

# Miami

*and*  
The Story  
of its  
Remarkable  
Growth

*An*  
*interview with*  
**George E. Merrick**  
*Published by*  
**The New York Times**

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**T**HE NEW YORK TIMES of Sunday, March 15th, contained a four-column interview with George E. Merrick, owner and builder of Coral Gables, which in many ways was one of the most notable expressions of the Miami spirit which has ever appeared in a great Northern newspaper. It is a message which every Miamian should read carefully. It answers in plain, straightforward terms all of the criticisms and derogatory vaporings of writers who come to Miami for a brief stay and, without study or serious thought of the city's growth and spirit, attempt to belittle it before the whole country. ❧ ❧ ❧

The New York Times is not only one of the nation's foremost newspapers, but one of the most conservative as well. That it invited the interview in question soon after the visit of its owner and publisher, Mr. Adolph Ochs, to Miami and Coral Gables, is evidence of its desire to do justice to Miami and to give Florida its proper place before the serious-minded readers of this country. The interview with Mr. Merrick follows.

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**M**IAMI HAS been misrepresented in a flood of articles which give the impression that it is a boom town, whereas the growth from a population of 1,681 in 1900 to 111,000 in 1925 is the result of the development of the permanent productive resources of the American tropics, according to George Edgar Merrick, who was in this city yesterday at the Hotel Biltmore, arranging with John McEntee Bowman the details of a \$10,000,000 suburban development. ❧

Mr. Merrick, who is less than forty years old, has created a city of tiles, concrete, steel and coral rock out of what a few years ago was his father's orange grove. This is Coral Gables, near Miami. What was an agricultural property a little more than a decade ago is today a varied landscape of lawns and gardens, broken by the white and red of fine residences in the Spanish and Moorish style.

#### ❧ ORANGE GROVE'S TRANSFORMATION

Mr. Merrick was in New York City studying law and practicing poetry when his father died in 1911. He returned to Miami, which was then a city of about 10,000 inhabitants. The idea occurred to him of turning the grove, which his father called Coral Gables, into a suburb of Miami. As the development began to prosper he called in artists, landscape architects and city planners and they built up a modernized Mediterranean city, in connection with which he and Mr. Bowman are now building the \$10,000,000 hotel, country club and bathing casino. ❧ ❧ ❧

"Just how I came to utilize the Spanish type of architecture in Coral Gables, I can hardly say, except that it always seemed to me to be the only way houses should be built down there in those tropical surroundings,"



said Mr. Merrick. "I made a trip to Mexico and Central America and was more convinced than ever of the possibilities offered by the adaptations of the Spanish and Moorish type of architecture. The gleaming white coral rock, the palm trees, tropical flowers and verdure seemed to me to provide a natural setting with which Spanish architecture alone would harmonize."

#### BRYAN EMPLOYED AS ORATOR

Mr. Merrick has played an important part in the building of Miami, and his enthusiasm about the place is such that he believes that to sing its praises adequately is a task not unworthy of the powers of the greatest natural orator living. He has employed the services of William Jennings Bryan, who makes a daily address to crowds at Miami on the glories and potentialities of the tropical region of which Miami is the metropolis.

"The recent articles in Northern papers and magazines about Miami have been in many instances so unfair to the real Miami that it seems to me time to bring out the facts behind its great, healthy, substantial growth," he said. 

"The 'smart Aleck' writings regarding this great Miami growth, from even financial writers, are akin to the solemn European conclusions reached by some of our near statesmen after a month's visit in Europe. Comparing the steady, healthy and tremendous growth of all Florida but Miami, particularly, to Klondike rushes and Texas oil field booms, as done in recent picturesque articles in New York newspapers and magazines, is simply silly, sob-sister, sensational writing. 

*"Miami merits a more mature consideration and exposition of its remarkable growth and the factors and*



*potentialities which are steadily forcing it more and more into the national limelight.* ❧ ❧ ❧

"I might say here that I am not a promoter just snapping upon a new chance for easy exploitation in Miami. I have lived and worked in the upbuilding of Miami for twenty-six years and I am almost as close to a native son as you usually find in Miami. I have done everything from grubbing the coral rock, clearing pine timbers, planting tomatoes, developing grapefruit and alligator pear groves, and have been in personal contact with most of Miami's principal resources in the actual and manual working of them out. And so on, to the developing and marketing of what is now probably America's greatest realty development, which is Coral Gables.

