For Miami's 15th Birthday in 1911: a Biplane Demonstration on the Golf Links

For Miami's 44th Birthday in 1940: Miami's 11th All-American Air Maneuvers

For Miami's 90th Birthday July 28 Next Year: Who Knows?

The Historical Association of Southern Florida

UPDATE

Volume 12, Number 4 November 1985 $2.00

Wings Over Miami

a special issue

The Historical Association of Southern Florida
presents the
Tenth Annual

Saturday and Sunday, November 23 and 24
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Dade County Youth Fairgrounds
Tamiami Park, S.W. 24th Street and 112th Avenue
a celebration of traditional and ethnic foods, folkarts, crafts, music, and entertainment

Inspect some of the early airplanes that used to fly over Miami. For more early "Wings Over Miami" take in the current exhibit at the Historical Museum in the Metro-Dade Cultural Center through February 13, 1986. *HASF collection*

Special Events

Saturday:
1:00 p.m. cow chip throwing contest
2:00 p.m. Little Miss and Mister Harvest Contest

Sunday:
1:00 p.m. Theodore R. Gibson Oratorical - Declamation Contest

Plus

Antique autos, Civil War enactment, farrier exhibition, skillet-throwing (for women and children), face painting, holiday gifts, and antique aircraft.

Join HASF in thanking RYDER for sponsoring this tenth Harvest.

The Historical Association of Southern Florida

UPDATE

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Contents

On the cover: Norma Duggan and her unidentified pilot needed windbreaker jackets for the open-air travel in a Curtiss flying boat, ca. 1916. *(HASF collection)*

Lucy and Harriet Audubon, eldest daughters of John Woodhouse Audubon, photographed in 1855 with their grandmother Lucy, 68. *(HASF collection)*

AROUND THE MUSEUM

WHO'S WHO

Because I find it impossible to eat lunch alone without reading something, I am always on the lookout for cheap books in remainder bins to while the twenty minutes over my tuna-on-rye and soft drink. Recently, while browsing through a chapter on the Lost Dauphin of France in a book called **Great Mysteries of History**, I was stunned to discover that one of the forty-odd pretenders to the throne of France after the Revolution was none other than Jean-Jacques Audubon, the creator of HASF's greatest treasure, the Double Elephant Folio of **The Birds of America**.

The brief life of the Dauphin, who should have been Louis XVII had he, rather than his uncle, Louis XVIII, survived to assume the throne in 1814, was filled with pathos and its end was obscure, but there is no doubt that it began with his birth on March 27, 1785. Audubon's birth is officially recorded as April 26, 1785. The coincidence would be meaningless were it not that Audubon's birth, parentage and early life are as cloaked in ambiguity as is the Dauphin's death.

Although Audubon is said to have been born in Les Cayes, Santo Domingo, the illegitimate son of a French naval-officer-turned-planter, there is no certificate of his birth. Audubon himself gave many conflicting stories to different people about his origins, but one date is certain; on March 7, 1794, he was legally adopted by his putative father, the French naval officer, Jean Audubon. Less than two months earlier, the Dauphin had effectively vanished into murky oblivion in an isolated cell in the Temple, not to be seen again by any responsible witness except once at the end of 1794, until his final illness and death in June 1795, when a body was produced. **Some** child's body was presented, but was it the Dauphin's? Rumors went round at the time that he had been spirited out of the Temple by royalist sympathizers and another child substituted. The doctor who attended him during his final illness died unexpectedly in mysterious circumstances — murdered, perhaps? The doctors at the inquest of the child's death pointedly refused to identify the child's corpse, asserting that their only function was to determine the probable cause of death. And an exhumation in 1846 only raised further doubts about the identity of the child

Continues on page 15

1835
150 Years Ago

Key West was a tidy little town in 1835, basking in the sub-tropical sun . . . Most houses had no heating, for frost was unknown, but still fuel was needed — for cooking and for some commercial uses . . . And where, one may wonder, would such an isolated place secure adequate supplies of good, efficient fuel, in those days before the shipment of coal became common and fuel-oils were unknown? . . . Filling this need was the life work of the "charcoal burners", a special breed of men who would go into the wilderness of nearby islands and mainland to chop out the choice buttonwood trees and convert them into charcoal . . . Piles of buttonwood logs were covered with grass and sand, almost airtight, and carefully burned under strictly-controlled conditions — if the fire got out of hand, the pile of wood became ashes, completely worthless. But in competent hands, a cord of buttonwood logs could be transformed into about ten sacks of good quality charcoal. It was peddled from door to door, and always found a ready market.

1845
140 Years Ago

The late Rembert Patrick's book "Florida Under Five Flags" refers to the flags of Spain, France, Great Britain, the Confederacy, and the United States — each, at one time or another, has controlled all or part of the peninsula . . . But Mr. Patrick's book doesn't mention that Florida has had four different flags of its very own! . . . The first State flag was flown for the first time at the inauguration of William D. Mosely as first State governor, in 1845 — and, so far as we know, that was also the **last** time that particular flag was flown . . . Other flags, bearing the State Seal on a white field, were adopted in 1868 and 1885, and the diagonal red bars were added in 1899 — but not until **1966** did the official flag reach its present dimensions.

1860
125 Years Ago

One of the first railroads in Florida ran 416 miles from Fernandina, on the east coast, to Cedar Key, on the Gulf . . . Sleepy as they seem now, those two cities were bustling ports a hundred years ago . . . David Yulee built that railroad, with the idea, of course, of making lots of money, by shortening shipping time from the northern cities to the busy ports in the Gulf . . . And it would have worked, too . . . Except that the railroad was completed in 1860 just as the Civil War was beginning, and almost immediately the Northern forces moved in and "took over" both Fernandina and Cedar Key . . . And there sat David Yulee — with a brand-new cross-state railroad, but without access from either end!

TIME CAPSULE

1885
100 Years Ago

To illustrate just how remote Miami was from the rest of the country in 1885 consider the peregrinations of a simple letter mailed from Palm Beach to Miami at that time: According to Theodore Pratt, such a letter first went north from Palm Beach to Jupiter, 22 miles away . . . This leg of the journey was not on any particular schedule — whoever chanced to be going in that direction, by boat or on foot, took that mail bag along . . . From Jupiter, the way led by infrequent river boat, up the Indian River, until the rail-head was reached at Titusville. After travelling by rail to New York, the letter would be placed aboard a ship sailing for Cuba; and, from Cuba, it would go to Miami — **if** there chanced to be a schooner heading in that direction . . . If not, the letter would go to Key West, to await the twice-a-month mail boat . . . The 66-mile trip took up to six weeks and more, and involved travel in excess of 3,000 miles!

Continues on page 16

Miami's First Plane

Everest G. Sewell *(HASF collection)*

BY DR. THELMA PETERS, Ph.D.

In the summer of 1911 President Taft celebrated his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary; England had a new king, George V; economic optimism had replaced the 1907 panic; and the University of Florida had just graduated its largest class—thirty-one.

Miami was fifteen that summer; population five thousand, paved streets twenty-five miles. The First National Bank had a capital stock of $100,000, the local chapter of the W.C.T.U. met regularly to fight Demon Rum, a room at the San Carlos cost $2.50 a day, E.B. Douglas sale-priced "elegantly trimmed ladies' drawers" for 99¢, and a kid with fifteen cents could swim in the pool of the Royal Palm Hotel.

