

Aviation Pioneer Glenn Curtiss, Part 2

Written by Paul George, BT Contributor
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A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

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As noted in last month's "Picture Story," Glenn Curtiss, the renowned aviator, and James Bright, a cattleman from Missouri with large holdings in northwest Dade County, owned thousands of acres of land in west Dade County in the early 1900s. From these holdings and additional land acquisitions by Curtiss emerged Hialeah, Miami Springs, and Opa-locka amid Greater Miami's real estate boom of the mid-1920s.

Hialeah, which incorporated in 1925 and whose most prominent buildings were designed in the Mediterranean style, was the earliest of the three to develop, bringing Curtiss and Bright wealth. Curtiss next purchased land south of the Miami Canal, across from Hialeah, and began development of a planned community, Country Club Estates, later called Miami Springs. The Pueblo-style design of the original buildings was influenced by the homes of the Pueblo Indians in the American Southwest, and adopted widely by settlers in that region. Curtiss had visited the Southwest and was familiar with the style, which includes structural beams that pierce through the exterior walls; rounded corners; recessed niches; herringbone-pattern *latillas*, i.e., pieces of wood laid between the beams of a ceiling; flat roofs; and smooth, stuccoed surfaces. Country Club Estates featured a golf course, a large ornate hotel, a town center with a band shell, and wide, winding roads. Like Hialeah, this development experienced great success in the boom era.

Opa-locka, the third South Florida community Curtiss developed, was arguably the most unusual. Said to be derived from the Seminole Indian word, Opatishawockalocka, meaning an island surrounded by a swamp, Opa-locka featured an Arabian Night's design style, a variation of the Moorish style of North Africa and southern Spain, with its keyhole arches, crenelated

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parapets, stucco walls with zigzags, and striped banking polychrome ceramic tile. Begun as the boom was winding down, Opa-locka's full development was halted by the ensuing Great Depression and the untimely death of Curtiss in 1930.

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