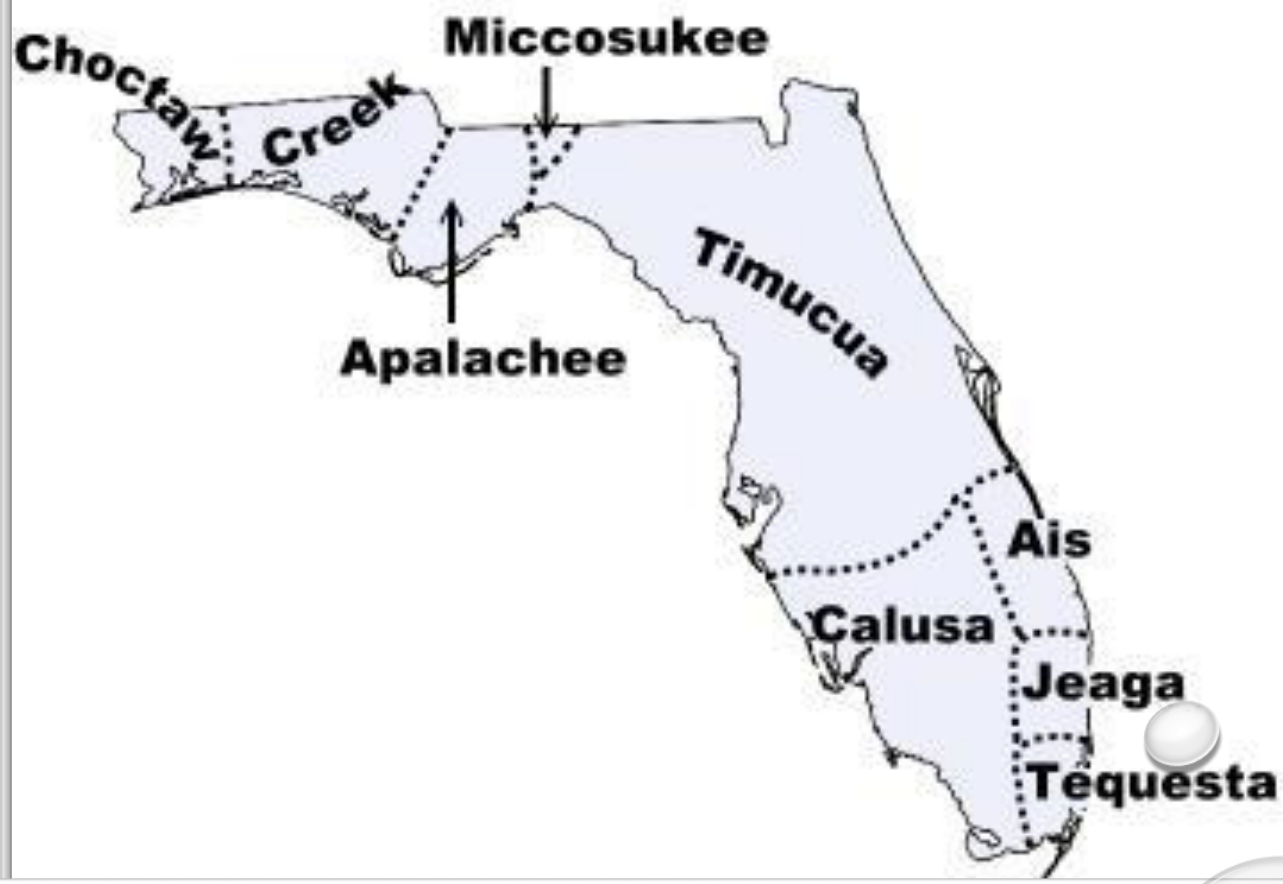
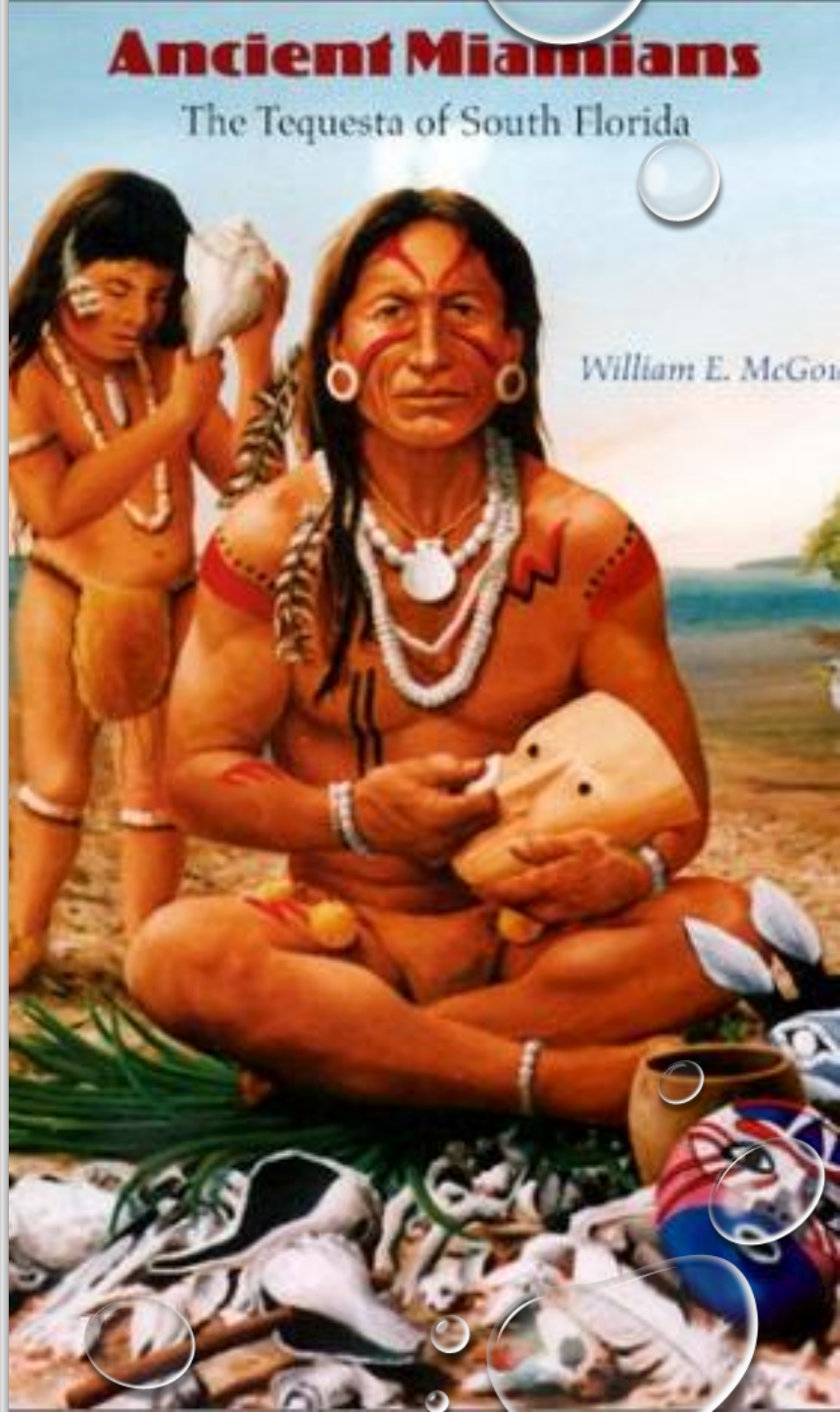
FISHER ISLAND