It was a good summer.

With exuberant civic pride the city fathers proclaimed a three-day celebration of their Magic City's birthday. Everest G. Sewell, pioneer Miami booster, was named chairman of the celebration committee.

The top event during three days of parades, baseball games, excursions, boat races, and banquets was to be the actual flight of an actual aeroplane. Most of the people in Dade County had never seen one.

Mr. Sewell contracted with the Wright Brothers of Dayton, Ohio, to send down a Wright biplane by train along with a "birdman" who would make six demonstration flights, three on July 20, three on July 21. The cost was $7,500, money eagerly donated by merchants and other individuals.

An aeroplane in Miami? The excitement was almost too much to bear. A few weeks before the plane arrived the *Daily Metropolis* commented that a new disease of epidemic proportions had hit Miami — a disease diagnosed as "aeroplanitis", one symptom of which was a rubber neck. People with the disease kept tilting their heads back and scanning the sky.

The city named June 22 as Clean-Up Day. Store fronts got fresh paint, back yards were raked, streets repaired and swept, and housewives aired the guest bedroom.

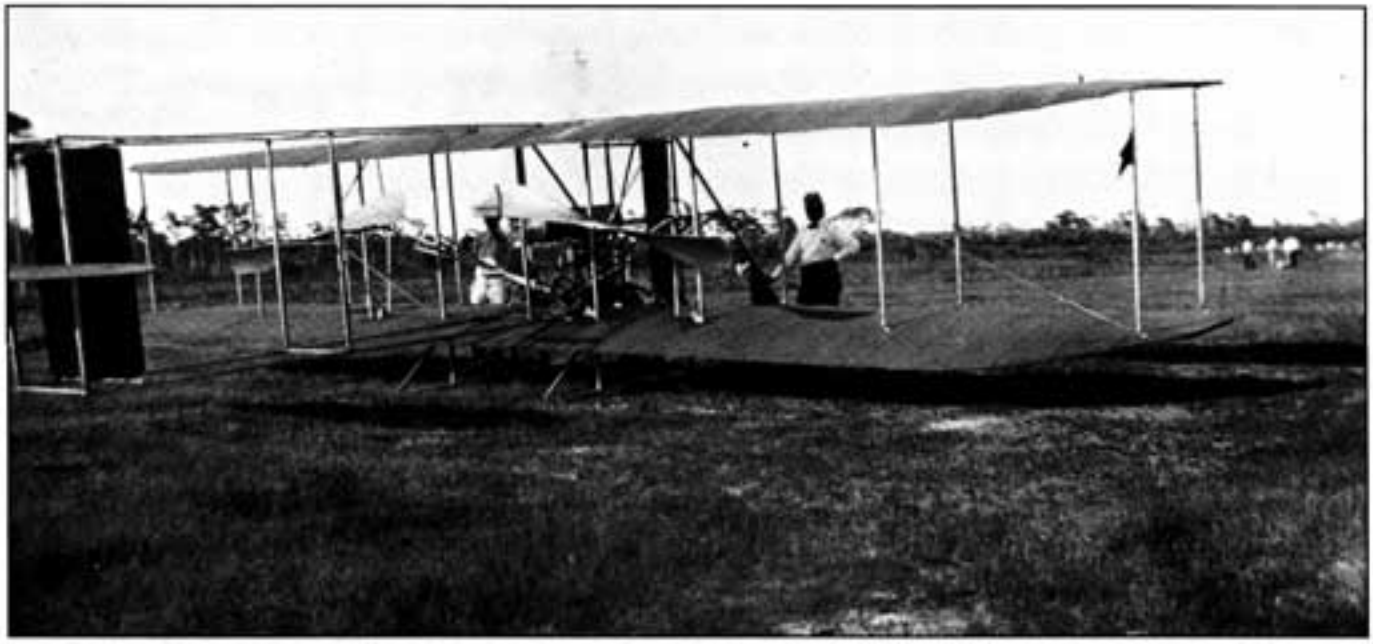
Preparations intensified as July 20 approached. Sheriff Dan Hardie and a jail trusty climbed all over the two-story, native-stone courthouse, draping it with red, white and blue bunting. Palm fronds, flowers, flags, bunting and even a large model aeroplane decorated the store windows and the buildings along Twelfth Street (present Flagler), the route of the parades. Guests poured in, filling all the hotels and private "spare rooms." The delegation from Key West, numbering almost five hundred, came partly on business: to advertise their own upcoming celebration of the completion of the Overseas Railroad scheduled for the following January.

Seminole Indians moved into tents in the rear of Girtman Brothers store: Cypress, Frank, Coffee and Teeth Pull Tiger, Phillip Billie, Johnny Jumper, Harry Doctor and others, including squaws and children. Some were to ride on a float in a parade, some were to do a war dance on Twelfth Street. All were curious to see what the white man was up to.

At Miami Golf Links, as Miami's only golf club was known at that time, a grandstand was built near the fairway which was to serve as runway. The Golf Links were out in the country and up the Miami River in the location of the present Civic Center. The local militia, the Miami Rifles, commanded by Captain G. D. Brossier, patrolled the field to keep spectators safely away from the plane.

Almost everybody in South Florida, guest or resident, was at the Golf Links on the afternoon of July 20. They came by foot, on wagons, on horseback, by bicycle, and in the high-wheeled, snub-nosed autos of

Dr. Thelma Peters wrote this article for ***Update*** *ten years ago and this is the time to reprint it.*



Wright Brothers bi-plane in which Aviator Howard Gili took off at the Miami Golf Links as part of Miami's three-day celebration of its 15th birthday. *(HASF collection, Dean Miller gift)*

that day. The crowd which the press called "monstrous" in size was probably the largest assemblage of people in South Florida up to that time. There might have been five thousand there — scarcely a splash in today's Orange Bowl.

With the band playing, two attendants wheeled the light wooden plane, its two wings cloth-covered, onto the fairway and within sight of the spectators. Wild applause. Aviator Howard Gill appeared. He took his seat at the controls, visible to all in the open frame. More applause. The prop was spun, the thirty-five-horsepower motor roared, and he was off down the fairway. Almost before a soul could breathe he was airborne, "exactly like a partridge taking wing" one spectator remarked.

The first flight was a low circling of the field not much above the tree tops. In the other two flights of the day the pilot went higher, performed stunts described as "spirals" and "rocking the boat." But it was on the second day, July 21, that he outdid himself. He climbed to 7,500 feet, a mere speck to the viewers below. Then the motor died. Had he cut it off? Was he out of control? The plane seemed to be plummeting to earth. Was he doomed? No, he was leveling off, the motor was on again. Five thousand people breathed again.

The pilot landed to wild applause. He invited Mr. Sewell, the celebration chairman, to take a ride with him. The crowd roared its approval. Would Sewell dare? He would. He calmly took a seat beside Gill, exposed, as Gill was, to the full force of the wind. Vicariously, five thousand people were about to have their first plane flight.

For his passenger's sake Gill kept this flight low and easy. They stayed under a thousand feet. Sewell, enjoying every moment, had his first bird's eye view of the city he so ardently promoted.

Later Gill said Sewell was the coolest passenger he ever had. Sewell said flying was "a delightful sensation indescribably pleasant." Sewell became an aviation enthusiast for life that day.

After the last flight Gill, the hero of the day, asked if he could please have a glass of milk. He said flying made him thirsty.

