual fence for the same purpose. It is an interesting commentary on Miami at the time, as well as the political savvy of Carroll, that he never brought the Hispanic leadership together with the English-speaking leadership. He convened the groups separately, except for public meetings, and he remained the lynchpin between the two. Finally, using the moral suasion of his position, Carroll wrote an open letter to business and civic leaders of Miami. “The Church is contributing $100,000 a month to aid Cuban Refugees,” he announced, “but the Church cannot do it all.” He called on corporations, especially those who formerly did business in Cuba, to contribute to help ease the plight of the refugees.

One reason bishops are selected is for their political prowess, and Carroll did not disappoint those who had put their faith in him. Within a few months of having nothing with which to address the Cuban crisis, the Church had mobilized the civic leaders of Miami, had collected significant donations and captured the attention of the federal government. In November 1960, President Eisenhower sent the bishop a letter thanking him and the diocese for their work with the Cuban refugees. He also sent Tracey Voorhis, the former director of the Hungarian refugee program, to Miami as his special envoy to report on the crisis in Miami. Voorhis was taken to the Centro Hispano where he was shown both the physical and the statistical evidence that documented the human tragedy. He returned to Washington with a report that convinced Eisenhower to immediately release one million dollars in order to establish a Cuban refugee relief program. In a letter to Carroll, Voorhis wrote “I want to express my admiration for all that you and the diocese did to help the refugees and the community of South Florida as they dealt with this crisis.”

At the end of January, and under the auspices of the federal government, the diocese organized the “National Resettlement Congress.” Ostensibly, the diocese instigated Congress to promote national interest
in the resettlement of Cubans, but knowing full well that the majority of Cubans wanted to stay in Miami, the real reason for the Congress was to draw national public attention to the drama unfolding in Miami. The event was attended by the national leaders of the National Catholic Charities as well as by the new Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Abraham Ribicoff, who was also taken on the obligatory tour of the Centro Hispano. The national publicity reaped benefits when in the next few months the initial $1 million contributed by the Eisenhower administration grew to a monthly federal stipend of $2.4 million.

The Bishop continued to exercise his political clout. When the AFL-CIO Executive Committee held its annual meeting in Miami Beach, Carroll urged them to issue a statement calling for more aid for the Cuban refugees. The culmination of the attempts to mobilize the government came at the end of 1961, when a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee held public hearings on the refugee problem in Miami. When Carroll testified, he reminded the Senators of some very important facts. First of all, during the first two years of the immigrant crisis from January 1959, until the Voorhis visit in December of 1960, the refugees received no public assistance whatsoever. During this period, the Diocese of Miami organized and financed the entire welfare program for refugees. Secondly, the Bishop pointed out that although President Eisenhower authorized the expenditure of one million dollars, it was only for resettlement to other locations; no money was provided for distribution at a local level. He also noted that since only people living in Florida for five years are eligible for any local relief, Catholic hospitals had to provide all medical relief.
for the refugees, including prenatal care, surgery, and maternity care at no charge to the patients. Finally, no bishop when talking to those who control the public purse strings can forego an opportunity to bring up the subject of education. Carroll informed the senators that 3,858 Cuban Children were attending Catholic Schools in Miami at a savings to the Government of $1.2 million a year. He reminded the Senators that these children were invited to the United States, that many were accustomed only to Catholic education, and therefore it would be prejudicial against them not to assist their Catholic education. "The Cuban people cannot understand why," chided the bishop, "in a country that has shown such goodness and charity by assisting them in every other welfare department, in the field of education there should be such discrimination."

The national mobilization instigated by the Diocese of Miami bore fruit. By 1976, the National Cuban Refugee Fund had pumped in $1.6 billion into the Cuban community in Miami. Additionally, other traditional government sources of disbursement, such as the Small Business Association, targeted Cubans as recipients of benefits; as Professor Raymond Mohl has pointed out, of the one hundred million distributed by the small business association in the early seventies, over half went to Hispanics, the great majority of whom were Cuban.

The young Diocese of Miami led the way in providing aid to the Cuban refugees. Individuals such as Bryan Walsh and Coleman Carroll remain heroes in the Cuban community and their names are spoken with reverence. But there is another side to the story. When Cubans began arriving in Miami in 1959, the Diocese of Miami was only three months old. According to a 1960 census, 331,000 Catholics lived in the new diocese that stretched north into Palm Beach and west to Naples. Of that number, 231,000 were under 44 years old. All but
30,000 were under 64 years old and 120,000 were children of school age. The Catholic population was young and growing in a very different direction than the one that became its destiny. Although the Cubans arrived to find the South Florida region in an economic depression, the area had just experienced a tremendous construction boom. In the fifties, hundreds of young families with Veterans Administration loans catalyzed the creation of new suburbs, as thousands of acres of former Everglades swamplands became bedroom communities. Carroll came to Florida as a “bricks and mortar” bishop. The local diocesan newspaper reported a new groundbreaking every week. The people that populated these new churches came from the Northeast and the Midwest. They brought with them their faith and their prejudices. Although geographically Cuba was only one hundred miles to the south, the problems of the Caribbean island were intellectually light years away from the average Miamian at the time of the revolution. North American transplants from the Midwest and Northeast, many of whom had grown up in families who had quickly assimilated into the American culture, could not understand these new immigrants who seemed overly excitable, loud, and altogether too different. A letter to Coleman Carroll complained about “these Cubans who use the mass as a pubic congregating hour and speak whenever they please during the mass.” Another wanted to know why the priest had to interrupt his sermon to allow a Cuban to translate for him. In an interview, Monsignor Walsh stated that he received many personal threats for his role in bringing Cubans to Miami. Even the clergy of Miami were not totally in favor of the rapidly changing face of the Church in Miami. Walsh remembers giving a talk in October of 1962 to a conference of clergy on the new immigrants. In it he informed his audience that it should not be the role of the church to force assimilation, that the culture
and tradition of Cuban Catholics ought to be respected. His talk at best was received with cordial indifference, and one priest expressed the thoughts of many when he told Walsh that he had given a nice talk “but that [acceptance of the Cuban religious heritage] will never happen in my parish.” The official policy of the diocese was expressed by Coleman Carroll on July 27, 1961: “It is hoped that they (refugee priests and laity) will learn the language and within six months be of some service to the Diocese.”

Wayne Farris, a nightly reporter on a local television station, summed up the thoughts of many South Floridians when he commented on the air that Miamians view the Cubans as “house guests who have worn out their welcome, who feel it is now time to move on. The Cubans are a threat to our business and our tourist economy.” Farris continued, “It would appear that the hand that holds Miami’s torch of friendship has been overextended.” Across the Florida straits in Cuba the actions of the Miami Church were noticed and also criticized. Castro accused the Miami Church of being in league with the Kennedy government in supporting counter-revolutionaries, and when Cardinal Spellman donated fifty thousand dollars to the refugee program, Castro called him a “protector of criminals and gangsters.”