HISTORY



OVER 2000 YEARS AGO, THE TEQUESTA, AS WELL AS OTHER NATIVE AMERICANS, LIVED AND THRIVED IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

- MIAMI IS NAMED AFTER THE MAYAIMI, A NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBE THAT LIVED AROUND LAKE OKEECHOBEE UNTIL THE 18TH CENTURY.
- IN 1896, THE FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH, GESU, WAS BUILT IN DOWNTOWN MIAMI. HOWEVER, SOUTH FLORIDA WAS STILL KNOWN AT THAT TIME AS THE LAND OF “PIRATES AND INDIANS”.



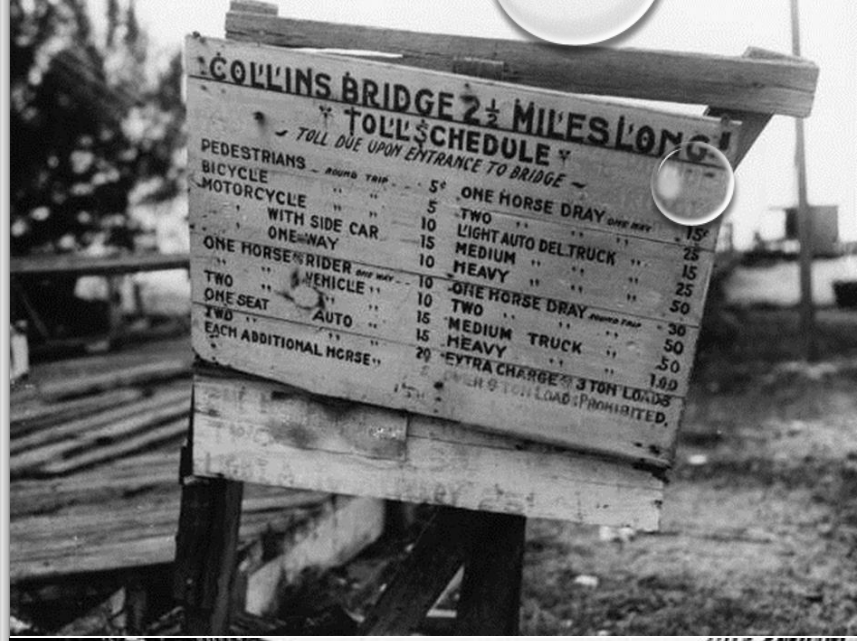
1896 MIAMI INCORPORATES AS A CITY

1905 – 1911 GOVERNMENT CUT

- IN 1905, MIAMI RECEIVED GOVERNMENT PERMISSION TO CUT THROUGH THE BARRIER ISLAND KNOWN TODAY AS MIAMI BEACH. THE CUT WAS CREATED TO PROVIDE DIRECT ACCESS FROM THE ATLANTIC OCEAN TO THE MIAMI SEAPORT.
- THE LAND DEED CONTAINED A CLAUSE STATING THE PROPERTY COULD NOT BE SOLD AND COULD ONLY BE USED FOR CITY PURPOSES.
- SAND DREDGED FROM GOVERNMENT CUT WAS REPURPOSED AS LANDFILL TO EXPAND THE ORIGINAL 21 ACRE BARRIER ISLAND.

1915 MIAMI BEACH

- THE COLLINS BRIDGE WAS A BRIDGE THAT CROSSED BISCAYNE BAY BETWEEN MIAMI AND MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA. AT THE TIME IT WAS COMPLETED, IT WAS THE LONGEST WOODEN BRIDGE IN THE WORLD. IT WAS BUILT BY FARMER AND DEVELOPER JOHN S. COLLINS (1837–1928) WITH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM AUTOMOTIVE PARTS AND RACING PIONEER **CARL G. FISHER.** THE WOODEN TOLL BRIDGE OPENED ON JUNE 12, 1913, PROVIDING A CRITICAL LINK TO THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED MIAMI BEACH, FORMERLY ACCESSIBLE ONLY BY A FERRY SERVICE.
- MIAMI BEACH WAS INCORPORATED IN 1915.



1917 - HERMAN B. WALKER

- HERMAN B. WALKER PURCHASED THE BARRIER ISLAND. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY DEED OR EXCHANGE ON FILE. CURIOUS THAT THE ORIGINAL DEED HAD A CLAUSE STATING IT WAS CITY-PURPOSED LAND ONLY. OIL TANKERS ON THE ISLAND SERVICED THE SHIPS THAT CAME INTO THE MIAMI SEAPORT.

1918 – DANA DORSEY

- DANA DORSEY PURCHASED THE ISLAND FROM HERMAN B. WALKER ON MARCH 23, 1918.
- WHILE DORSEY WAS EMPLOYED BY THE HENRY FLAGLER FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILROAD, HE RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR THE RAILROAD WORKERS. HE BEGAN PURCHASING LAND IN OVERTOWN AND LEMON CITY TO BUILD RENTAL HOUSING ONE-BY-ONE, EXPANDING AS FAR AS FORT LAUDERDALE, FL. HE BECAME A SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE.
- THE DEED POSTED ONLINE BY FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY SHOWS DORSEY PAID $8,000 (TWO LOANS AT 8% INTEREST) PLUS TEN TRACTS OF LAND IN LEMON CITY FOR THE BARRIER ISLAND.
- DORSEY SOLD THE BARRIER ISLAND 1.5 YEARS LATER…

1919 – CARL FISHER

- IN 1919, ALTON BEACH REALTY, OWNED BY CARL FISHER, PURCHASED THE 21-ACRE BARRIER ISLAND FROM DANA DORSEY.
- THERE IS NO DEED OR EXCHANGE ON RECORD, AGAIN SURPRISING AS THE LAND DEED WAS DEEMED FOR CITY PURPOSES ONLY…
- CARL FISHER EVENTUALLY SET UP A NEW CORPORATION, THE PENINSULA TERMINAL COMPANY, WITH DREAMS TO EXPAND THE ORIGINAL 21-ACRE BARRIER ISLAND INTO A 300-ACRE DEEP WATER SEAPORT TO SERVE THE CRUISE SHIPS. HE SANK CLOSE TO $5 MILLION INTO THE AMBITION BEFORE RUNNING AGROUND.