The first flight set in motion a series of steps which were to make Miami a leader in aviation. Sewell was so convinced that flying would soon become commercially practical that he got the city to offer the Wright Brothers $1,000 to bring a flying school to Miami. They declined but Sewell persisted and did bring the Curtiss Flying School to Miami. Until his death in 1940 Sewell worked tirelessly to improve Miami airports, to expand air traffic, and to better trade relations particularly with the Latin American countries. Historically he is the father of Interama. ■

Hydroplane on Biscayne Bay takes off with the Royal Palm Hotel in the background. *(NASF collection)*

REMINISCENCE OF CHARLES CHRISTIAN WITMER

The School for Famous Flyers:

BY LINDA K. WILLIAMS

In the winter of 1912, just a few months after aviator Howard Gill introduced flight to South Florida, the first "hydroplane" arrived in Miami. Hydroplanes were early seaplanes developed by Glenn H. Curtiss. Late in 1911, Curtiss had agreed to Everest G. Sewell's request that he open a flying school in South Florida during the winter months. Students taking the course would learn to fly and maintain both land and seaplanes.

Charles C. Witmer, an experienced pilot who had previously instructed army and navy personnel, was in charge of the Curtiss Flying School. The land school was at N.W. 17th Avenue and 20th Street, while hydroplane instructions were given on Biscayne Bay near the Royal Palm Hotel where Witmer was staying. Classes began on January 12 and lasted through April. The four graduating students were Barney Moran, Augustine Parla, W. W. Vaughan, and Señor Martini.

Witmer's stay in Miami was brief, just a few months in 1912 and possibly another visit in 1916, and he eventually settled in Santa Barbara, California. However, a letter from Witmer to Curtiss dated July 31, 1925, enhanced with photographs of the hydroplane, remains to show a fragment of life in Miami in 1912.

After a few introductory remarks, Witmer writes:

"Now about the school for famous flyers. I am afraid that if we gave the real history of every one shown in the picture you sent me (see photograph above), it would read like a hard luck story. On the left is myself, Charles Christian Witmer, etc., etc., etc. Then Barney P. Moran who never made a flight after leaving the school in Hammondsport but was a very good pilot. Then C. A. Vaughn from Virginia, who could handle the plane after his first two hops and was a good flyer before he left the school. He was quite wealthy and upon his return home from the school his mother prevailed upon him and he gave up flying and, as far as I know, never flew again. The next chap (Beachey Lincoln) is a bird from Elmira, N.Y. Came all the way

Charles C. Witmer, left, in charge of the Curtiss Flying School, with presumed 1912 students. See Witmer's 1925 letter to Glenn Curtiss beginning on page 4. *(HASF collection)*

down to Florida, looked the school over, and decided that he could build a machine for what we were asking for the course. Next is Bob Faucit of Hammondsport, a mechanic. Next is George Hallett whose history you know. Then comes a mechanic (Simmons), of Beckwith Havens. Then we have the Famous Cuban Aviator Augustus Parla, an air merchant not a flyer. And last Mr. Beckwith Havens. That is a hard crowd to make much of a story from unless the chap who writes it up has more imagination than I. . .

"As I look back upon that winter in Miami I cannot remember so much flying as I do about tents, cooks, rain, rust, water on the field, broken wings, motorcycles, snakes, Martie, Parla. Well, there was another side, too. The Royal Palm Hotel and all the nice people connected with it, yes, and the people that were guests there, dancing, boating, bathing, the grill. O boy, the cocktails and the wonderful ladies! The town of Miami then had a spirit and a soul. Yes, and it had E. G. Sewell who was our light and also our heavy, and I never forget Mrs. E. G. She was always at the head of the Parade and the doors of her home were wide open. Poor E. G. could never sneak home for a nap because he would be sure to find a house full of young people.

"I would like to step into Miami some time to see what it has grown to but mostly to see some of the folks that were there in the old days when men were men and cocktails were cocktails.

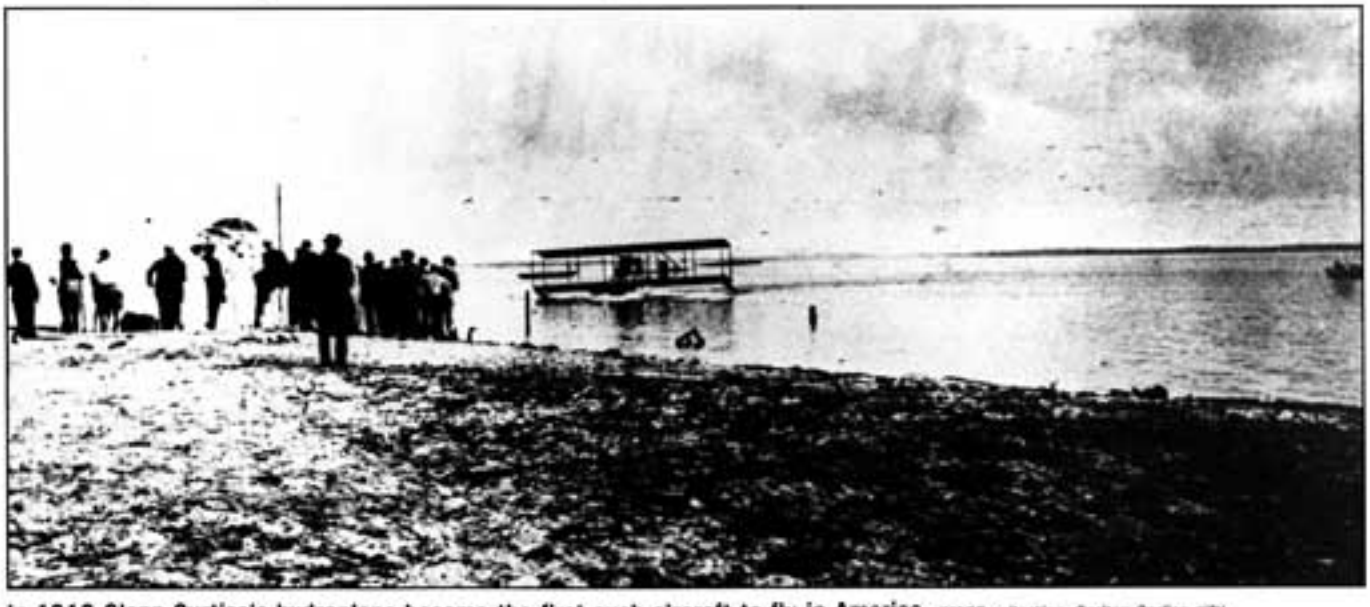
"Sorry I have no better account of the flylets in the picture. Now that you have their names see what flyers you can make of them. Do not say too much about Barney Moran because the people of Miami know too much about him.

With my best regards to Mrs. Curtiss I am Sincerely

Charles C. Witmer

(Witmer's spelling of the flyers' names have not been altered.)

Linda Williams, former assistant director of HASF, is Executive Director of Spanish Point at the Oaks in Sarasota.



In 1912 Glenn Curtiss's hydroplane became the first such aircraft to fly in America. *(HASF collection, Carlton Curtiss gift)*

Wings Over Miami

BY AMANDA S. RIDINGS

Wright Brothers bi-plane at the Miami Golf Links, July 1911. *(Don Carson, rephotographed)*

In the span of a lifetime, aviation has progressed from the historic flight of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk to the supersonic transports which have made the continents accessible to one another within mere hours. Aviation has reshaped our concept of geography, space and time.