❧ \$21,000,000 SPENT IN THREE YEARS

"In Coral Gables there has been expended during the past three years over \$21,000,000 in hard, cold cash. There have been nearly \$30,000,000 of realty sales made throughout thirty-eight of these United States. There have been close to a thousand Mediterranean-type houses built within three years. ❧ ❧ ❧

*"Such enterprises in Coral Gables as the Miami Biltmore Hotel and the Miami Biltmore Country Club, which, with its golf courses, bathing casino, polo fields, etc., will cost over \$10,000,000, are but a single phase of this development, which has a definite further ten-year program involving a \$100,000,000 expenditure still ahead.* ❧ ❧ ❧

"Remember, too, that Coral Gables is only one of many great developments in Miami. There is, for instance, Miami Beach, which twelve years ago was a mangrove swamp, but by the genius, energy and millions of Carl



Fisher has been transformed into the Greatest Winter playground of the nation, and where there has been invested in construction altogether probably \$100,000,-000. 🌀 🌀 🌀

"It has been said in some of these articles that Miami is in the throes of a wild, fantastic boom. Now, on the contrary, Miami never had a boom, and is not having a boom now. To back up this statement of mine it is necessary to make a further emphatic assertion, which is that should no further persons commonly designated as 'tourists' ever again visit Miami it still would steadily become a great city.

#### 🌀 THE ADVANTAGES OF FLORIDA

"My father and my family are examples of what I mean. We went to Florida twenty-six years ago, not as tourists, but to take advantage of the natural resources; the advantage for real and broader living and the potentialities for tremendous profit to be taken out of the ground in Miami. And we found them. Disregarding realty value and enhancements entirely, we found them. Today and every day in Miami, Dade County, in the great Everglade empire to the west and south of Miami, and in that great only American tropics which is the backbone of Miami, hundreds of people are finding and making their own, those same things that drew our family to Miami. And the hundreds of today are healthy, naturally, and, just as logically as the endless-chain scheme works, becoming the thousands and hundreds of thousands of tomorrow and the day after. 🌀 🌀 🌀

"From, and because of the establishment of our own family at Miami (and also disregarding realty phases entirely), over 300 people have come to Miami in our



own single endless chain. Once a Miamian always a Miamian—and the present tremendous growth is largely due to the cumulative effect of these endless chains started by satisfied Miamians. ❧ ❧ ❧

*“Miami has had one continuous, steady growth from the one thousand inhabitants of twenty-five years ago to the hundred thousand or so inhabitants of today. True, it has been growing faster, gathering momentum with each year, and it will continue to grow with still increasing momentum for at least ten more years, into a city of 1,000,000 inhabitants, which we surely expect.*

#### ❧ GROWTH OF BANK DEPOSITS

“The bank deposits of Miami are a fair barometer. They have grown steadily and surely from an aggregate of only a few millions fifteen years ago into about one hundred millions today. The fact that Miami is now an all-year city and not just a tourist resort is shown by the fact that its bank deposits will fall off hardly more than 10 per cent. during the Summer. ❧

*“Can you call a city a boom town whose building permits last year were close to \$30,000,000 in greater Miami, and whose building permits in the same area this year will exceed \$60,000,000, and all of which are materialized in concrete, reinforced concrete and everlasting coral stone? These are surely not the materials of which a boom town is made. Miami has for years been dubbed by architectural and building magazines the ‘Concrete City.’ In boom cities of the Middle West, of the Southwest and the West you sometimes read of frame schoolhouses burning, sometimes with loss of lives. Throughout the entire Miami area there is not a single frame schoolhouse. Literally millions upon millions are invested in the most modern concrete buildings*



of architectural beauty and ideal arrangements, far surpassing anything else in school building architecture, yet worked out in this country. The same phase is apparent in the churches. An \$800,000 Catholic cathedral, a \$600,000 Episcopal church, dozen of \$500,000 churches supplanting \$100,000 ones and in the most beautiful style of ecclesiastical architecture, by national architectural authorities. Does this seem like a boom town? 🌀 🌀 🌀

"A million dollar causeway built only five years ago of stone, concrete and steel, and designed to meet the needs of twenty years is now to be doubled to meet present traffic needs.

#### 🌀 THOUSANDS OF MILES OF ROADS

"Thousands of miles of the most permanent kind of highways gridiron the entire Miami area and make every part of this entire and only American tropical country literally a part of the City of Miami. 🌀 🌀 🌀

"A five million dollar overseas highway is stringing together the 150-mile chain of matchless Florida Keys into a super-Riviera highway which will be the most wonderful motor road in the world. 🌀 🌀 🌀

"A great Tamiami trail costing over a million dollars is being thrown across the Everglade Empire to the Gulf Coast, making direct connection with all the Gulf Coast cities and making directly tributary to Miami millions of feet of untouched cypress and the future produce of thousands of square miles of rich lands. 🌀 🌀