MID-1920S

- CARL FISHER AND HIS LOVE OF RACING BOATS AND CARS LED HIM TO MEET CHARACTERS LIKE WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT II AND GARFIELD WOOD. THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE ALREADY FREQUENTING PALM BEACH, SO CARL DECIDED TO INVITE THEM FURTHER SOUTH TO MIAMI TO VISIT HIS NEW ISLAND.

WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT II

- WILLIAM KISSAM VANDERBILT II (1878 – 1944) WAS A MOTOR RACING ENTHUSIAST, YACHTSMAN AND MEMBER OF THE PROMINENT AMERICAN VANDERBILT FAMILY.
- HE WAS BORN ON OCTOBER 26, 1878 IN NEW YORK CITY, THE SECOND CHILD AND FIRST SON OF WILLIAM KISSAM VANDERBILT AND ALVA ERSKINE SMITH. KNOWN AS “WILLIE K”, HE WAS A BROTHER TO HAROLD STIRLING VANDERBILT AND CONSUELO VANDERBILT. BORN INTO A LIFE OF LUXURY, HE WAS RAISED IN VANDERBILT MANSIONS, TRAVELED TO EUROPE FREQUENTLY, AND SAILED THE GLOBE ON YACHTS OWNED BY HIS FATHER.
- WILLIE WAS EDUCATED BY TUTORS AT ST. MARK'S SCHOOL AND ATTENDED HARVARD UNIVERSITY FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE DROPPING OUT.

- IN 1899, VANDERBILT MARRIED VIRGINIA GRAHAM FAIR (1875 – 1935), A WEALTHY HEIRESS WHOSE FATHER, JAMES GRAHAM FAIR, MADE HIS FORTUNE IN MINING THE FAMOUS COMSTOCK LODE. WILLIAM AND VIRGINIA HAD ONE SON AND TWO DAUGHTERS:
  - MURIEL VANDERBILT (1900 – 1972)
  - CONSUELO VANDERBILT (1903 – 2011)
- WILLIAM KISSAM VANDERBILT III (1907 – 1933) INHERITED HIS FATHER'S LOVE OF FAST CARS AND EXOTIC TRAVEL. HE WAS KILLED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT IN SOUTH CAROLINA WHILE DRIVING HOME TO NEW YORK CITY FROM HIS FATHER'S ESTATE ON FISHER ISLAND.

- THE VANDERBILTS SEPARATED AFTER TEN YEARS OF MARRIAGE BUT DID NOT FORMALLY DIVORCE UNTIL 1927 WHEN WILLIE WANTED TO REMARRY.
- AN ORIGINAL OIL PAINTING OF VIRGINIA FAIR CAN STILL BE VIEWED AT THE MANSION HOTEL RECEPTION.

VANDERBILT'S FIRST LIFE

THE PENINSULA TERMINAL ISLAND IN 1927

- THE CITY CREATED GOVERNMENT CUT TO PROVIDE GREATER ACCESS TO THE MIAMI SEAPORT. NOTICE THE OIL TANKERS IN PLACE ON THE BARRIER ISLAND, TO SERVICE THE SEAPORT TRAFFIC.
- THE ISLAND WAS REFERRED TO AS PENINSULA TERMINAL ISLAND, UNTIL YEARS LATER IT WAS FINALLY REFERRED TO AS FISHER ISLAND.

1927
VANDERBILT MARRIES ROSAMUND WARBURTON

- WHILE DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS WERE HANDLED IN NEW YORK, WILLIE AND ROSAMUND LANCASTER WARBURTON (1897–1947), WAITED DISCREETLY AWAY FROM THE MEDIA AT A HOME IN THE PARISIAN SUBURB OF PASSY, FRANCE. WHEN THE DIVORCE WAS FINAL, THE COUPLE WAS MARRIED AT THE HOTEL DE VILLE (CITY HALL) IN PARIS **ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1927**.

DECEMBER 27, 1927

- CARL FISHER OFFERS LEGENDARY TRADE TO WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT II
- FISHER TRADES 7 ACRES OF LAND FOR VANDERBILT'S YACHT THE "EAGLE" PLUS $1.00. (SEE LETTER FROM THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA)
- SOMETIME LATER…FISHER ENCOURAGES VANDERBILT TO INCREASE HIS HOLDINGS TO 13.5 ACRES

December 27, 1927, is from Vanderbilt in New York to Fisher in Miami Beach:

Dear Mr. Fisher:

I am in receipt of Warranty Deed for piece of property on Harbor Terminal Island, for which I thank you, and remain

Sincerely yours,

W. K. Vanderbilt

The second letter, dated January 9, 1928, is from Fisher's secretary to Vanderbilt:

Dear Mr. Vanderbilt:

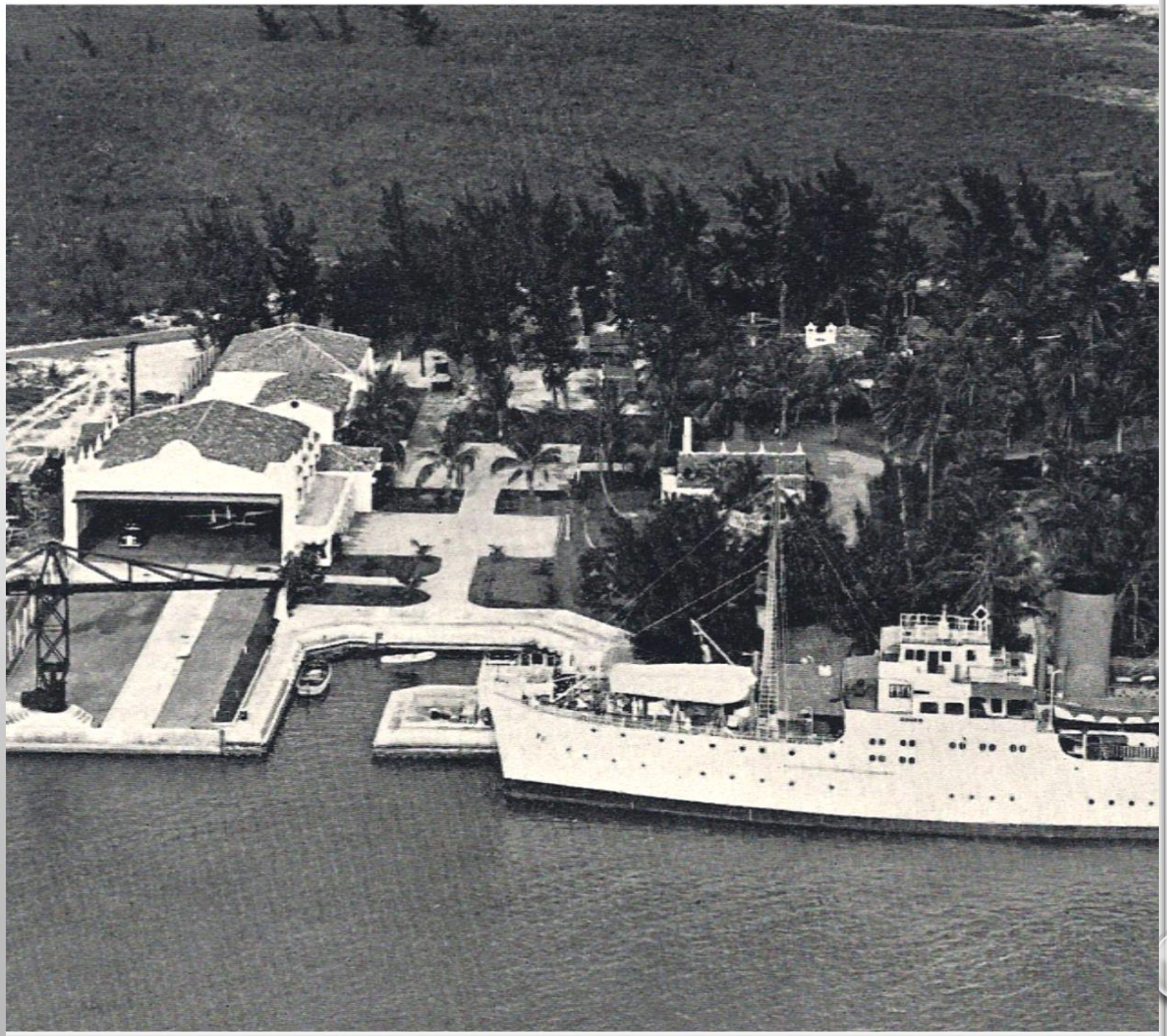
Mr. Fisher has received your letter of December twenty-seventh, with which you enclosed check for ten dollars.

As you had previously sent check-for one dollar, the agreed price of the land at Terminal Island, Mr. Fisher directs that this check be returned to you. I enclose the check with Mr. Fisher's endorsement.

Very truly yours,

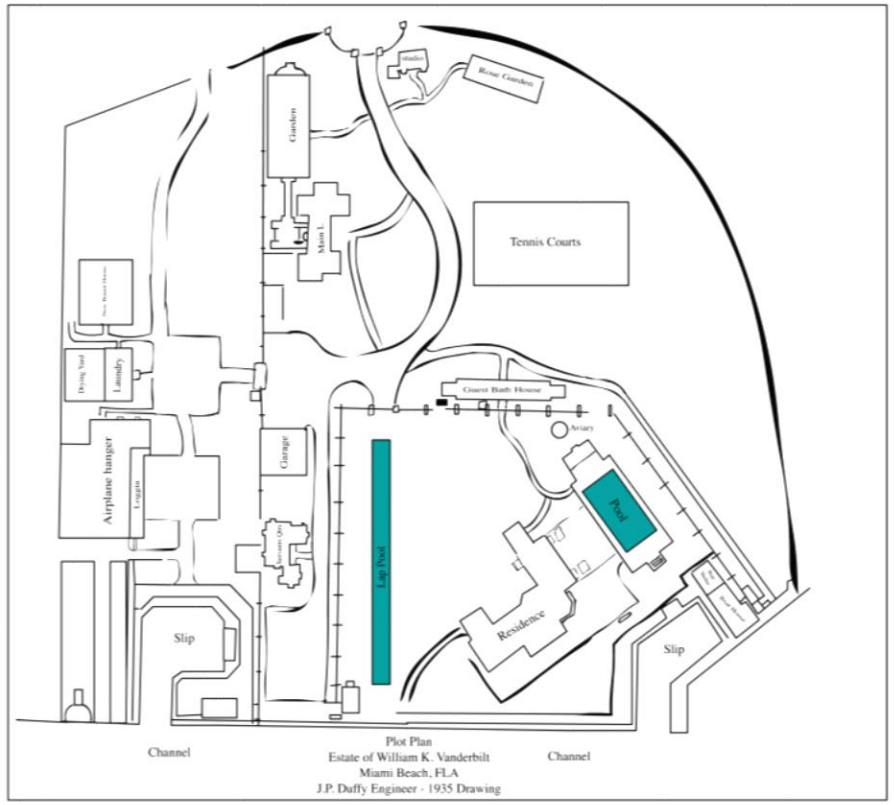
Secretary to Mr. Fisher

FOR 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS, RENOWNED WEST PALM BEACH ARCHITECT, MAURICE FATIO CREATED A PRIVATE RETREAT FOR WILLIAM AND ROSAMUND VANDERBILT