Perhaps nowhere has the impact of aviation been more profound than in South Florida, where mild climate, flat terrain, and geographic location have combined to create a proving ground for aviation progress. The decades from 1911 to 1940 brought major developments to aviation and South Florida, the growth of one influencing the other.

The dawn of aviation in South Florida came at the celebration of Miami's fifteenth anniversary. Everest G. Sewell, chairman for the festivities, arranged for the Wright Brothers to send from Dayton, Ohio a biplane which would make a series of demonstration flights over the Miami Golf Links during the celebration on July 21 and 22, 1911.

A crowd of 5,000, most of whom had never seen manned flight, converged for the grand event, and Pilot Howard Gill did not disappoint them. Not only did he circle the links, perform stunts, and climb at one point to an altitude of 7,500 feet; he also took Everest Sewell along on one flight, making him South Florida's first airplane passenger.

From the day of his first flight over Miami, Sewell became a promoter of aviation in South Florida.

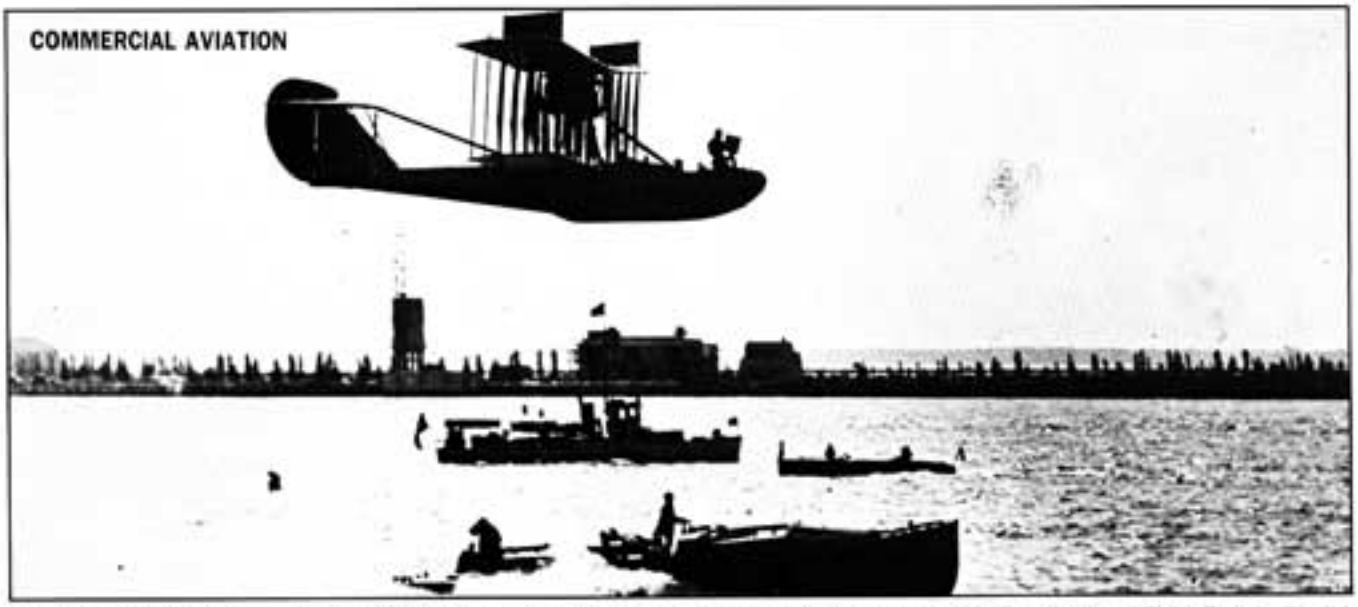
FLYING SCHOOLS ►

Glenn Curtiss, South Florida aviation developer, with early hydroplane, 1911. *(HASF collection)*

Although he failed to convince the Wright Brothers to open a local training school, the undaunted Sewell fared better with aviation inventor Glenn Curtiss. The Curtiss Flying School was established in 1911, and in the decades to follow was based at a number of locations, both on Miami Beach and the mainland.

It may have been the magnetism of South Florida, with its mild climate and flat terrain, that convinced Glenn Curtiss to settle here permanently in the 1920s; or, perhaps, Everest Sewell's enthusiasm proved to be contagious. Whatever the reason, the native New Yorker remained and became influential both in the advancement of local aviation and in the development of Hialeah, Miami Springs, and Opa-Locka. A skilled aviator who completed the first successful takeoff from a cruiser in 1910, Curtiss was noted for his development of seaplanes, and instructed Navy pilots during World War I. His many accomplishments earned him the title "Father of Naval Aviation."

COMMERCIAL AVIATION



Among the earliest South Florida commercial airlines was Aero Limited, which opened in 1919 and served Palm Beach, Bimini, Nassau, Long Key, and Key West. *(HASF collection)*

By no means did flying schools such as Curtiss' monopolize flight in South Florida. Several commercial ventures began before 1920 to transport tourists and residents from Miami to the Keys, Cuba, Bimini and the Bahamas.

Arthur B. Chalk opened his Red Arrow Flying Service from the docks of the Royal Palm Hotel in 1917. Still in operation today on Watson Island, Chalk's Grumman Mallard twin-engine seaplanes serve Bimini, Cat Cay, and Nassau.

Less long-lived was the Campäia Cubana-Americana de Aviacion, which in July of 1919 began passenger service between the United States and Cuba. Soon succeeded by Aeromarine Airways, which extended service to Bimini and Nassau, the airline declined following an air accident and closed in 1924.

Flying boat service also was opened in Miami by Aero Limited in 1919. The route structure included Palm Beach, Bimini, Nassau, Long Key, and Key West. Rates were approximately $1 per mile per passenger. At that time, the Miami-Nassau trip took at least three hours.

WORLD WAR I

World War I brought military flyers for training in the Army, Navy, and Marines. In this 1918 photograph the cameraman focused on a marine. *(HASF, Matlack collection)*

In leggings and leather coats Naval aviators pose at Dinner Key. *(NASF, Claude C. Matlack collection)*

WORLD WAR I

A new era in South Florida aviation began during World War I when the United States Marine Corps, Navy and Army opened and operated flying schools.

For the price of $1, Glenn Curtiss leased his flying field west of the Miami Canal and south of NW 36th Street to the Marine Corps for the duration of the war. Twenty-three Flying Jennies were used to train the 200 officers and 300 enlisted men stationed there.

Dinner Key was selected for the Naval Air Base. Until the facility was completed, naval aviators of the Seventh Squadron were housed at the Fair Building near Royal Palm Park. As they performed stalls, spins and other air maneuvers along the bayfront, guests at the nearby Royal Palm Hotel grudgingly endured the persistent drone of their seaplanes.

During the war, the Dinner Key station gained a reputation as the most efficient naval training station in the country, where ideal weather enabled more flying hours and training time than at any other naval base. While many of those flying hours were uneventful, there were occasions for unexpected heroics. Lt. Cmdr. O.A. Sandquist, stationed at Dinner Key from June through October, 1918, later recalled one thrilling rescue:

> "During the early training at the Royal Palm Park location . . . one of the seaplanes with a student had crashed into Biscayne Bay, pinning him in the wreckage underneath the water. Another plane put out immediately and flew low by the wreckage. One of the navy men plunged into the water from the flying plane and dove down into the wreckage, freeing the student, and held his head above water until the rescue boat arrived. For this act, this man received a medal of distinction."