"Nearly \$20,000,000 has been spent by the State of Florida in draining and fitting for agriculture that great Everglade empire of millions of acres, the development and exploitation of which will most directly affect Miami. Men who are largely responsible for the sale



of the Everglade bonds enabling this great drainage project, and Government men familiar with same, say that the properly developed potentialities of the Everglades alone would make a city of a million people out of Miami. ❧ ❧ ❧

“Several varieties of rubber are indigenous in this area. American rubber manufacturers are just turning their attention to experiments, apparently proving that Everglade rubber culture is a practical thing. Great pulp manufacturers from the North are turning their attention to the Everglades, with its various fibre grasses growing wild and the many tropical fibre plants which would be cultivated thereon, and are actually beginning great manufacturing enterprises based thereon. ❧ ❧ ❧

“One great sugar company has successfully invested in the neighborhood of Miami over \$10,000,000 in the sugar industry.

#### ❧ RICHES OF THE EVERGLADES

“The expensive sea island cotton, finest grade wrapper tobacco, have been proved to grow successfully in the Everglades. *Think of millions of acres richer than any other area on this continent, and capable of producing not only the staples of the temperate zones, but all the higher priced commodities of the tropics. Why, many a city in the Middle West has been built into great size on the potentialities of its enveloping corn and grain lands which may make from \$10 to \$50 per acre per year. Here are millions of acres which will produce crops ranging in yearly profit from \$100 to \$1,000 per acre.* ❧ ❧ ❧

“Here is the ideal beef-producing section of the United States; with all-year natural forage, capable of growing only the most luxurious tropical grasses twelve months



of the year. There are none of the freezes or droughts common to other beef-producing sections to contend with; there is minimum danger of cattle diseases. ☞ ☞

"The casual observer sometimes asks, 'How can you expect a great city here at the jumping-off point of Florida?' Havana has been made a great city by reason of the same resources as those behind Miami. Despite every handicap known to man, and with never in its history any tincture of progressive spirit, Havana, just across the Gulf from Miami, became a great city. ☞ ☞ ☞

"Great Middle Western cities were built in twenty-five years by farmer migration from the East. Why is it not reasonable for a million people to be drawn in ten years from the congested East and semi-congested West and Middle West to Miami, where the lure, promise and results are a hundred to one more powerful than they were in the Middle West migration? ☞ ☞ ☞

"A great city, Los Angeles, was brought into being on the far side of the Continent from the congested East, which furnished its population. Economically, should not Miami, which is comparatively a New York suburb, with its vastly greater range of resources and opportunity, grow in vastly greater ratio and extent?

#### ☞ THE FACTOR WHICH BUILDS MIAMI

*"The great factor which is building Miami is that same urge which pulls the Canadian from the place of his birth; which pulled my family from Massachusetts; that is pulling from Mid-Western towns that have reached their limit of opportunity for young men. It is pulling from the great congested centres like New York that offer but really pitiful living advantages for the middle-class family.*



"All of these are finding what they want in Miami and are sending back for their friends and relatives just exactly as did the people who have populated other new sections of our country. But in the case of Miami, the pull is stronger. The population building works faster, because there are many, many times the resources and potentialities and many times the lure and opportunities of any other new section that has ever been developed in our nation. ☺ ☺ ☺

"The lure of the tropics is a great and a definite thing alone to build upon. The Miami area and thence on south to Cape Sable (all of which is tributary to Miami) comprises absolutely the only American tropics, and in that great fact Miami owns and will forever hold a priceless American monopoly. We are 600 miles south of the southernmost tip of California. It is the only point in the nation from which the Southern Cross may be seen. It is the only spot in the United States where the royal palm grows wild, where the coconut naturally thrives and the flowers and vines of the South Sea Islands are as common as roadside weeds. ☺ ☺ ☺

"In these Miami tropics are grown nine-tenths of all the tropical fruits that are grown in our nation. We have a practical monopoly in the growing of the better types of the alligator pears which mature 12 months in the year in Miami. For six months in the year Southern Florida feeds the nation with all Winter vegetables. Citrus fruits and their by-products are worth millions of dollars annually to the Miami tropics. The alligator pear industry alone is destined to become in the United States a larger business than the banana. This alligator pear growing alone will during the next ten to twenty years give splendid livelihood and even fortune to hundreds of thousands of people that will come to the Mi-



ami area. There are in Miami hundreds, yes, thousands, of people who have started in the Winter vegetable business with less than \$500 who are now comfortably fixed. ❧ ❧ ❧

"I know of no other place in the United States where a farmer can take a mule and \$10 worth of tools and share crop on a ten-acre piece of ground and usually net from two to five thousand dollars for his season's operations. ❧ ❧ ❧