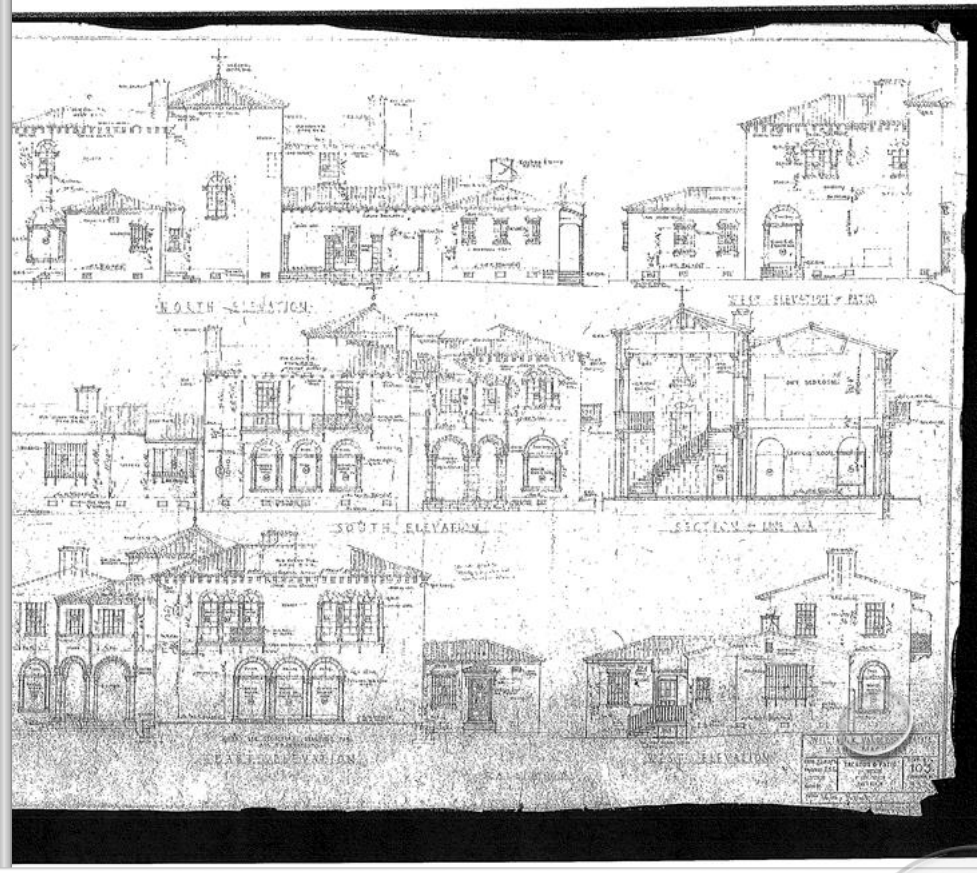
THE VANDERBILT FAMILY ENTERTAINED THE LUMINARIES OF THEIR TIME …

- THE FOLLOWING DRAWINGS WERE OBTAINED IN 2008 FROM *THE EAGLES NEST*, THE VANDERBILT ESTATE / MUSEUM IN CENTERPORT, NEW YORK.
- AUXILIARY BUILDINGS WERE BUILT TO HOUSE VANDERBILT'S CREWMEN & SERVANTS, AND A SEPARATE COTTAGE WAS BUILT FOR HIS STEP-DAUGHTER, ROSEMARY WARBURTON.
- VANDERBILT'S WIFE, ROSAMUND, WAS A PAINTER, AND THE SMALL HOME AT THE NORTH ENTRANCE OF THE PROPERTY WAS CREATED AS HER PAINTING STUDIO.



1929 MIAMI DADE COUNTY BUILDING PERMIT

- 1929 MIAMI DADE COUNTY BUILDING PERMIT DATE FOR THE VANDERBILT PROPERTY.
- 1935 - DRAWING - JP DUFFY/ ENGINEER DRAFTS THE RESIDENCE AND SURROUNDING AUXILIARY BUILDINGS.
- PROPERTY DRAWING REFLECTS MAIN RESIDENCE, AUXILIARY BUILDINGS, AVIARY, LAP POOL, AIRPLANE HANGER, BOAT HOUSE, TENNIS COURT, SERVANTS QUARTERS AND GARDENS.