The military establishment in South Florida was completed late in the war with the addition of an Army base, Chapman Field, on Biscayne Bay about 12 miles south of Miami. Because there was no other branch of the Army to which air operations could be assigned, they were delegated to the Signal Corps.

THE KELLY AIR MAIL ACT

First mail to be transported by air was delivered to Florida Airway in Miami in 1926. *(Miami-Dade Public Library)*

THE KELLY AIR MAIL ACT

A turning point came for commercial aviation in South Florida with the adoption of the Kelly Air Mail Act of 1925 which authorized the United States Post Office Department to award air mail contracts for specific routes. The act helped to establish scheduled air service between major cities, and gave airline companies a regular source of income.

The first air mail contract affecting South Florida enabled Florida Airways Corporation to begin serving Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville on April 1, 1926. Within a few months the lack of passengers and mail, combined with the collapse of the Florida land boom, led to the closing of the airline.

International air service from South Florida was only a year away. The first contract to fly mail to a foreign country was awarded to Pan American Airways, which was owned by Aviation Corporation of the Americas and managed by Juan Terry Trippe.

On October 28, 1927, a Pan Am Fokker tri-motor F-7 completed the first international air mail flight, opening scheduled service between Key West and Havana. Named for Gen. Gerardo Machado, Cuba's president from 1925 to 1933, the plane completed the 90-mile flight in one hour and 20 minutes.

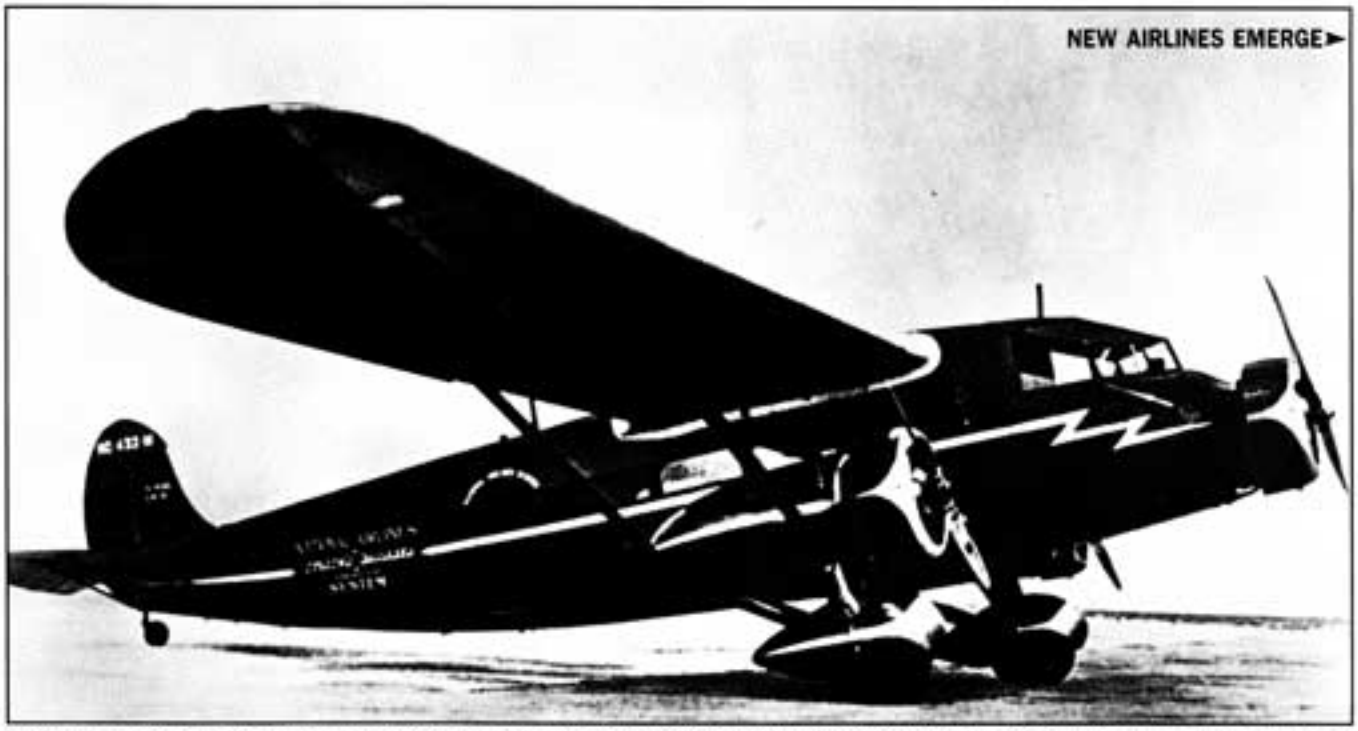
If Pan Am was an unfamiliar name in South Florida, at least one of its technical advisors was certainly well-known. Charles A. Lindbergh had joined Pan Am a few months after his famous Atlantic crossing in May of 1927, and was assigned to fly new routes for the airline.

By January of 1928, passengers were traveling the Key West-Havana route with a one-way fare of $50 and maximum luggage allowance of 30 pounds for each passenger. However, mail retained priority over passenger transport.

Soon after its first international air mail flight, Pan Am relocated its headquarters for Latin operations from Key West to Miami. In the two years from 1928 to 1930, the airline completed its Caribbean network, which included service to Port au Prince, San Juan, St. Thomas, Port of Spain, Curacao, Cartagena, Cristobal, and Kingston.

Charles A. Lindbergh joined Pan American Airways as a technical adviser shortly after his 1927 Atlantic flight. Photographed in 1929 at controls of a Sikorsky S-38 in the Caribbean. *(HASF collection)*

NEW AIRLINES EMERGE►



National Airlines, which began operating in 1934, displays a Stinson "U" tri-motor plane in 1935. *(HASF collection, National Airlines gift)*

In the decade following 1928, the emergence of Eastern Airlines and National Airlines resulted in increased domestic air mail and passenger service for South Florida.

Eastern Airlines had its origin in Pitcairn Aviation, Inc., which earned U.S. Post Office Air Mail Contract #25 to serve Atlanta-Jacksonville-Miami. Sold shortly thereafter to North America Aviation, Inc., a conglomerate which owned both airlines and manufacturing companies, Pitcairn was renamed Eastern Air Transport. In 1933, General Motors bought the parent company, and with the appointment of Edward Rickenbacker as general manager of Eastern, the airline's maintenance base was relocated to Miami. When the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938 required manufacturers such as General Motors to sell their airlines, Rickenbacker purchased Eastern.

Another airline recognized today began in 1934 with just three monoplanes owned by George Theodore Baker. Denied a Cleveland-Nashville route, Baker instead earned a St. Petersburg-Daytona Beach pattern, and began service as National Airlines. Three years later National won an air mail contract to serve St. Petersburg, Miami, Sarasota and Ft. Myers.

AIRPORTS

With the growing demands of private and commercial aviation in the 1920s and 1930s came the construction of more seaplane bases and airports.