"These factors are permanent. The Miami monopoly of the alligator pear industry, the Miami monopoly of the finest all-year climate on the globe—yes, these things are permanent. Miami must continue to grow steadily into a great city, should all tourists (purely tourist type) cease to visit here. But will the tourist cease to visit Miami? You may just as well try to make sparks cease from flying upward! ❧ ❧ ❧

*"Within forty hours of three-quarters of the population of the United States is Miami. Within forty hours of seven-eighths of its wealth. Only four days' comfortable automobile ride for the great American family out of snow and ice into everlasting June. Why should a tourist stop going? And a tourist of one year is a Miamian of the next year.*

#### ❧ MILLION DOLLAR ESTATES

"A James Deering, after traveling the world over to its favorite rest, pleasure and health places, looked in at Miami for several days one year. The second year thereafter you find him building a ten-million dollar estate in Miami. He is typical of hundreds and hundreds, the aggregate of their estates running into hundreds of millions in Miami. In one afternoon in Miami there dropped into my office the president of one of the



nation's greatest railroads, the head of one of the nation's greatest chain of hotels, two of the nation's greatest bankers, one of the greatest writers and one of the greatest living artists. And that was simply a sample afternoon. What other new section of the United States draws so many such men automatically? At a gathering in Coral Gables recently, upraised hands showed thirty-eight States represented. 'Who's Who in America' finds most of its most noted members either living the year 'round or wintering in Miami. 🍀 🍀 🍀

"Miami was discovered in a large way by the most prominent Americans during the war period when it was difficult to get abroad. Now they don't care to go abroad. Miami is the magnet drawing the most aggressive, progressive go-getting elements from every State west of the Mississippi. 🍀 🍀 🍀

*"Miami's port bill has just been approved by Congress and the President, appropriating nearly \$2,000,000 for the completion of its wonderful deep water harbor. Despite its poor facilities in the past, its shipping has grown to the point where a dozen large steamer lines and many freight lines enter Miami, and its shipping has already grown to tremendous proportions.*

#### 🍀 TO BE A GREAT PAN-AMERICAN PORT

"With the completion of this harbor Miami will readily take its place as the great Pan-American port of the Atlantic. It is the logical contact port with all of the West Indies, Central and South America, and with a great commercial trade expansion with the United States. Miami's port will grow into something far greater than New Orleans, Galveston or Savannah in the past. Also, with the completion of the deep water



program it is likely to mean the throwing across the Everglades, for instance, from the present terminus of the Atlantic Coast Line, 100 miles away, the railroad links which will connect with the great Florida phosphate fields, and the great freight steamers for every port in a short period will be loading phosphate in Miami port. ❧ ❧ ❧

“All-year business in Miami has grown to the extent that the Florida East Coast Railroad is now engaged in double-tracking its 400 miles, giving us the equivalent of another railroad. It is likely that the Seaboard and one other railroad from the West Coast will shortly be in Miami. ❧ ❧ ❧

“Industries are springing up with all-year growth of the city. There are now over 150 profitable industries readily expanding. Great natural assets, like our coral rock, are worth untold millions to Miami. Among many other natural industries may be noted the fish and sponge industries.

#### ❧ RUN BY FIVE BANK PRESIDENTS

“Miami is today the most cosmopolitan and American of American cities. It is a city and country where, despite its mingling of ultra-conservative stock, no public bond issue has ever been voted down. It is one American city that can boast of having its civic affairs handled for years by a commission of its five bank presidents; where, though in the Far South, sectionalism is never thought of, where the community church idea has been carried to its furthest limits; where capitalism and industry work ideally together; where the crudities of the ordinary new country, the half-baked stage that has been in the development of every other



American city, never existed, because national experts in every line are living in our midst and actually working out the future Miami now. ❧ ❧ ❧

*"In Miami the nation has truthfully regained its youth. Optimism is the very air that you breathe—the same air that inspired Flagler in his 70th year to plan the \$100,000,000 overseas railroad, which at first his competitors called 'Flagler's Folly,' but by getting Cuban freight traffic is now one of the nicest paying railroad propositions in the United States. It is essentially that life-impelling quality of the very Miami air that draws men of great and small affairs back to Miami. It is not, however, a foolish optimism, taking no account of obstacles or wasting time in pipe dreams. It is simply an optimism born of tremendous resources and founded upon a range of potentiality and opportunity absolutely new to American life—an optimism founded on the fact that in a single one of its years of 365 sun-filled working days may be compressed what would ordinarily be a lifetime of effort in the common, starved, older North or Western communities. ❧ ❧ ❧*

*"Miami is the minting in America, in one fine, shining piece, of the substantial compound of that very American dream of freedom—Opportunity and Achievement." ❧ ❧ ❧*