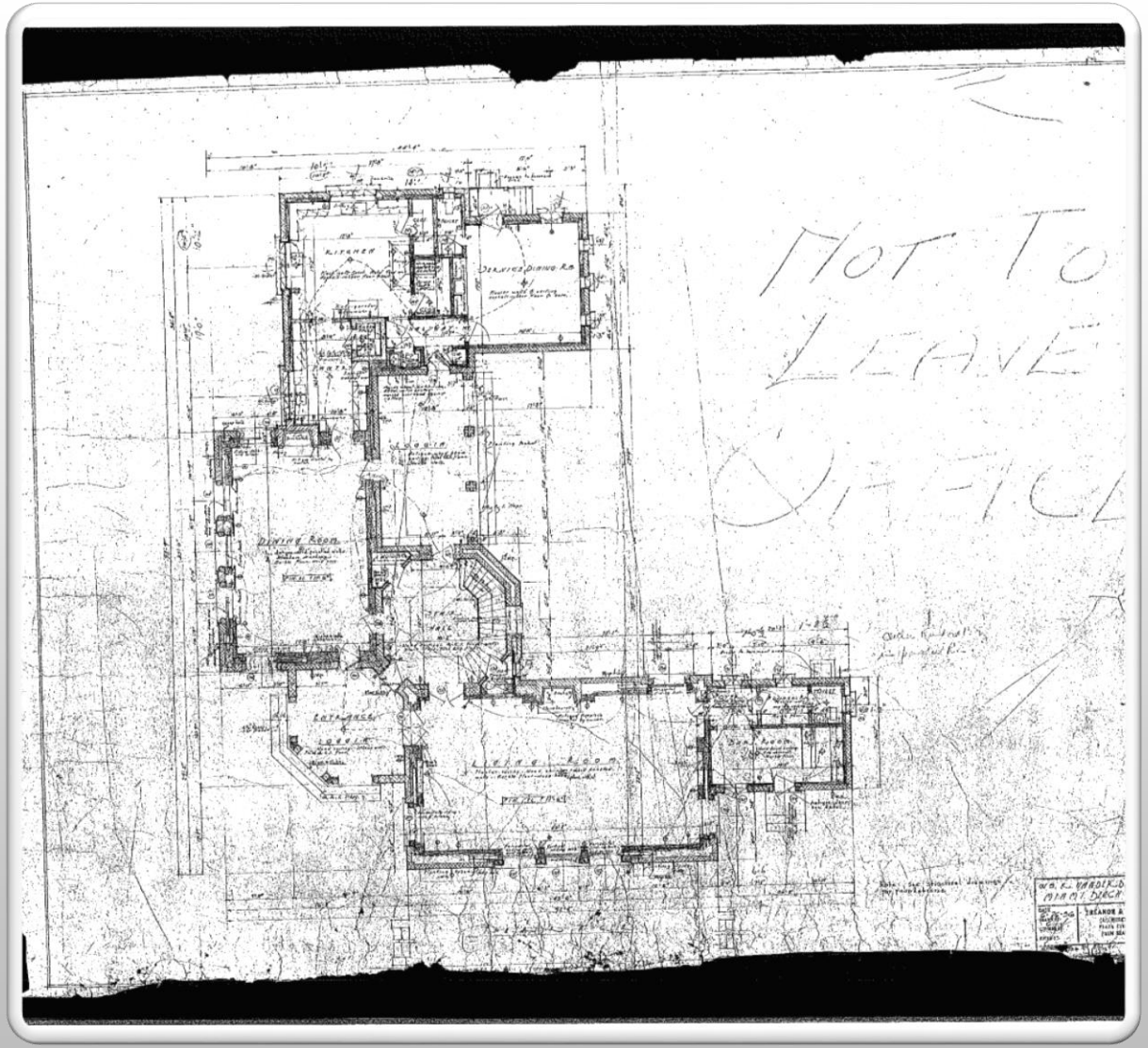


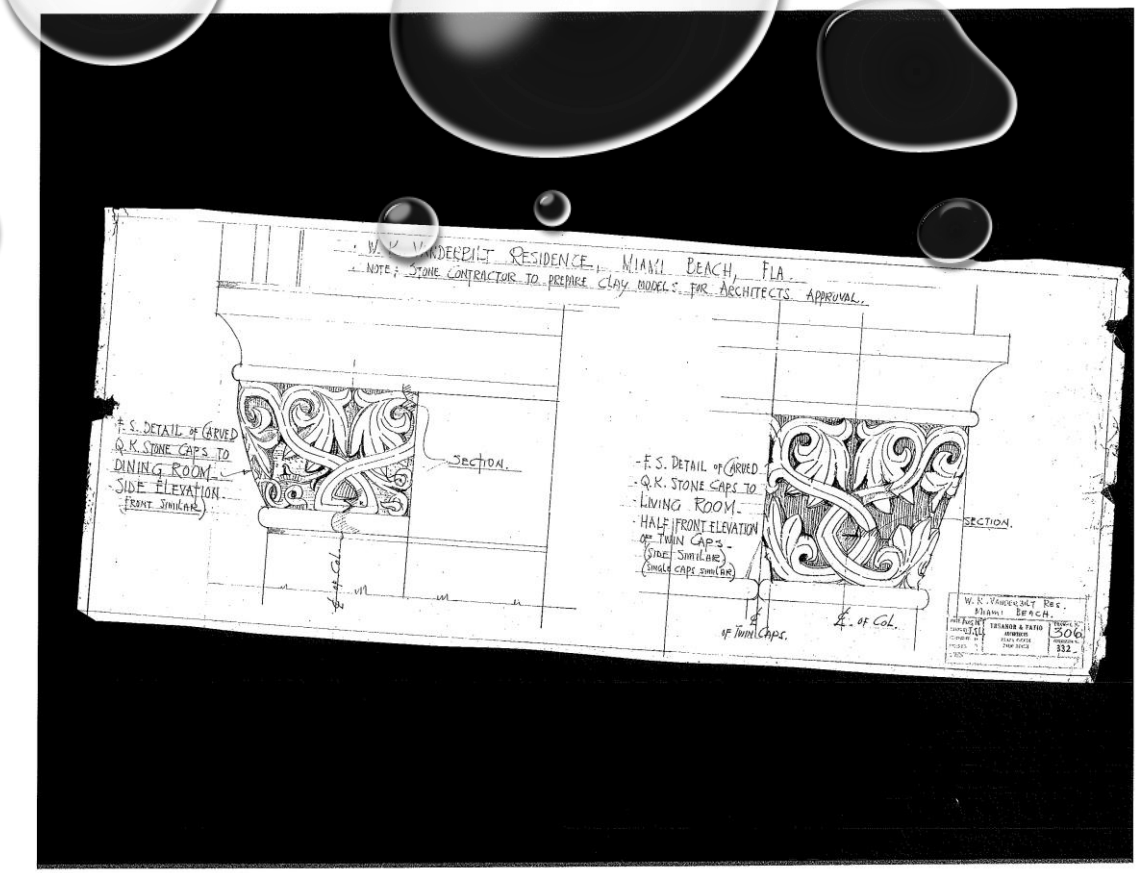
VANDERBILT HOME - FISHER ISLAND

FATIO ELEVATIONS 1936 - 1938

VANDERBILT HOME INTERIOR

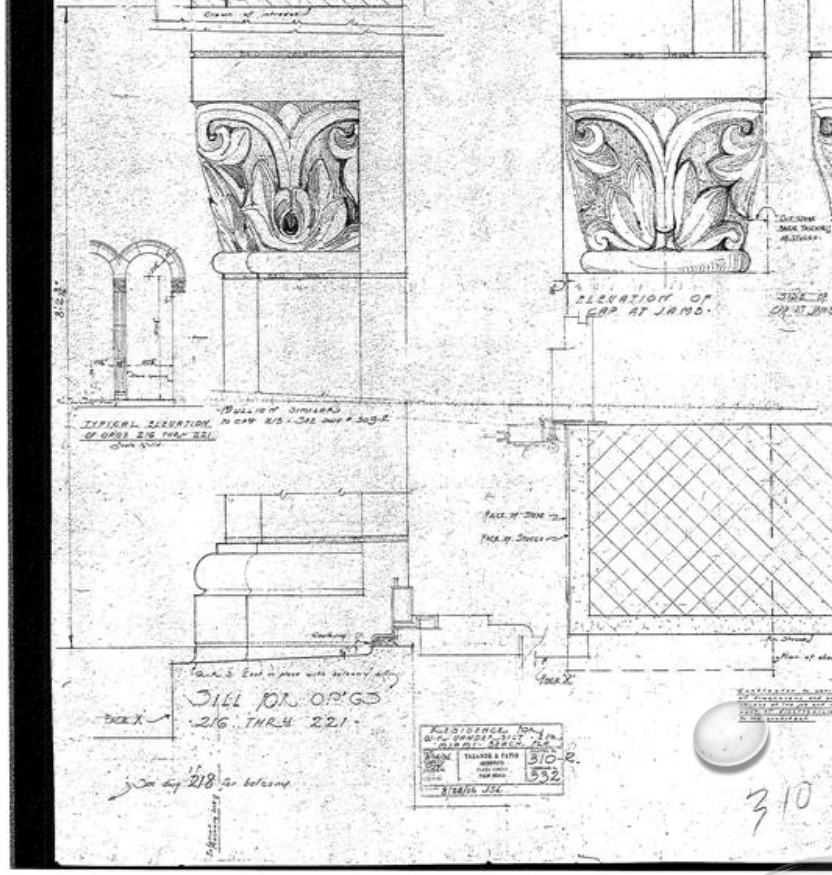
- DRAWING DATED 6/26/36
- TREANOR & FATIO ARCHITECTS