Events in 1928 brought the beginnings of two airports in the Miami area. That year Glenn Curtiss gave 160 acres at 119th Street and 4th Avenue to the City of Miami for a municipal airport, which was constructed with such features as two 3,000 foot runways, lights for night flying, hangars, and shops for maintenance and repair. Dedicated the next year at the First All-American Air Meet, the airport became the home of the Curtiss Flying School and, in 1937, was the scene of Amelia Earhart's departure on her attempted flight around the World, from which she never returned. In her honor, the airport was later renamed Amelia Earhart Field.

At NW 36th Street, Pan American Airways opened Pan Am Field in 1928, and relocated its operations from Key West. In two years, Pan Am vacated the field, leasing its space to Eastern Airlines. The airport was taken over during World War II by the Army Air Transport Command, and after the War was purchased with airport revenue bonds by the Dade County Port Authority (now Dade County Aviation Department). In 1948 the field received its present name, Miami International Airport.

Pan Am Field, opened in 1928, was a base of operations at various times for Pan American Airways, Eastern Airlines and, during World War II, the Army Air Transport Command. Renamed Miami International Airport in 1948. Top left is a 1937 aerial view looking north: above a 1970s picture looking west. *(HASF collection)*

SEA PLANE BASES

Houseboat served as Dinner Key's terminal until one was built in 1934. Building is now City of Miami's city hall. *(HASF collection)*

After 1928, Pan Am expanded its seaplane operations, and in 1930 purchased and relocated to the Dinner Key seaplane base which had been established by the U.S. Navy during World War I. A houseboat served as the terminal, until the construction in 1934 of a building which today is Miami City Hall. World War II brought the return of the Navy to Dinner Key, where by the end of the War, Pan Am had begun to phase out its flying boats. Expensive to operate and dependent on waterfront bases, Pan Am's seaplanes last flew from Dinner Key in August of 1945.

Several other seaplane bases brought increased air traffic to Biscayne Bay in the 1930s. The Curtiss-Wright flying Service, managed by Harry Rogers, was located on Biscayne Bay near NE 6th Street. By 1930 the Viking Seaplane Service established headquarters at the Venetian Causeway. The Miami Terminal for Chalk Airlines at nearby Watson Island is still in operation today.

Viking Seaplane Service operated from a base on the Venetian Causeway, built in 1930 and managed by Lloyd Fales. *(HASF collection)*

Cabin design and services increased passenger comfort in the 30s. It was still a long trip to New York. *(HASF collection)*

ADVANCEMENTS IN COMMERCIAL AVIATION

Pan American Airways, Eastern Airlines, and National Airlines rapidly expanded their routes to and from South Florida in the 1930s. By 1935, Pan Am connected Miami with 32 Central and South American countries. That year over 31,000 passengers passed through its Dinner Key terminal. Also in 1935, Eastern transported more than 12,500 customers over routes linking Miami to New York, Chicago, and intermediate cities. Two years later National Airlines, already serving St. Petersburg, Jacksonville, Tampa, Lakeland, Orlando, and Daytona Beach, added Miami to its schedule.

Expansion of customer services, combined with advancements in aircraft design, resulted in increased comfort and convenience for the air traveler of the 1930s. Refreshments were served on Pan American Airways flights as early as 1929. The Douglas DC-2 of the early 1930s boasted comfortable seats, soundproofing, reading lamps, and cold air louvres for each passenger.

By today's standards, a New York to Miami flight in the early 1930s was a long journey. An Eastern Airlines passenger leaving New York at 7:00 a.m. would lunch in Richmond, Virginia, dine in Jacksonville, and arrive in Miami just before 9:00 p.m.

ALL-AMERICAN AIR MANEUVERS

It was appropriate that South Florida, where aviation had begun as a promotional event, should be the scene of a national air meet which became a tradition for 28 years.

The All-American Air Meet in 1929 was sponsored by the City of Miami in conjunction with the dedication of the Municipal Airport. Attendance surpassed 5,000 for the meet, in which 65 military and civilian aircraft participated in races, aerobatics, and games of skill. Among the events were a balloon-bursting contest, in which planes competed to break the most airborn balloons possible within a limited time and a "bomb-dropping" contest in which flour sacks were dropped from an altitude of 500 feet on targets marked on the flying field.

Such air meets were not entirely frivolous, for what pilots and engineers learned from competitions would later influence the design, construction and refinement of commercial aircraft.

In the years following its debut, the meet became known as the Miami All-American Air Maneuvers. Entertaining enough to satisfy the spectators, and ambitious enough to attract the aviators, the Maneuvers grew to become a prestigious annual event. R.V. Waters, general chairman for the 1940 Maneuvers, wrote:

> "...the aims of the Miami All-American Air Maneuvers are (a) to hold at Miami an annual mid-winter assemblage of the aviation fraternity, including those engaged in every phase of aeronautic activity; (b) to provide an occasion for the first showing of the year of new types of civilian and government aircraft — a preview of America's latest in aircraft design; and (c) an occasion for a showing of the latest and best aerobatics and stock plane races — the 'Olympics of Aviation', the 'Proving Ground of Aviation Progress'."

In a larger sense, South Florida itself became "a proving ground of aviation progress." In the decades following Howard Gill's early flight over Miami, both aviation and South Florida matured rapidly. The growth of each influenced the other, and culminated in the emergence of Miami as a major center for international aviation.

Formation flying at the sixth All-American Air Races in 1934. *(Miami-Dade Public Library/Romer collection)*

Autogyro attracts a crowd to Bayfront park in 1932 during the All American Air Meet. *(Miami-Dade Public Library/Romer collection)*

The First U.S.-Cuba Passenger Flight

The first company to fly passengers from the United States to the Republic of Cuba was the Compania Americana de Aviacion (Cuban American Aircraft Corporation), organized in Havana July 18, 1919. Senor Jose Carminero of Havana, a graduate in engineering of Villanova College in Philadelphia, was president.

Three airplanes, one model 50L (a flying boat with Hispano Suiza motor) and two six-cylinder model 40L Aero Marine flying boats, one with a Linite motor and one with a Hall Scott motor, were purchased by the corporation, shipped to Key West, Florida, and assembled at the old U.S. Naval Primary Training Aviation Base. The company employed three pilots: Cy Zimmerman, chief test pilot of Aero Marine Flying Company; Lt. Donald C. Richardson of Buffalo, N.Y., and Lt. Thomas O. Otto of Key West, both recently discharged from the U.S. Air Service.

The three planes were registered in the U.S. Customs House in Key West as passenger-carrying flying boats; the three pilots were registered as Able Bodied Seamen and Captains of passenger-carrying flying boats, and passports were issued to Cuba.

In Havana the Cuban Customs entered them as Passenger-Carrying Flying Automobiles!

On April 12, 1919 Lieutenant Otto, recently separated from the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps (A.S.A.), had piloted an HS2L flying boat from Colon, Panama, to Bluefields, Nicaragua, accompanied by Lt. (later General) J. O. Barker and Sgt. Robert Hornby (M.S.E.) as mechanic. This flight was 275 miles across the open ocean—unpatrolled and unescorted—and constituted the longest overseas flight to that date. For this flight Otto had received a commendation from Lieutenant Colonel Millard F. Harmon, commanding officer of France Aviation Field, Coco Walk, Panama.