By 1962, when the Bay of Pigs failure and the missile crisis had become a part of the sad history of conflict that continues today between Havana Cubans and Miami Cubans, the new Diocese of Miami began to enter a second phase of its short history. The first stage dominated by the immediate care of the Cubans continued, but thanks to the Church’s efforts, that obligation was now primarily in the hands of the federal government. Another reality was setting in: the Cubans were not temporary visitors. The Church was the first institution to recognize the refugee problem, and it was also the first to realize the eventual permanence of the Cuban refugee community. In 1962, Carroll established the Latin American Chancery. In 1966, another important step in the acceptance of the rapidly developing bicultural Church in Miami occurred when Saint Vincent de Paul Seminary became the first and only bilingual seminary in the country.

The Church anticipated correctly, the Cubans did not go home as the television commentator had suggested, and in their process of relocation, they transformed the Miami Diocese in ways that the Vatican or clerics could not have imagined in 1958. A diocese of some
300,000 primarily English speaking Catholics from the Midwest and Northeast spread over about twelve counties became, by the 1980s, a diocese reduced geographically to three counties, but one containing a population of 1.1 million, 62 percent of whom are Hispanic. The diocese boasts a bilingual seminary, a weekly paper that is printed only in Spanish, a diocesan radio station broadcasting in Spanish, and an auxiliary bishop who is Cuban. On Sunday, more, or as many, masses are said in Spanish in most parishes as English, and the dominant language in the Archdiocesan offices (outside the archbishop and chancery offices) is Spanish. A diocese that some feared could not survive in 1958, is now the tenth largest Archdiocese in the United States.

The transformation of the Diocese of Miami, which reflected the transformation of the city itself over those years, was the most radical to occur in the diocesan history of the American Church. When historians begin to examine more carefully the causes of the massive Cuban migration, the role of the Catholic Church will become central. First, it was the Catholic Church in Cuba that became the focal point for the Cuban counter-revolution, providing it with organization, philosophy and leadership. Second, when that counter-revolution failed and the flight to Miami began, the Catholic Church became the first institution to welcome the refugees. In this role, the Church provided food, shelter, and most importantly a political voice. Finally, the Diocese of Miami was the first organization to recognize the permanence of the Cuban migration and began very early on to adjust its institutions to this social reality. In the midst of an indifferent if not hostile Miami community, the early Cuban refugees found comfort, sustenance and voice within the Catholic Diocese of Miami. Without the initial support of the Church, the story of the Cuban migration to Miami may have been a completely different one.
Endnotes

7 “Sale de Cuba Jose Rasco,” *The Voice* (Spanish Section), May 6, 1960, 20.
8 “Castro Aims To Replace Church With Communism,” *The Voice*, October 7, 1960, 1.
13 Ibid.
18 Francis Sicius, “The Miami Havana Connection: The First Seventy
The Miami Diocese & the Cuban Refugee Crisis 55


19 Interview, Francis Sicius with Monsignor Personal Interview, Bryan O. Walsh, Former Director Of Catholic Charities Miami Diocese, Miami Florida, November 16, 1999.


21 Interview, Bryan Walsh.

22 “Carroll Testimony,” 15.


26 Ibid., 384.

27 Ibid., 392.

28 Ibid., 390-391.

29 Ibid., 393.


31 This entire story is told in much greater detail in Walsh’s article (op. cit) and Conde’s book (op.cit).

32 Walsh Testimony, Senate Hearings, 226; Walsh Interview.

33 Walsh Interview; Conde, 43.

34 Walsh Interview.

35 “Lay Committee Organized to Aid Centro Programs,” The Voice, February 5, 1960, 14; Among those joining lay committee to aid Centro Hispano were the Fanjuls, who were the largest producers of sugar in Florida and the Caribbean, and the Ferres, who owned the largest construction material factory in South Florida, as well as Dr. Nestor Portocarrero, Horacio Aguirre publisher of Diario Las Americas, Rafael Riero Cruz president of the Latin American Bar Association, Pierre Perez Inter American division of the City of Miami Publicity department, Eduardo Morales Metropolitan and Manuel Gonzalez Central Bank”

36 Among this group were Congressman Dante Fascell, Clyde Atkins, president of the Florida Bar, Franklyn Evans president of the Dade

37 Walsh Interview.

38 *The Voice*, February 24, 1961, 11.

39 The owner of a local dog racing track ($6,000), Texaco Oil Company ($50,000) and Cardinal Spellman ($10,000) to name a few; Carroll Letters, Diocese of Miami Chancery office archives.

40 “President Praises Inspiring Refugee Relief By Diocese,” *The Voice*, December 16, 1960, 1. The story noted that: “President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed his gratitude to the Diocese of Miami for the inspiring work on behalf of the Cuban refugees of South Florida...”


42 Walsh Interview.

43 *The Voice*, February 3, 1961, 1.

44 Sicius, 36; “Senate Hearings,” 4.


46 “Senate Hearings,” 18.


50 Walsh Interview.


52 Ibid.

53 Wayne Farris, *Crisis Amigo*, WCKT Channel 7 Special Report” (December 5, 1961, 8:30–9:00 pm).

54 *The Voice*, December 30, 1960, 2.

55 According to Bryan Walsh, this may have been clever politics rather
than cultural sensitivity since the decision was made at a time when the Vatican was closing seminaries and Carroll kept his open by pointing to its uniqueness as a bilingual seminary. Walsh, "A Splendid People," 34.

Ibid., 33. In 1959 the diocese of Miami had been created out of Bishop Joseph Hurley’s Diocese of St. Augustine. At that time Hurley feared that the Catholic population of South Florida would never be large enough to support a diocese. Walsh Interview.
Cobbled together to encompass more than 850 acres of pineland, scrub, marsh, and seashore, the army airfield that came to be named after the first U.S. flier killed in France during World War I saw active service for only two months before the war ended. Thereafter local horticulturists and aviation interests vied for control of the property as development crept around its perimeter. With much of the acreage remaining parkland or agricultural through the end of the twentieth century, Chapman Field has persisted as an identifiable entity in Miami-Dade County with a locally recognized name long after its airstrips have vanished.¹

Powered flight had barely passed its first decade when the war in Europe erupted in 1914, but German, French, and English governments quickly saw the strategic advantages to be gained from the airplane over the battlefield. During the first years of the war the United States had a chance to watch from the sidelines, and it, too, discovered that air power was a potentially great new tactic. The U. S. Army had few pilots, however, and few bases for training more; in Florida, only the Naval Air Station in Pensacola was operational. America entered the war on April 6, 1917, and, in a wave of federal spending, $640 million was appropriated by Congress on July 24 of that year for military aeronautics. Many private schools of aviation were taken over by the military, such as Curtiss Field in Miami, and new airfields were established throughout the country. Several were built in Florida, including Carlstrom and Dorr Fields at Arcadia and the seaplane bases at Key West and at Dinner Key in Miami.²

Along Biscayne Bay, fifteen miles south of Miami, the U.S. Army Signal Corps’ Cutler Aerial Gunnery Field was pieced together from
Survey diagram of the Cutler Aerial Gunnery Field, renamed Chapman Field, produced in 1918. Note the original county road and layout of streets, which persist today. Courtesy of the U. S. Department of Agriculture & the archives of the Subtropical Horticulture Research Station, Miami, FL.