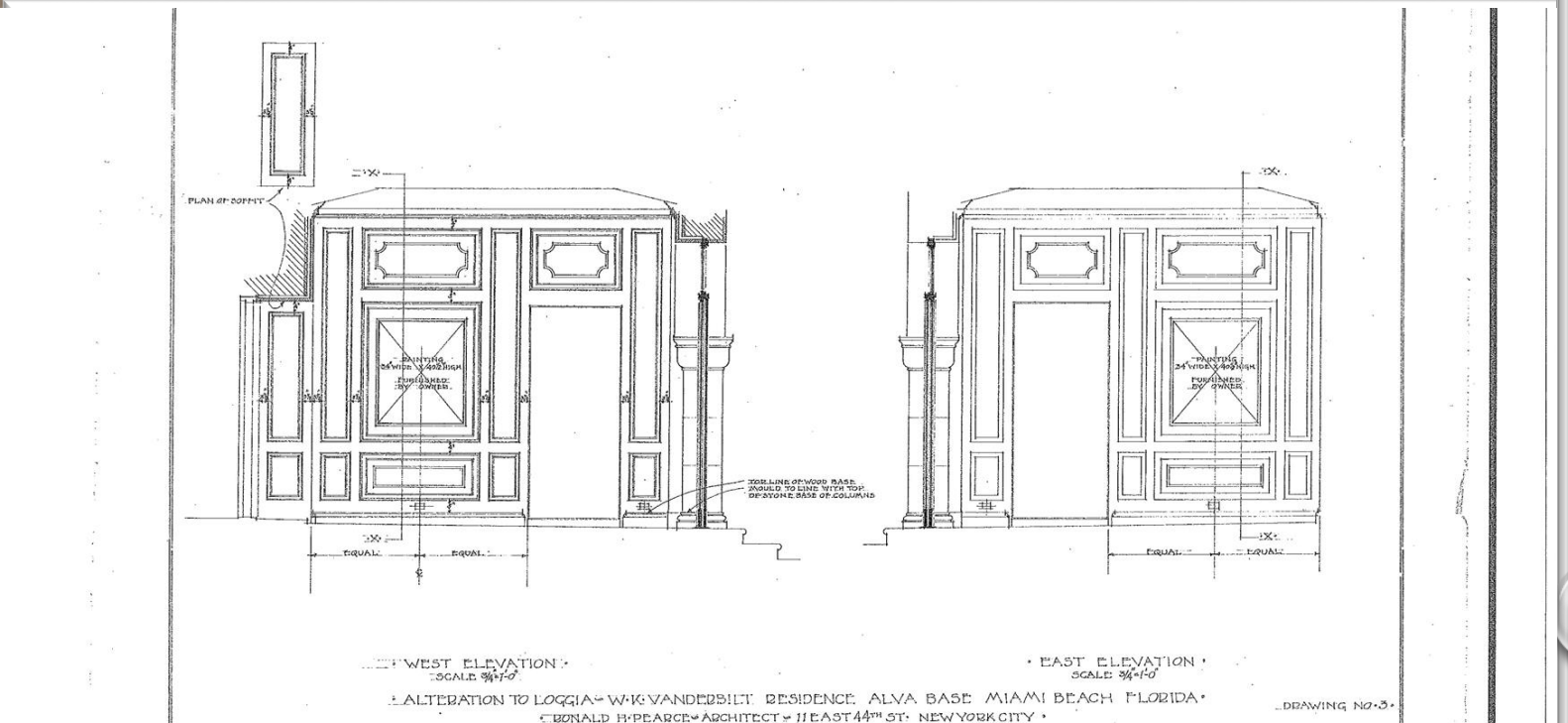
FATIO DRAWING

COLUMN DETAIL



COLUMN DETAIL

VANDERBILT PLACED THE NOTICEABLE "V" IN A FEW PLACES…



DINING ROOM WALLS

- PHOTO TAKEN IN 1967
- DINING ROOM WALLS DRAWING DATED 2/24/1938

THE ESTATE AND SURROUNDING AUXILIARY BUILDINGS WERE FINISHED BY THE EARLY 1940S

- THE MANSION LAP POOL, THAT IS NOW COVERED OVER, WAS LOCATED IN FRONT OF WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS THE NORTH AND SOUTH COTTAGES – AKA - THE MANSION BACK OF HOUSE

1944
VANDERBILT PASSED AWAY

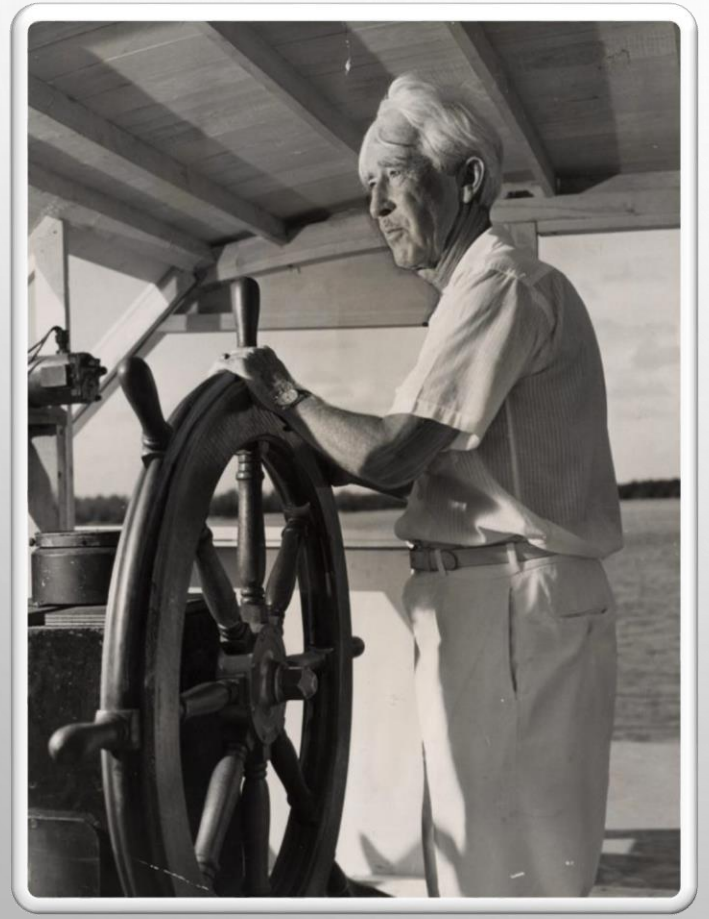
- VANDERBILT DIED ON JANUARY 8, 1944 OF A HEART AILMENT AT THE AGE OF 65 . HE WAS INTERRED IN THE FAMILY MAUSOLEUM AT THE MORAVIAN CEMETERY ON STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK.
- AFTER VANDERBILT'S DEATH IN 1944, ROSAMUND VANDERBILT SOLD THE ESTATE TO EDWARD S. MOORE OF U.S. STEEL. ROSAMUND PASSED AWAY THREE YEARS LATER.
- ONE YEAR LATER, IN 1946, EDWARD MOORE PASSED AWAY, AND HIS WIDOW SOLD THE ESTATE TO GARFIELD WOOD.

