

Silver Bluff's Golden Past

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



Greater Miami's many distinctive neighborhoods offer a wide array of architectural styles; retail, institutional, and restaurant districts; foliated or non-foliated streets and avenues; and of course, dizzying demographics. Often overlooked in surveys of the area's neighborhoods is Silver Bluff, a quiet, attractive enclave whose informal borders include Coral Way and U.S. 1 on the north and south, and SW 17th Avenue to SW 27th Avenue in an east-west alignment. But in an earlier era, Silver Bluff possessed more expansive borders.

Named for a silver bluff running for miles along or near the crystalline waters of Biscayne Bay, the neighborhood hosted early homesteads, like that of John "Jolly Jack" Peacock, a colorful 19th-century Englishman who was keeper of the Cape Florida Lighthouse, as well as the House of Refuge on today's Miami Beach. With the entry of Henry M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway and the incorporation of the City of Miami in 1896, the area grew quickly. Soon several subdivisions began appearing in Silver Bluff. Some homes from that era of the early 1900s remain.

These and other homes made up the newly incorporated Town of Silver Bluff in 1921. The municipality's broad north-south borders stretched from S. Bayshore Drive to Coral Way and all the way in a northeasterly direction to and including Villa Vizcaya on Biscayne Bay. The area between SW 12th Avenue and SW 34th Avenue represented its east-west axis.

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The real estate boom of the mid-1920s brought many prominent residents and picturesque Mediterranean-style homes to the neighborhood, but it also led to its annexation, in 1925, by the expanding City of Miami. The community's growth in the affluent era following World War II was spectacular, as it filled in many of the empty lots left by the collapse of the boom in 1926 with another round of prominent Miamians. Today's Silver Bluff is reflective of the area's large Hispanic population but remains a quiet neighborhood with commercial activity limited to its northern and western borders.

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