195 acres owned by Walter H. Browne of Kings County, New York, and 695 acres owned by the Avocado Land Company of Jackson County, Missouri. Specifically, the site covered all but the southwestern quarter of Section 24, Township 55 South, Range 40 East, plus fractional section 19 of Township 55 South, Range 41 East, as recorded on page 44 in plat book 2, office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Dade County, Florida. The total cost to the government was $71,500 for lands deeded it in April 1920. The tract occupied by the U.S. Army bordered the eastern edge of the Perrine land grant, and the northwestern corner is at the intersection of what would become SW Sixty-seventh Avenue and Old Cutler Road.

During 1918, the army subsequently dredged a portion of the bay-side marsh to create a marl landing field, a lagoon for water landings, and channels to Biscayne Bay. Roads were cut through the palmettoes and slash pines on the limestone ridge a mile inland. Water was pumped from underground, stored in three tanks of twenty thousand to one hundred thousand gallon capacity, and distributed across the
base by underground piping with hydrants for fire fighting. Electricity was provided by lines to Miami, and steam was generated for heat.

The base was completed in September 1918, under the command of Capt. William J. Pedrick, Jr. An article in the *Miami Metropolis* of August 20, 1918, described the deluxe conditions awaiting the fliers who would come to the school to finish their training in gunnery practices. The camp was a model town with electricity, waterworks, and a sewage system. Constructed on a rock ridge, the base buildings were situated among pine trees and offered a view of the bay to the east.

A medical contingent had already arrived to man a hospital complete with operating room, a large airy public ward, and several private rooms. Nearby, officers' quarters and mess halls and the home of the commanding officer were built around an oval field higher up and perpendicular to the original Ingraham Highway (which had been relocated to the station's perimeter and would in succeeding years be renamed Old Cutler Road) off which the enlisted quarters and mess were built. A row of hangars sat along the western edge of the filled landing field just east of a road parallel to Ingraham Highway on which were situated maintenance shops, the headquarters building, and entertainment centers provided by the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) and the Knights of Columbus. Off to the side of the station, a target range had been dug out of the rock, and the material was used for constructing the network of roads. On November 15, 1918, the airfield was formally renamed the Victor Chapman Military Reservation by Major Kenly, head of the aeronautical division.
Victor Emmanuel Chapman graduated from Harvard in 1913 and, afterwards, journeyed to Paris to prepare for admission to the Beaux Arts Academy and studies in architecture and painting. In a preface to a memorial volume to his son published in 1917, John Jay Chapman (a Harvard professor and the great-great-grandson of John Jay, the first United States Chief Justice) wrote of Victor: “He had no aptitude for sports, none for books, none for music; but always a deep passion for color and scenery...” If in school he was dull and uninspired, he seemed to come alive in natural settings among woods and streams. He was also thrilled by the threat of danger and almost recklessly threw himself into life-threatening situations. In August 1914, France, Germany and other European nations found themselves at war. Americans living in Europe often felt as intensely loyal to their adopted countries as did the combatants and sought to enlist, but by joining the army of a foreign power they were threatened with a loss of American citizenship. Many, therefore, chose to work in an ambulance corps or, if their loyalties ran toward France, joined the French Foreign Legion, which, as a mercenary group, was outside the French War Department. Victor Chapman joined the Third Marching Regiment of the First Foreign Regiment of the Foreign Legion as a private in September of 1914 at the age of twenty-four and subsequently fought in the trenches at Frise, Amiens, and Bas over the next eleven months.

At the time Chapman slogged through the trenches, Norman Prince and other Americans sought to influence the French government to establish an air squadron composed solely of American fliers. At the suggestion of his father in England and uncles William Astor Chanler and Robert Chanler living in Paris, Chapman sent an inquiry to

Victor Chapman (back row, center) with fellow French legionnaires on leave in Paris, July 7, 1915. Photo reproduced from Edwin W. Morse, America in the war.
Prince and found himself transferred to French aviation. As a *mitrailleur-bombardier*, Chapman flew on bombing runs to Voisin and across the Rhine into Dilingen, Germany, before applying to the School of Military Aviation at Avord, where he was admitted in September, 1915. With the receipt of his *brevet militaire*, and with his uncles' financial and political influence in the creation of the *Escadrille Americaine*, Victor Chapman, as a legionnaire, became one of the founding members of the squadron. In April, 1916, this squadron of seven Americans, under the command of two French officers was sent to Luxeuil-les-Bains, an ancient spa at the foot of the Vosges Mountains near the Swiss border, and from there in May to the Behonne airfield at Bar-Le-Duc to patrol the raging battle of Verdun. The squadron of Americans boosted French morale and titillated newspaper readers in America but embarrassed the U.S. government, and subsequently the name of the unit was changed to the *Escadrille Lafayette* on December 2, 1916, in deference to America's continued official neutrality.

As a pilot, Chapman's life was exciting but only rarely dangerous. Most days, pilots seldom engaged the enemy during scouting missions, and five kills qualified one as an ace. Individual pilots generally flew two missions each day provided that the weather was favorable, and each mission would last two hours. The Vosges sector was relatively quiet, and off hours at Luxeuil were spent at a villa adjoining the spa with chauffeured rides to an inn for dinner and nights of drinking and playing pool. Life was harder near Verdun with more German air incursions and more dangerous reconnaissance across German lines, and the first American pilot, Horace Clyde Balsley, was seriously wounded and evacuated to a hospital in Vadelaincourt. Unable to freely drink water
due to a perforated intestine, Chapman volunteered to deliver oranges to Balsley's bedside daily. On June 23, 1916, Chapman was in the air headed toward Vadelaincourt when he saw a group of three squadron mates depart on patrol. Chapman couldn't pass up an opportunity to engage the enemy, although he was not scheduled for this patrol, and decided to follow. In time, the regular patrol encountered five German fighters and after a brief combat, outnumbered, withdrew to French lines. Unknown to them, Chapman was flying to their aid and was subsequently left alone with the five Germans. His plane was shot down behind the German lines near the ruins of the French town of Beaumont. A body presumed to be that of Victor Chapman was recovered after the war, but dental records didn't match; nevertheless, the body was placed in a grave under his name in the American Cemetery at Suresness. Consequently, the remains in that grave at Suresness were not later removed to a memorial to the Lafayette Escadrille built at Villeneuve Park in St. Cloud outside Paris, and the crypt bearing Chapman's name remains empty.