On November 15, 1919 Señor Carminero, representing the Cuban American Aircraft Corp. as an official and principal stockholder, rode as a passenger with Pilot Otto when the planes took off for Havana. The lead plane, with a compass, was faster than Otto's and was soon lost to sight. However, Pilot Otto reached the coast of Cuba, some distance from Havana.He followed the coast and reached Havana Harbor just as the flying boat gave out of gas. Otto landed in the water, jumped overboard with a rope and fastened the plane to a buoy. Ultimately they were picked up by a boat.

Señor Carminero was not as easily rescued financially. Since the planes could carry only one passenger per flight the revenue did not cover the operational costs. The pilots remained in Cuba several weeks with a promise of $180 a month non-flying time and $350 in the future. Ultimately the company paid off in stock certificates, three of which Mrs. Otto still has.

Thomas O. Otto, who was born in Key West, had graduated from that city's Ruth Hargrove Institute and entered the University of Florida to begin the long work toward a medical degree when the United States declared war on Germany April 6, 1917. He re-entered the University of Florida in January 1920, and was graduated that year. He received his medical degree from the University of Virginia, took graduate study in surgery at Union Memorial Hospital, Baltimore.

He practiced in Miami, serving as president of the Dade County Medical Association in 1941. After the United States entered World War II he was commissioned as a U.S. Army major serving as chief of surgery at four U.S. bases before becoming chief of surgery of the 305th Station Hospital in England. In 90 days after D-Day he supervised the care of 22,000 wounded, who were followed by ailing prisoners of war. He retired as a lieutenant Colonel in 1946, returning to Miami, where he became chief of surgery at Jackson Memorial Hospital. He retired from active practice in 1947 following a coronary attack and died in 1962.

The Cuban American Aircraft Corporation was succeeded by the Aero Marine Flying Co., which purchased a number of U.S. Navy HI6 naval planes that were capable of carrying 12 passengers and a crew of three. The company, largely subsidized by the U.S. Government with mail contracts for intercontinental service, operated for a number of years before it was bought by Pan American Airways, which operated for a short while out of Key West to Havana. Pan American then transferred its business to the Dinner Key (Naval) Base, employing Commodore and Clipper ships. From this base they expanded to the British West Indies, Central and South America, Europe and Asia, and Africa. ■

Lt. Thomas O. Otto piloted first commercial passenger flight from the U.S. to Cuba November 15, 1919. *(Lent by Mrs. Otto)*

Material for this article was obtained from a manuscript written down by Marjorie Otto, wife of Thomas O. Otto, as Dr. Otto dictated and from his vita.

Lighter-Than-Air Craft

This Goodyear blimp cruised over Miami Beach in 1933. *(Miami-Dade Public Library)*

BY AMANDA RIDINGS

No history of South Florida aviation would be complete without reference to the presence of lighter-than-air craft. Identified in a variety of ways — blimp, dirigible, Zeppelin, airship — these graceful giants have held a unique fascination since their origin nearly two centuries ago.

The modern blimp can be traced to 1783 and the design in France of a 35-foot hot air balloon constructed of an implausible material: paper. In 1852, the French developed a power-driven version, in the form of a 145-foot balloon propelled by a three-horsepower engine.

It was in Germany that lighter-than-air flight matured, when huge airships were produced by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin for military use in World War I.

Military applications also were explored by the United States Army and Navy, which purchased airships produced by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. Blimps became a familiar sight in the South Florida skies during the 1920s and 1930s, when the coastal waters were patrolled by the naval airships USS AKRON and USS LOS ANGELES.

Since the last military airships were retired in 1962, only the Goodyear commercial fleet has remained active. Miami, which had consistently served as a Goodyear base since the 1930s, was startled July 19, 1979 to read **The Miami News** that Goodyear was transferring the blimp base to Pompano. The **Mayflower**, smallest of the company's fleet of four blimps, began operating in Pompano November 8 as "aerial ambassador." The **Enterprise** now makes forays over Miami for boat regattas, car races, Orange Bowl games and parades.

Amanda Ridings, onetime HASF publication director, is now based in Texas.

Broadside view of Navy airships USS AKRON at mooring mast at Opa-Locka Airport 1933. *(Miami-Dade Public Library)*

Around the Museum. From page 2

who had been buried as the issue of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

But if the Dauphin escaped from the Temple and survived, was he Jean-Jacques Audubon? Did Jean Audubon adopt him two months after an escape in 1794? Jean-Jacques Audubon himself never claimed to be the lost Dauphin, at least not publicly, although later generations of his family questioned the curious circumstances of the two children's lives. There is a letter, however, in which Audubon, writing to his wife from Paris in 1828, says:

> I see my father before me with his proud eagle's eye frowning on me as if I had leaped over the abyss . . . I must try to bury the dreadful past in oblivion . . .
>
> What might this day have been, if known here? Patient, silent, bashful . . . dressed as a common man, I walk the streets! I bow! I ask permission to do this or that! I follow the publication of a work on natural history that has apparently absorbed my whole knowing life. **I, who should command all!**

It is true that this was the romantic era when people built gothic ruins and wrote elegies in graveyards, and it is also true that Audubon appears to have been vain, neurotic, and fanciful (to put it kindly); but there is no evidence to indicate that he was actually schizophrenic. That being the case, what does this letter mean?

In the May 1985 issue of **Audubon** magazine, Michael Harwood and Mary Durant have published a long, beautifully researched article that deals among other things with the problems encountered in establishing the most basic facts about Audubon's life. They dismiss the Lost Dauphin story as a "romantic fable" devoid of documentation. If he was indeed the Lost Dauphin of France, he may have preferred to roam the virgin forests of North America painting birds, rather than to arrive in Paris, like his uncle, Louis XVIII, in the baggage train of the Allies.

UP THE CIRCULAR STAIR

Mention of the Audubon **Birds** brings into my mind a weekly charming sight: Becky Smith's red hair shining under the lights as she bends her head, her hands in white cotton gloves carefully turning the pages of the four volumes of the Double Elephant Folio to the birds for the week.

Such care is typical of Becky, who approaches every article in her trust — every slide and snapshot and dog-eared, coffee-stained paperback — with the same loving respect, in her job as Curator of Research Materials. And she guards them with the fierceness of a mother lion protecting her cubs. I once wanted to take an old paperback detective story out on the patio while I had lunch — just out on the patio. No soap. Nothing goes beyond the library doors.

Recently I followed Becky up the circular iron staircase to her lair in the stacks. There are books, to be sure, but more than books there is box after acid-free box of slides, photographs, papers, bumper strips, campaign buttons, all the minutia and detritus of life in South Florida. Some of it is frivolous, some is of grave significance: all of it is important to the reconstruction of the history of our community. "People think this is a library of books," said Becky, "but there are many more photographs than books."

Usually material comes in unsorted and is stored temporarily in the big cardboard boxes. When its turn comes, it is divided: toasters from the 1940s, bathing suits from 1906, and Indian arrow heads from time immemorial go to Dan Markus, Curator of Artifacts. To Becky come the pictures; slides, photographs, maps, drawings. Documents of interest are usually sent to Sam Boldrick, who directs the Florida collection at the Public Library, now conveniently next door.

There is a pleasant cooperation among the various scholarly agencies in Dade County. Becky and Dan work closely not only with Sam Boldrick but also with Bob Carr, the Dade County archeologist. Scholars are almost always allowed access to archival material if their research projects seem reasonable. Because much of the material is fragile or unique, only Becky and her staff are allowed in the stacks, but the indexing is excellent, and a steady stream of researchers make use of the library. In addition, the library is a resource for the local news media. Reporters call frequently to check the accuracy of their stories or to learn something they need to know.