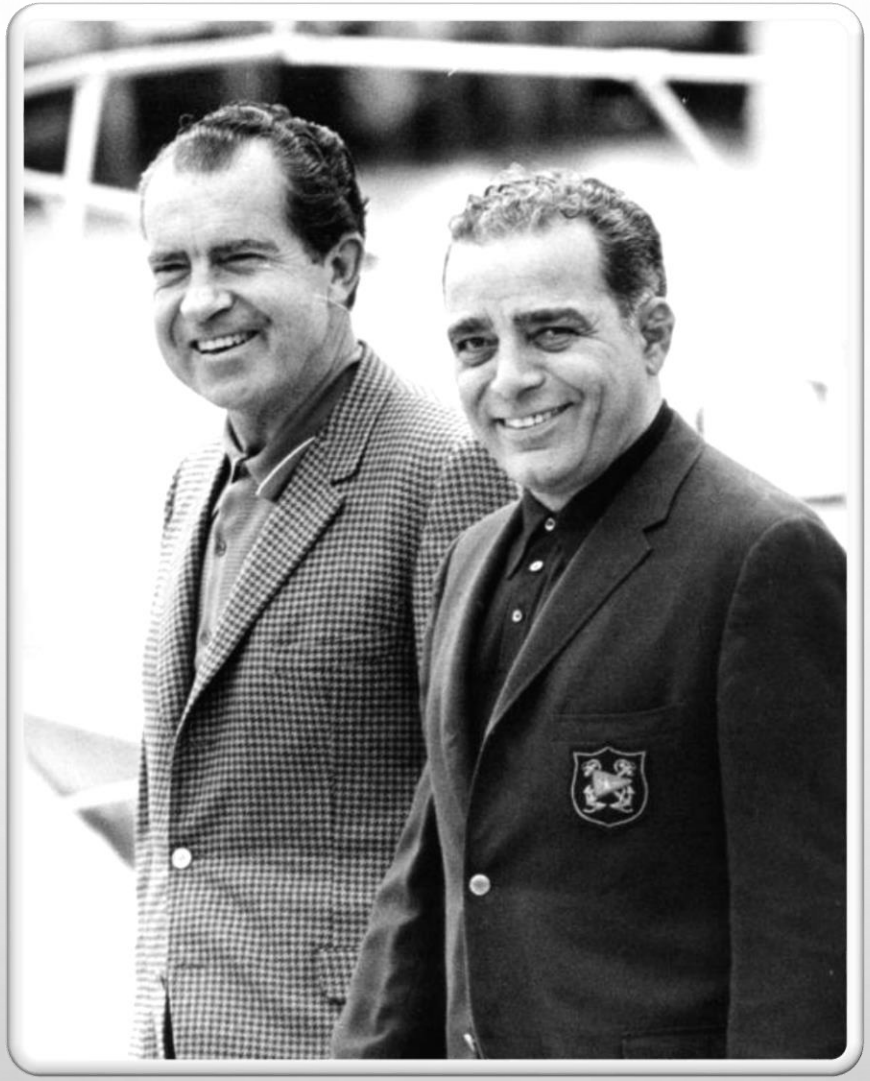
GARFIELD WOOD

- IN 1946, GARFIELD WOOD PURCHASED THE ESTATE FROM THE WIDOW OF EDWARD MOORE. GAR WOOD KNEW CARL FISHER AND, MOST LIKELY, VANDERBILT.
- GARFIELD WOOD WAS KNOWN AS THE RACE BOAT KING AND THE INVENTOR OF THE HYDRAULIC HOIST.

1946 - 1963

- GARFIELD WOOD MADE A FEW CHANGES TO THE ESTATE, INCLUDING MIMICKING THE MANSION STAIRWELL CEILING IN WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS GARWOOD LOUNGE.





1963

- IN 1963, GARFIELD WOOD SOLD HIS 13.5-ACRE ESTATE TO AN INVESTMENT GROUP HEADED BY CHARLES G. REBOZO, (BEBE), A FRIEND OF PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON.
- THEY TOOK POSSESSION OF THE ENTIRE ISLAND; HOWEVER, THEY ALLOWED “GAR” WOOD TO REMAIN IN THE MANSION UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1971.

1979

- ADDITIONAL TRACTS SOLD IN 1979 TO ISLAND DEVELOPERS LTD., A PARTNERSHIP THAT INCLUDED BEBE REBOZO'S NEPHEW, AMONG OTHERS.

THE 1980S

- FISHER ISLAND BEGAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY 1980S. THE FIRST BOAT TO BRING INTERESTED PARTIES TO THE ISLAND CAME FROM VIRGINIA KEY.
- BY 1987, FISHER ISLAND OPENED AS A CLUB.
- IN 1993, FISHER ISLAND CLUB BECAME AN EQUITY CLUB.

FISHER ISLAND

- IN 2019, FISHER ISLAND CELEBRATES ITS 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

ISLAND HISTORY RESOURCES

Virginia Hanley worked for Fisher Island Holdings | Fisher Island Club and Fisher Island Community Association Between 2007 – 2019. The information retained during this period assisted in creating the historic timeline.

- **FISHER ISLAND HOLDINGS**: 2007 – 2008 RETAINED PHOTOS AND BOOKS FROM THE DEVELOPER

- **FISHER ISLAND CLUB** - 2008 - 2013 WHILE WORKING ON THE CLUB MASTER PLAN RENOVATIONS, CONTACTED THE CURATOR OF THE EAGLE'S NEST (VANDERBILT ESTATE IN NEW YORK.) THE EAGLES NEST AT THAT TIME, RECEIVED THE ORIGINAL BLUE PRINTS FOR THE VANDERBILT MANSION ON FISHER ISLAND. THE EAGLES NEST MUSEUM PROVIDED A COPY FOR $16 AND WE NOW HAVE THE ABILITY TO CONFIRM DATES BASED ON THE ORIGINAL MANSION DRAWINGS.

- **FISHER ISLAND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** 2013| 2014| 2017 | 2018 | 2019 – RETAINED INFORMATION REGARDING ISLAND PURCHASES AND CONTRACTS. UPDATED CLUB AND FICA WEBSITES TO MATCH TIMELINES. RETAINED OLD PHOTOS FROM DEPARTMENTAL MOVE THAT CONFIRMED LOCATION OF PRE-EXISTING MANSION LAP POOL AND LAND ACQUISITIONS.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND SPECIAL THANK YOU

- CLUB BOARD MEMBER PEGGY SMITH | THANK YOU FOR ENDLESS REVISIONS AND SPELL CHECKS
- REAL ESTATE BROKER PHYLLIS WINICK | FIRST ISLAND CONDO SALES WITH ENDLESS INFORMATION
- CURATOR STEPHANIE GRESS |THE VANDERBILT MUSEUM| EAGLES NEST UPSTATE NEW YORK
- HISTORIC RESTORATION ARCHITECT RICHARD HEISENBOTTLE | MIAMI DADE COUNTY
- MIAMI DADE COUNTY |BUILDING PERMIT RECORDS DEPARTMENT & HISTORY MUSEUM
- FIU | FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY | POSTING OF DANA DORSEY ISLAND PURCHASE.
- VANDERBILT MUSEUM | ORIGINAL BLUE PRINTS AND INFORMATION ON WILLIAM VANDERBILT'S LIFE
- GARWOOD.COM |GARFIELD WOOD HISTORY
- BOOK | THE PACEMAKER | HISTORY OF CARL FISHER'S LIFE BY JERRY FISHER.
- BOOK | FISHER ISLAND | CREATED BY ISLAND DEVELOPERS
- BOOK | BISCAYNE BAY PILOTS 100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY | BY ANDREW D. MELNICK AND EDITED BY DR. PAUL GEORGE