Three days after the renaming ceremony, World War I ended, and construction at Chapman Field Military Reservation ceased on November 25, 1918. The base was declared surplus in 1921 by the War Department and offered for sale, but a clear title could not be conveyed, and the sale was canceled. Subsequently a notice was received at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry that the property was to be abandoned. This notice was brought to the attention of Dr. David Fairchild, a plant explorer in charge of the Bureau's Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction.

Dr. Fairchild was instrumental in establishing several plant introduction gardens throughout the U.S. to screen plants with a potential to improve the diets and industry of Americans. Excursions throughout the orient had fostered in Fairchild a passion for exploration and tropical horticulture, but it was a fellow explorer, Walter Swingle, who undertook the establishment of a new subtropical laboratory and garden in Miami. Swingle convinced Henry Flagler, the man who opened South Florida to development by bringing his Florida East Coast Railway south from West Palm Beach in 1896, to give the USDA an acre of land along Biscayne Bay to be used for construction of a laboratory to study plant diseases. He also persuaded another prominent Miamian, Mary Brickell, to give him six acres across Brickell Avenue from
Flagler’s plot, between SE Tenth and Fourteenth Streets, for use as a plant introduction site. The Department refused the gifts of land but accepted a lease arrangement in 1898. When the facilities on Brickell Avenue proved too small, twenty-five additional acres of land were leased in 1914 from Charles Deering north of there between NE Twenty-first and Thirtieth Streets on North Miami Avenue in a section of the city called Buena Vista. It was soon recognized, however, that this property was also insufficient.

Upon hearing that Chapman Field was to be abandoned by the War Department, Fairchild investigated and determined that this location could be ideal for an expanded program of plant introduction. The former army air base seemed perfect for his dream of creating an “Ellis Island for plants”—a place where sensitive plants could be propagated and bred for resistance to colder temperatures prior to their introduction to areas of the United States farther north. As he would continually declare, Fairchild sought “a piece of climate”—not simply land, which was plentiful and cheap inland but more prone to cold temperatures. With more than 850 acres, the base was of sufficient size; several varieties of soil were represented as well as several ecological zones; the site was easily accessible by road and by water; but, most importantly, the climate was as close to ideal for growing tropical plants as would be found in Florida. A freeze in 1917 had severely damaged plants at the Buena Vista lab and, to a lesser degree, on Brickell Avenue. A break in the barrier islands off Chapman Field allowed the warm Gulf Stream to come closer to land there, and indications within local hammocks suggested less severe winter temperatures. Fairchild also sought to create a living collection of plants—an arboretum—to benefit both teaching and scientific study. He and others were able to convince the Secretary of War, John W. Weeks, to provide a portion of Chapman Field to the USDA under a revocable lease agreement. On April 26, 1923, the first trees were planted at the new USDA Plant Introduction Garden. Fairchild, however, was unsuccessful in his attempts to transfer title of the entire property, and this preoccupation dogged him for more than two decades.

David Fairchild thought it was entirely appropriate that the new Plant Introduction Garden should border the Perrine Land Grant on its western edge. In 1838, Dr. Henry Perrine was given a township of land in Florida (specifically below 26 degrees north latitude) to settle with farmers engaged in the propagation of tropical plants. As American
consul at Campeche in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, Perrine introduced tropical plants into the United States and showed they could be domesticated in South Florida. Although he was subsequently killed by Seminole Indians on August 7, 1840, his wife continued to satisfy the conditions of the grant and brought in settlers who propagated tropical plants.

Soon after leasing a portion of Chapman Field in 1923, USDA horticulturists began propagating their accessions for transfer to the new property, and many of the plants from the Brickell and Buena Vista sites had been transferred to the Plant Introduction Garden at Chapman Field by the time a disastrous hurricane hit Miami in September 1926. The storm, carrying winds of 130 miles per hour, destroyed many of the wooden structures from the original air base, while a later storm in 1945, brought down the water tower. To replace the older buildings, sixteen laboratories, shops, and residences were constructed between 1927 and 1934, as well as a serpentine enclosure wall whose labyrinth of open rooms shielded the most cold-sensitive plants from winter winds. In some cases, exterior walls were constructed of the native oolitic limestone. In other cases, the cement floors of hangars and other structures from the World War I air base were broken up and used; since the cement had been poured onto the leveled limestone, these walls also have the appearance of natural rock. Local legend says that these limestone structures were built as part of one of the New Deal programs of President Franklin Roosevelt; Col. Robert Montgomery, in *The Facts about Chapman Field*, attributed their construction to the Civil Works Administration (CWA), one of the first of Roosevelt’s economic recovery programs. The CWA existed from November 1933, through March 1934, before being incorporated into the Federal Emergency Relief Program, which subsequently evolved into the Works Progress...
Administration in May 1935. Lola Dowling, whose father helped maintain the USDA plantings and lived on the station from 1923 through 1947, also attributes their construction to the WPA. Buildings 14, 15, 22, 28, 29, and 33 were built in 1933 and 1934, and, thus, may have been constructed as a result of the New Deal.

Several USDA buildings were constructed atop the foundations of the army structures, such as the USDA's Building 18, a pump house (now carpentry shop) built on the base of the original pump house, and Building 37, a laboratory built on the foundation of the original boiler house that heated the hospital. Building 28, the Visitors' Center at the USDA station, was constructed on the foundations of the airfield's machine shop, originally a garage for the USDA, it was renovated in 1977 by the Federation of Women's Garden Clubs and dedicated to Catherine Sweeney, who, incidentally, was a subsequent owner of the Kampong, David Fairchild's home in Coconut Grove.

The period of great plant explorations continued unabated throughout the 1930s, with Fairchild and others bringing thousands of new plant specimens into the station for propagation. Accessions numbered approximately nine thousand in 19381 (when the horticulturist in charge, T. B. McClelland, prepared an extensive listing by quadrant), and, although not every accession was represented by a live plant, space
limitations again became worrisome. The USDA was allowed use of only ninety-five acres initially, supplemented in 1935 with another sixty-five acres to aid research in finding alternatives to natural rubber (Hevea brasiliensis), which had to be imported at great expense from southeast Asia. Rubber research became increasingly important, but the many alternatives never produced a satisfactory product. Instead, by 1940, research increasingly involved breeding and adapting Hevea to Florida's growing conditions. The need was so great that Senators Charles O. Andrews, Sr., and Claude Pepper were able, in May 1940, to persuade Congress to restore money that had previously been deleted from the budget of the Bureau of Plant Industry; that sent an extra $115,000 to the Plant Introduction Station in Miami. There was also talk of acquiring more War Department land for the station. By advancing rubber research, the congressmen hoped price controls on this commodity could be removed more quickly, and they hoped to establish a new line of business with nearby countries. The USDA station became a clearinghouse for disease-free rubber plants that were sent to Central and South America for transplantation.