The most momentous event in the library's history was of course the move to the new museum. It was also the most chaotic. Becky started packing two years before the move, which made for many exasperating instances when materials were unavailable because they were already packed. Because we have a working research library, it was desirable to keep the time when materials were out of service to a minimum. Hence, the long delay of the move while the smoke detector system was redesigned added to Becky's frustration.

When the day finally arrived, the move was exhausting. Two twenty-foot trailers — one-sixth of the total for the entire Museum — were filled with library material which had to be put away. In the first ten days Becky lost six pounds.

"Once material is sorted it takes up much less room than it does in the (arrival) boxes."

— BECKY SMITH

Today the tranquility in the stacks may be a bit deceptive. Becky estimates that it will take ten years to catalogue everything she has right now. In addition to the material that was brought over from the old museum, there have been many recent acquisitions of large and important collections. The museum is a depository for South Florida photographic material, and its position will grow with the passage of time. I asked if the new quarters would be big enough as more material comes in. Becky replied, "Oh, yes. Once the material is sorted it takes up much less room than it does in the boxes. And we have space for more stacks. It will be a long time before we outgrow this building."

Now and then as we strolled through the rows of stacks, Becky took down a book of special interest to show me. One I was particularly taken with was a history of Miami printed in Japanese. We went downstairs to the main library, where a group from one of the universities was listening to a lecture by a staff member. A volunteer in the same kind of white gloves that Becky wears to turn the pages of the Audubon **Birds** was carefully placing photographs in little envelopes. "The gloves are to keep the oils in the skin of the hands from contaminating the material," said Becky. "Over a period of time it can damage the paper."

Becky came to HASF ten years ago, fresh from Florida State University, where she and Linda Williams, our former assistant director, overlapped in time, although the didn't know each other. Becky started work as a volunteer. I asked her if she had ever thought when she started that her job would evolve into the exacting and exciting professional challenge it is now. She shook her head. "Never," she said, her eyes shining. "I can see you love your job," I said. Becky glowed.

I love libraries, too, and I understood.

— LEE ABERMAN

THE FINAL WORD

Stuart McIver, whose name appears on the masthead with mine as editors of **Update**, is busy with the February issue. We will alternate editing two issues a year. He is welcomed with open arms.

You can find three books by Stuart on library shelves: **Yesterday's Palm Beach, The Greatest Sale on Earth: The story of the Miami Board of Realtors 1920-1980** and **Fort Lauderdale and Broward County, An Illustrated History**. He is currently writing the history of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club.

Stuart, who writes a Sunday column on history in the **Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel**, received the Florida Historical Confederation's prize for history writing in a publication this year. He started life in North Carolina, went to Baltimore and has been in Fort Lauderdale 23 years.

If, like others, you thought Miami International Airport was dedicated as Wilcox Field you are right, says Beverly Weinsier of the airport authority's public information department. It was dedicated to Florida Congressman Mark Wilcox, who died in 1956. Seven months after his death a room at the airport was designated, with a plaque, the Mark Wilcox room. The next county commission closed the room but kept the plaque. In 1957 Judge Ray Pearson urged the commission to reconsider. The plaque is still there somewhere but you know what it is like at airports these days.

Cover Girl Norma Duggan Stevens was born in 1896, the year Miami was incorporated. Father John Duggan was a railroad man and he and Sadie were out west in Raton in territory that became New Mexico. (A 1981 atlas shows a town named Miami near Raton's coordinates.) The Duggans had Verna in Denver, Dorothy in Miami, Jackie and Olive in St. Augustine where Mother Sadie found it easier to raise daughters.

Norma graduated from Miami High in 1911, the year **Miahi**, the school's annual, first appeared. She went to Stetson, business college and worked for Evans, Mershon law firm before becoming secretary for Walter Beckham, juvenile court judge. On his retirement she became Judge Dixie Chastain's secretary, retiring in 1983.

Marie Cudnson

INTO THE TRUNK

The recent "Floridians at Work" exhibition inspired Cyane Berning to donate to the museum some of the work-things that had belonged to her grandfather, Charles Richardson. Mr. Richardson settled on the Miami River in 1897 where he established the Musa Isle Fruit Farm. He grew citrus and tropical fruits, such as guavas and bananas (whose botanical name is musa), and sold preserves made from them. This photo-postcard shows him sitting in front of his store. The horseshoe-shaped stand in the picture also was given to the collection, as were mason jars, preserve labels, letters, and other photographs, almost as charming as this one.

— REBECCA SMITH
Curator of Research Materials

Time Capsule From page 2

1910
75 Years Ago

The story of Ed Watson sounds like pulp fiction... Watson lived at Chatham Bend, some six miles south of Chokoloskee, where he became a fairly successful farmer. The only high ground in the vicinity, his farm was a forty-acre Indian shell mound, fertile and productive — he grew sugar cane there, and made syrup, and shipped vegetables to Key West... Some of his workers were fugitives from justice — but he asked no questions. But neither did he take any "sass" from anybody... A rough, tough character he was, and many a cutting or shooting was "laid on Watson"... It is claimed that sometimes, when pay day was due, he would simply murder his helpers and throw their bodies in the river — and it may be true, for it seems that a couple of these bodies were found... One day in 1910 he appeared at Smallwood's dock, at Chokoloskee, where a "ruckus" arose. Watson raised his gun, but before he could use it he was riddled by a fusillade of shots from several bystanders who seem to have been waiting for just such a chance...

1945
40 Years Ago

When the Dade County Port Authority was first set up, in 1945, there was not a single public airport to serve Miami!... The old municipal airport had been sold to the Navy, later become known as Amelia Earhart Field. Pan American Airways had a fairly good port of its own, up on 36th Street, which would be a good spot for a **new** Municipal Airport — but the Port Authority had no money to finance such a large purchase. There were 223 acres of land there, and the price set for land and buildings was about two and a half million dollars... In a complicated deal, the Port Authority floated a revenue bond issue to purchase the airport from Pan American — and Pan American bought most of the bonds!... In effect, Pan American thus lent the County money to buy the port from Pan American... Really confusing!... Anyway, according to the records, these were the **first** airport revenue bonds in the United States history, and the purchase formed the nucleus of the present airport, which encompasses almost 3,000 acres.

— From the J. Floyd Monk Collection

WANTED

report cards, yearbooks, class rings, class pins, diplomas, desks, letter sweaters, letters, school uniforms, beanies, and other Dade County School memorabilia dating as long ago as 1886 and as recently as 1986. . . Seminole clothing, dolls, baskets, carvings; items from Musa Isle and Coppinger's Tropical Gardens. . . your mother's (daughter's, own) clothes from the 20s (or 30s or 40s or teens). . . photographs of you and/or your friends at any identifiable place or event in South Florida since the turn-of-the-century up till the 70s. . . Florida postcards, Miami Dolphin and University of Miami souvenirs from the beginnings. . . your grandfather's (son's, own) panama hat; and all other things dealing with our past in South Florida.

FOR

the collections and archives of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida and possible future exhibitions.

WHY?

so we can continue being South Florida's attic and the source of extensive research.

THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

the museum is accredited by The American Association of Museums

Becky Smith, Curator of Research Materials, or Dan Markus, Curator of Collections, welcome your interest in preserving our history. Call the museum at 375-1492.

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