On a portion of the remaining land outside the USDA station, the government maintained an airfield used by army reservists who practiced bombing runs over Biscayne Bay during the winter months. Local antagonism to this airfield was led by Col. Robert Montgomery, a neighbor on Old Cutler Road who shared with David Fairchild a special concern for plants and a determination to develop a botanical garden in the area; he joined Fairchild's continuing effort to have all the property released to the USDA. During the Depression years, however, other interests in Miami were hoping the War Department would develop a major air facility on the site, which would provide many new jobs. Congressman Mark Wilcox led the effort to secure an expanded airfield for Chapman Field, but he was thwarted by Montgomery and Fairchild and their Washington connections at nearly every step. Montgomery, who had recently retired from the U.S. Army, had special access to military planners. Most of these men already believed that Chapman Field was unsuitable for modern aircraft and that its proximity to urbanized areas was a serious detriment. Although Congressman Wilcox pushed legislation in 1933 for an $11 million expansion of Chapman Field, no changes actually appeared. On January 15, 1939, an erroneous claim of the field's abandonment appeared in the Miami Daily News. Still, it was
hard for the War Department to part with the property. Eventually, however, the War Department transferred its operations to a municipal airfield in Miami and leased the airfield at Chapman Field to the Embry-Riddle Company, which operated a civilian flight school. In the autumn of 1941, the War Department was finally set to accept a transfer of title to the USDA, but the onset of World War II put everything on hold. During the war years, Fairchild and others continued to send new plant material to the USDA station, and the place was used at times by the military for survival training.\footnote{6}

The original Embry-Riddle enterprise was organized as an air mail service and training school in Cincinnati in 1926; it was later sold and merged into AVCO, which then became American Airlines.\footnote{7} Riddle then moved to Miami and started a new flight school. In 1938, because of fears of possible war, Congress passed the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program, providing free ground school to college students and free flight training for the upper 10 percent scholastically. Later, high school students were enrolled in the program. The air arm of the military was considered ineffectual, and there existed few training bases and trained instructors. The Army Air Corps sent cadets to commercial flying schools. One school, operated by Embry-Riddle, conducted flight training in Miami; other schools run by this company were at Carlstrom and Dorr Fields in Arcadia, Florida. A second company, Riddle-McKay, ran an aeronautical college in Clewiston.

With the onset of American involvement in World War II, the military began to use tourist areas for training programs because these areas had become financially depressed as tourism and college enrollment declined due to war. Miami’s Chapman Field was reactivated with the advent of WW II, but it was too small for modern military airplanes. In August 1942, the army air facilities at Chapman Field were made available to the Embry-Riddle Corporation, which was contracted to train civilian and military pilots. Civilians, including prospective WASPS (Women’s Air Force Service Pilots), were taught at the Seaplane Base on the County Causeway which was renamed MacArthur Causeway in 1942; written exams and Navy flight training were conducted at Chapman Field.\footnote{8} Women seeking additional flying time for WASP approval also took training at Chapman Field. These aviators attended the Riddle program to amass flying time and secure ratings prior to their formal training in Sweetwater, Texas. University of Miami
coeds were also trained as WASP pilots under the War Training
Program. With the end of the war, the GI Bill of Rights made available
technical training to returning vets, and a contract was given
to Embry-Riddle to provide training at Chapman Field. In
1947, a request was made by Embry-Riddle to make
Chapman Field a commercial airport, but it was denied by
Dade County, and the company eventually moved to Opa
Locka, after which the field was closed. In 1965, following,
another move to Daytona, Florida, the Embry-Riddle
Aeronautical Institute was established leading to a
Bachelor of Science degree in aviation specialties. Its enrollment in the
1990s surpassed four thousand.

Dade County expressed a desire, as early as 1940, to connect the
excess land at Chapman Field into a county park. In February 1940,
R. V. Waters of the Greater Miami Airport Association wrote County
Commissioner Charles H. Crandon advising that the property could
become available and that the county should consider acquiring the
land. Another stimulus was a letter in March, 1940, from Montgomery
to Crandon, which mentioned that Congress was disposed to cut
appropriations for all foreign plant introduction, suggesting the
USDA might not care to acquire the property, which might instead
be sold for development. By May, of course, this situation had
reversed. The property contained one of the last stretches of undeveloped
white sandy beach in the county. Crandon, an amateur horticulturist,
had made it his mission to create a park system in Dade County
and to protect the region's natural beauty, and in March of 1940 he
was able to convince the County Board to go on record to open
negotiations with the War Department to acquire fractional Section
19 of Township 55 South Range 41 East. To this effect, Congressman
Claude Pepper was able to get the Department of Agriculture (which
had received new funds in support of research at the Miami lab) to agree that land close to the bay was unsuitable for agriculture, and therefore, in principle, could eventually be deeded to the County as parkland. Dade County felt at the time that it had received a commitment from the federal government. With the end of the war, Fairchild still hoped to incorporate Chapman Field into the plant introduction station, but the USDA had by now decided that the upkeep on such a large piece of land would drain resources from other projects, so it would no longer support Fairchild's efforts. Moreover, Montgomery's creation of the Fairchild Tropical Garden in 1938 satisfied the local desire for a botanical garden, and there no longer seemed to have been much public support for expansion of the USDA property. Although an additional 37 acres was incorporated into the USDA's plant introduction station in 1947, the remaining portion of Chapman Field—633 acres—was excluded. That part of Chapman Field outside the USDA property was declared surplus by the federal government in November 1947. From the War Assets Corporation it was transferred to the Farm Credit Administration's Federal Land Bank and reclassified agricultural when disposal as airport property was impossible. Dade County applied for the property, as did the city of Coral Gables and the University of Miami. Coral Gables acceded to the wishes of the county and withdrew, and the county and university agreed to split the property. As an educational institution, the university had first choice of the land and chose 150 acres that included most of the filled area used for airport runways. Dade County received the remaining 483 acres by quitclaim at 50 percent of the fair market value of $3,500 on December 19, 1949.

One-hundred fifty acres of Chapman Field, including one airport building not destroyed by the 1945 hurricane or subsequently demolished, was acquired for $1,550 for the University of Miami by a quitclaim deed dated November 16, 1949, subject to certain conditions and the right of re-entry by the federal government. Among other things, the government was interested in reserving its access to any fissionable materials that might be discovered on the property. Some conditions were ultimately abrogated when University President Jay W. Pearson was authorized to pay $1,162.50 to the government in 1954, but the government's right of re-entry and its reservation of uranium resources continued to be a problem.
Since its inception in 1926, the university had planned to establish a tropical research bureau for contributions to tropical agriculture, but development money was not forthcoming.\(^2\) Earlier in 1949, Pearson had requested from university departments proposals justifying a need to secure land at Chapman Field. The Department of Botany had suggested that the land would suit its ecology course and floriculture program and provide space for a tree nursery and the propagation of tropical and salt-tolerant plants. The Zoology Department mentioned tests evaluating termite exposure, the study of animals living in mangroves, and general field zoology. The Marine Laboratory submitted plans to develop a swamp station in the mangroves and to pursue research on marine borers, and tropical deterioration in swampland, as well as for the improvement of Florida's fisheries; the facility also hoped to build docks closer to the university than those available to it on Miami Beach.

Specific proposals were submitted in January of 1950, apparently without the benefit of adequate inspection of the property. In August 1950, the Botany Department had come to realize that there was no bay footage and that the mangrove area was subject to flooding and of low diversity. The next month President Pearson noted that there was no further interest shown by the Department of Zoology and the Marine Laboratory, and that the Botany Department felt the expense for preparing the site for research purposes was excessive; he suggested, instead, that the university concentrate on the Richmond property that was to become South Campus and either sell the Chapman Field property or return it to the government.

Due to the government's right of re-entry written into the property deed, sale of the land proved difficult. An offer of $250,000 from the Babcock Company was withdrawn when clear title could not be proven. In September 1955, United States Congressman Dante Fascell, whose district encompassed Chapman Field, was asked to intervene with the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which could grant a release, but the department's secretary, M. B. Folsum, was not helpful. Some conditions of the lease were changed, including a deed restriction that the land be used for educational purposes.\(^2\) By April 1956, a long-term lessee was found who was not concerned about the deed's conditions. In October 1956, local developer Ben Cooper leased 128 acres of Chapman Field from the University for two thousand dollars per year for a period of fifty years. His plan, of which he
notified the county in late 1957, called for his company, Kings Bay Corporation, to build a semi-private golf course and clubhouse as a benefit to the people buying his homes in the neighboring subdivision. The county unsuccessfully protested the sale since the only public access to Chapman Field Park was through the university’s property along Mitchell Drive (SW 144th Street), which Cooper attempted to close. Without access, development of the park would have been difficult.

Next, Cooper came to the county asking to buy forty-eight acres of Chapman Field along the eastern side of the USDA station; there he planned to construct the last four holes of his eighteen hole golf course. This request caused a tremendous uproar over the possible sale of public lands; instead, a lease arrangement was agreed upon with the county in February 1958. In exchange for a favorable twenty-year lease, and with an option for twenty more years, Cooper agreed to make improvements valued at $250,000 to the adjacent park. He agreed to dredge a lake in the remaining park property and deposit five hundred thousand cubic yards of fill for a roadway and parking lot; Cooper also planned to acquire an adjoining piece of property providing the county with access to the park from Old Cutler Road.

Before the proposed deal was approved by the county, however, Cooper had already begun work on the land he hoped to lease, causing another storm of local indignation.24

As an aside, Cooper, in fulfilling the terms of his lease to build a new park entrance,25 purchased land from the Warwick estate, which owned property on the northern side of Old Cutler Road and adjacent to the northeast corner of the USDA station. An additional 0.11 acres had to be acquired from the USDA, and letters from station leaders Schrum and Loomis in 1958 and 1959, respectively, itemized provisions for a revocable lease with Dade County
and its amendment. One item dealt with the reconstruction of the station's coral rock entrance gate, which had to be moved to make way for the new roadway. Surveys indicated the entrance, left from the days of the World War I airbase, was outside USDA property on land Cooper had purchased from Warwick since this USDA provision was found therefore, to be invalid, the gate was demolished, and Cooper declined to spend the seventeen hundred dollars needed for its reconstruction.

Cooper began to experience financial difficulties, before receiving $1 million from a Washington, D.C. businessman, Gustave Ring. In late 1961, Ring foreclosed on Cooper; Ring not only owned the Kings Bay Country Club and its county lease, but he also purchased, in 1962, the university’s Chapman Field property formerly leased by Cooper. Ring next persuaded the county to lease an additional twenty-four acres of Chapman Field Park in exchange for services such as dredging; then, he offered to buy all seventy-two acres for seventy-two thousand dollars; that offer was declined, however. The lease on the seventy-two acres was extended, in 1964, for ten additional years until 2008. With the sale of Kings Bay Yacht and Country Club in 1980 to Phil Revitz and Alan Gordich, the lease on seventy-two acres of Chapman Field Park was modified to include payments of fifteen thousand dollars per year, but this lease could be canceled after February 17, 2009, only if Dade County could prove the land was needed for county purposes. The lease was subsequently extended twenty-two years, expiring in 2030. In 1981, Kenneth Rosen and Edward Easton purchased the property and the leases were transferred. The partnership comprising Kings Bay Yacht and Country Club was subsequently renamed the Deering Bay Partnership, with Easton as trustee; it combined with Codina TB Venture, with Armando Codina and others as principals, to form the joint venture Deering Bay Associates in 1990, for further development of the property formerly owned by the University of Miami and the county leases. Subsequently, the property was sold for $32 million to developer Al Hoffman in May, 1997.

Although there have been extensive changes to that part of the Chapman Field property purchased by the University of Miami, little has been accomplished to develop Chapman Field Park by Dade County. The original utilization program submitted by the county to the federal government in 1949 called for a swimming beach, hiking trails, and a boat marina; Chapman Field Park was to be developed as a
companion to Matheson Hammock Park, three miles north of it along the Biscayne Bay. Lack of accessibility, a problem with a clear title to the land, dearth of development funds, and encroaching urbanization hindered construction of a public park on the property. For many years, the city of Coral Gables and the county maintained sanitary landfills at the park entrance, but prospects brightened in 1972, when a general obligation bond known as the "Decade of Progress" was approved by referendum. Included in the provisions for Chapman Field Bond, which provided $3.9 million for improvements to Chapman Field, were a 200-slip marina, bait and tackle facilities, parking dry boat storage, boat ramp, utilities, restrooms, and picnicking facilities. Three lighted ball fields were constructed near the park entrance, and some grading was completed, but within three years the other proposed additions had been greatly altered. The idea of a marina was abandoned in favor of boat ramps that would serve more people; more ecologically friendly ideas were developed, including canoeing and sailing on the manmade lakes and canals.

Neighbors and environmental concerns have stalled large-scale development long enough so that community interest has turned toward preservation of Chapman Field Park as a natural area. Its original features, including mangroves, sandy beach, and tributaries, have been, for the most part, preserved. Of its 483 acres, 432 are mangrove forest designated by type as coastal band mangrove, dense scrub mangrove, sparse scrub mangrove (all primarily red mangrove), disturbed white mangrove, and transition mangrove. Although there is limited access by road, shallow draft boats can approach the bank’s waterfront by way of grass flats lying parallel to the coast; deeper draft vessels can enter via short channels near the northeastern boundary where the water is eleven feet deep. The county’s site assessment report lists numerous species of native plants and birds as well as animal life.

At a state of development intermediate between Chapman Field Park and Deering Bay lies the USDA property, which has occupied Chapman Field since 1923. The army’s temporary wooden buildings have been replaced with more permanent ones of coral rock and cement block, but most of the land continues to be agricultural with pockets of native pineland. Within these pinelands can be found two endangered plant species—the deltoid spurge and Small’s milkpea—which bestow federal protection on these lands.
The USDA’s plant introduction station has continued to develop tropical agriculture on the bulk of its acreage. Throughout the decades, plant explorations have continued to bring in new specimens for propagation, but the focus of research has changed over the years. Early introductions sought to improve the diet of Americans, and tropical fruits seemed to predominate. For example, many new cultivars of avocado and mango were introduced from Caribbean and Central American nations and from southern Asia, respectively, some of which were well-adapted to southern Florida and became widely planted. The lychee and papaya were also distributed widely from this station, but many other tropical fruit introductions are less familiar outside specialty markets. Concurrently, introductions included flowering and shade trees, such as the white geiger, the Hong Kong orchid, the flame-of-the-forest, the African tulip tree, and many *Ficus* species and palms to beautify city streets and gardens. Other introductions sought to benefit industry, such as those for the rubber research and trials with bamboo and medicinals. In the 1950s and early 1960s, as in the previous decades, this station was closely associated with agriculture as well as fruit and ornamental horticulture, and new plant varieties were freely distributed.
nationally to nurseries and research institutions, and to private individuals with an interest in plants. Collections of coffee and cacao were established in 1954 since they could be maintained in Florida free of the diseases common to their native countries, although they could not be commercially grown here. Currently, this station is one of two quarantine facilities for cacao in the western hemisphere that serve to keep diseases from moving into the area. While the U.S. does not produce a significant quantity of cacao (the mainland being too cold), large amounts of milk, sugar, peanuts, almonds, and other materials produced in the U.S. are ingredients in the making of chocolate products.

A departmental reorganization in 1972 renamed the USDA's facility at Chapman Field the Subtropical Horticulture Research Station (SHRS), and research station-wide was administered through the Subtropical Horticulture Research Unit. In the latter part of the 1990s Paul Soderholm continued to maintain the plant collections and breed ornamental plants such as Dombeya, which were distributed throughout the area. Dr. Robert Knight, Jr. continued the tropical fruit crops program, and selected for improved characteristics in avocado, mango, lychee, carambola, and passion fruit. His work produced passion fruit that could be grown in temperate regions of the U.S.

With the arrival of Dr. R. J. Schnell in 1987, the direction of plant science research changed. The SHRS was designated as a National Germplasm Repository, one of eight locations nationwide with the mission to preserve the biological diversity within agriculturally-important crops. This station has been responsible for maintaining, characterizing, and enhancing mango, avocado, lychee and longan, annona, carambola, tropical citrus, banana and plantain, and other tropical fruit species. Responsibilities also include maintenance of a world collection of sugarcane and related grasses as well as a large collection of the forage grass Tripsacum. A molecular genetics laboratory was established in 1987 to aid this germplasm research. That lab has also facilitated the development of a technique for the detection of Avocado Sunblotch Viroid that has now been accepted as a diagnostic test for this disease by the Departments of Agriculture in both the State of California and the State of Florida.

A breeding program was also established at this station in the 1980s by the Division of Forestry of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to develop disease resistance against lethal
yellowing disease of coconut and other palms. There being no chemical control, Mr. Bill Theobold supervised a program to cross the Malaysian dwarf and the Panama tall palms to produce the resistant Maypan hybrid. The Division of Plant Industry (DPI) is the longest-lived tenant at the SHRS, being established there in 1959. The office inspects and certifies plant nurseries; it also places insect traps within the community to identify new pests and conducts surveys to identify disease outbreaks that threaten the agriculture of Florida. Asiatic citrus canker, a disease of many citrus species caused by a quarantined bacterium, was discovered near Miami’s international airport in October 1995, and DPI was charged with surveying for the pest and its eradication.

Another field of plant science research that has been represented at this station for a number of decades concerns the market quality of tropical fruits and vegetables. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has shown an interest in postharvest quality of tropical fruits since a lab was established in Homestead, Florida, in 1953. Initially, the Krome Avenue lab, supervised by Dr. T. T. Hatton, developed maturity standards for avocado and lime; soon after, it began studies to improve the market quality of harvested tropical fruits by determining optimal storage and ripening conditions. In 1956, this market quality lab was moved to the Plant Introduction Station at Chapman Field. In 1971, Dr. Donald H. Spalding, a research plant pathologist, arrived to study postharvest quality of tropical fruits and vegetables. Through 1987, Dr. Spalding studied methods to improve storage of these commodities and reduce decay and the quality changes induced by quarantine treatments against the Caribbean fruit fly. Among other projects, he tested modified storage atmospheres and low-pressure storage for fruits including mangoes and avocados and evaluated the effects of fumigants, irradiation, and heat on mangoes and grapefruit. This work was continued from 1989 by the author of this article in conjunction with entomologists to develop specific quarantine treatments against the fruit fly in grapefruit, navel orange, mango, guava, lychee, and longan, and against weevils and scale insects in sweet potatoes and limes, respectively. By this time, the most commonly used fumigant, methyl bromide, was being displaced, and heat, cold, or gamma irradiation were the most common alternatives.

A third program area, the entomology section, was instituted at this Miami research station in 1968 as a result of the appearance in 1965 of the Caribbean fruit fly in Florida. In its early work, the entomology
section learned how to rear millions of the flies on artificial diets for experiments on sterilization and other control techniques including trapping and bait attractants. During the mid-1970s, entomology research shifted to include investigations of quarantine treatments for commodities infested with the Caribbean fruit fly. Scientists conducted work during this period that included the development of ethylene dibromide, methyl bromide and cold as quarantine treatments and the investigation of fumigant residues on treated commodities. Large-scale fumigations were tested in a special facility constructed for this purpose, and many of these fumigation treatments were commercialized to ship a large portion of Florida's citrus crop to Japan.

In the mid-1980s, research shifted to finding alternatives to ethylene dibromide, which was banned as a carcinogen in 1984 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. There was also continued work on insect attractants, which included work with the papaya fruit fly. One of the treatments developed during this period is the widely-used hot water immersion treatment for mangos developed by Dr. Jennifer Sharp; all mangoes entering the United States from foreign countries use some form of this hot water treatment, as do Florida mangoes shipped to parts of the U.S.A. Cold treatment was developed for carambolas, while a hot water treatment was developed for guavas, which allow these fruit produced in Florida to be exported to large markets in the western U.S. that quarantine the Caribbean fruit fly now endemic in this state. Irradiation was further refined as a treatment for a number of commodities including mangos, citrus and carambolas by Don von Windeguth. Dr. Guy Hallman investigated insects infesting a number of locally-produced commodities including canistels, black and white sapotes, and spondias, and he sought to refine quarantine treatments by modifying the internal atmospheres of fruits.

From the late 1980s through the late 1990s heat treatments were further investigated to include the development, in cooperation with other USDA laboratories, of vapor heat and dry heat treatments. Hot air treatments were developed for citrus, mangos, carambolas, and other commodities; development of quarantine treatments for additional species of insects attacking subtropical fruits and vegetables was also begun. Treatments were tested against sweet potato weevil, banana moth, plum curculio, blueberry maggot, diaprepes weevils, mealybugs, and other insects. After 1990, fruits were evaluated for possible removal
from a list of hosts for the Caribbean fruit fly; eventually, limes, lychees, longans, and mamey sapotes were determined to be non-hosts, which makes quarantine treatment unnecessary.

During the period from 1968 to 1986 there were usually three entomologists and a chemist on staff at any given time, but by the late 1980s the number in the entomology program had risen to six scientists. Attrition and threats of station closure after 1993 brought the number down to one entomologist and a chemist at the end of 1998. Increases in tourism and shipments of tropical commodities, however, have continued to threaten American agriculture, especially that in Florida, with the establishment of exotic insect pests. A re-direction of the entomology unit will emphasize work outside the country in preventing the introduction of exotic pests to the United States and place less effort on the development of quarantine treatments.

In 1998, the Everglades Agro-Hydrology Research Unit was established with Dr. Reza Savabi investigating changes to local agriculture that could result from the restoration of a natural flow of water in the Florida Everglades. After fifty years of constructing dikes and canals to channel water away from developed areas and farmland, state and federal government had committed themselves to a restoration of the natural habitat, but this would displace some homeowners and lead to the flooding of many farms. The new unit is charged with understanding hydrologic processes in South Florida to help sustain the local agro-ecosystem and environmental quality; more directly, it seeks to produce maps of flooding possibilities and develop a model relating hydrology and crop growth in agricultural areas.

The station has known natural disasters. In spite of the station’s position by the bay, freezes have occurred, the latest in 1989 that killed sensitive plants such as cacao and damaged plants like avocado. On August 23, 1992, Hurricane Andrew passed over the southern tip of the Florida peninsula. The SHRS was in the northern eye-wall of the storm and suffered a significant amount of damage. Assessments made several months after the storm revealed a loss of approximately 30 percent of the fruit tree and sugarcane germplasm and 50 percent of the ornamental germplasm. Most of the fruit crop and sugarcane germplasm was reintroduced from backup locations, but the ornamental collections were not replaced. With the exception of minor damage
to roofs and some windows, the oolitic limestone buildings from the 1930s withstood the hurricane well. Laboratories built in the 1970s and 1980s fared less well but were quickly restored.

The SHRS was slated for closure with eighteen other ARS stations in 1994 as part of USDA Secretary Mike Espy’s 1995 budget reduction package for President Clinton; reasons cited included costs of restoring the station and its plantings after the hurricane and urban encroachment around the station and into the farming areas that made reestablishment of tropical fruit production questionable. By this time, however, much of the station’s reconstruction had been completed, and local agriculture was rebounding. Concern over the loss to tropical agricultural research galvanized the scientific community to support the station. Within the local community, Frank Smathers, a retired banker and amateur horticulturist, assumed the role fostered by Colonel Montgomery, Smathers’ former neighbor across Old Cutler Road, and tirelessly lobbied to keep the SHRS open. Florida Congresswoman Carrie Meek, especially, and Senator Bob Graham led a fight in Congress with the help of other state and federal representatives to rescind closure. The mood among supporters was alternately gloomy and ecstatic; thousands of letters were penned to politicians and USDA administrators. In June 1994, both the U.S. House and Senate Committees on Appropriations removed the SHRS from the closure list, but, whereas the full House agreed with its committee’s recommendation, the Senate did not. In September 1994, a congressional compromise provided funding for the station for one additional year. Subsequently, station personnel and representatives from Fairchild Tropical Garden, the National Tropical Botanical Garden, Florida International University, the University of Florida, and the Dade County parks department met to develop an organization plan for a public-private partnership, and from the neighborhood and local agricultural and research communities an advocacy group of two thousand members was formed. A Memorandum of Understanding between ARS and the Friends of Chapman Field recognized the cooperation between the two parties in fostering and publicizing agricultural and horticultural research. Closure formalities were again initiated in February 1995, but this time both House and Senate disagreed with the USDA’s justifications for closing the station. No further attempt was made to close the station the following year; not only was the SHRS preserved, Congress appropriated several million
dollars to upgrade the facility. Everglades research was included, and the entomology and plant science programs were expanded. Nevertheless, with future threats of closure a possibility, the county commission in 1996 changed the master plan designation of the USDA property from “institutional” to “parks and recreation,” precluding future development.

Together, the USDA’s Subtropical Horticulture Research Station, Dade County’s Chapman Field Park, and Deering Bay’s golf club and recreational community share a historic property in South Dade. From different perspectives, perhaps, people connected with all three also share a love of nature and a fondness for the out-of-doors. With the passage of time, the desire and need to preserve our natural surroundings has increased, and it is unlikely that further development will be allowed to mar this setting significantly. As a warrior excited by a life of danger, Victor Chapman would probably have been proud to have had an airbase named after him in 1918. As an artist and naturalist, he would most definitely have experienced great joy in knowing that his name would become associated with the exuberance of tropical species native to or introduced upon the spit of land in southeastern Miami-Dade County known as Chapman Field.
Endnotes

1 The author would like to thank the following people and institutions for providing research assistance: Bert Zuckerman of the Fairchild Tropical Garden, Dr. Terrance Walters of the Montgomery Botanical Center, Kevin Asher of Metro-Dade Park & Recreation, William Brown of the University of Miami, Rebecca Smith of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, and Brian Sullivan of the Harvard University Archives.


3 Howard Kleinberg, “Chapman Field once an air base,” The Miami News, August 31, 1985, 4C.


9 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction. *Chapman Field Garden*, by David Fairchild (Washington, D.C.: 1923), 151. Volumes can also be found in the archives of the Subtropical Horticulture Research Station and Fairchild Tropical Garden. This report documents events leading to the establishment of the USDA station at Chapman Field, describes the former airbase and its buildings, and relates the property to the Perrine land grant.


11 From a total of 4,389 plant introductions in 1924, the number increased to 11,000 in 1941; 12,000 in 1949; 14,000 in 1956; 17,000 in 1960; and 22,000 in 1973. Generally only 3,000 to 4,000 accessions were growing at any particular time, however—the others being represented in seed collections or having died. McClelland's 58 page list is in the station’s archives.


18 See Lola Dowling’s history for a more personal account of the war years at Chapman Field. Found in Gilbert, *Growing up on Chapman Field*.
20 Ibid.
21 “Chapman Field” file, Special Collections, Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. Dade County, Deed Book 3215, 421.
25 “Chapman Field” file, correspondence in the archives of the Dade County Parks & Recreation Department.
29 Chapman Field Park Site Assessment Report prepared for the Metropolitan Dade County Parks & Recreation Department, 1995. Found in “Chapman Field” file, Dade County Parks & Recreation Department.


34 See, for example, in *The Miami Herald*, 1996, articles by Charles Rabin, September 1: “Gables, Pinecrest vie to get Chapman Field”; September 12: “Change may keep USDA site a park”; November 15: “Metro acts to protect Chapman Field.”
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