

CRANDON PARK

Relevant History

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRANDON PARK

Accompanied by

An Essay by Charles Birnbaum

FASLA, FAAR, President + CEO, The Cultural Landscape Foundation

VOL. 3



The Crandon Park: A Call for Change report is comprised of an *Executive Summary* and the following *Research Volumes*:

- Vol. 1 Introduction
- Vol. 2 Crandon Park Today | Part 1 - Site Analysis
Crandon Park Today | Part 2 - Specific Area Analysis
- Vol. 3 [Relevant History](#)
- Vol. 4 Master Plan Evolution
- Vol. 5 Park Governance & Funding
- Vol. 6 Recent Best Practices
- Vol. 7 Park Precedents
- Vol. 8 Historic Documentation

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Crandon Park: A Call for Change
Research & Analysis Report

Volume 3

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Prepared for
Citizens for Park Improvement (CPI)

Elaborated by
West 8 urban design and landscape architecture

CRANDON PARK

VOLUME 3 | RELEVANT HISTORY



3 Relevant History

The Development of Crandon Park

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Building Upon the Legacy of Crandon Park

By Charles Birnbaum

FASLA, FAAR, President + CEO, The Cultural Landscape Foundation

William Phillips created the closest thing there is on the coast of North America to the fabled tropical beaches of the Caribbean or South Seas: Crandon Park on Key Biscayne. Two miles of crescent beach, fringed with clusters of coconut palms, thatched-roof shelters on sun-brilliant white sand, and five miles of winding roads through tropical settings, Crandon was fat cloud formations, bright moons, soft winter air, and love at first sight.

— Faith Reyher Jackson, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture: William Lyman Phillips in Florida* (1997)

There is a balance between change and continuity in our shared legacy of public parks, from Miami-Dade's Greynolds and Crandon Parks to New York City's Central and Prospect Parks—the latter, two masterpieces by Olmsted and Vaux that have been guided by a succession of preservation master plans since the 1980s.

All parks—and indeed, all cultural landscapes—are subject to change. Change can come from natural processes, such as beach or dune erosion, and from human activities, such as renegade parking or new playgrounds and cultural facilities.¹ Sometimes the change can be very subtle, as with the incremental loss of a pathway of trees one by one, or barely perceptible, when, for example, an invasive undergrowth of plant materials leads to the loss of historic views from Crandon Boulevard.

At other times, change is strikingly obvious, whether in the death of a single tree species brought on by an invasive pest, the introduction of a new play court in former open space, or the expansion of parking areas.

This dynamic quality of parks and public landscapes is balanced by the continuity of distinctive, character-defining features retained over time. Despite constant change, or perhaps because of it, a historic designed landscape such as Crandon Park can still exhibit a continuity of form, order, use, features, or living and nonliving features that can inform future planning, design, and management decisions.



Greynolds Park (Source: *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*)

1. Jackson, Faith Reyher. *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture: William Lyman Phillips in Florida* (University Press of Florida: 1997), p.167.



William L. Phillips was Crandon Park's visionary landscape architect

Looking forward, the key to making educated stewardship decisions at Crandon Park, on the northern part of the island of Key Biscayne, requires an understanding of the Park's character-defining qualities, i.e., its bone structure.² That bone structure was established by landscape architect William L. Phillips in the 1940s and 50s, whose work was enabled by the patronage of William J. Matheson, with the goal that the landscape would be "perpetually used and maintained for public park purposes only." It was, therefore, Phillips who established the essential foundation for all future park planning and stewardship decisions.

Reflecting on Phillips's contributions to Miami-Dade County's visionary park system, architect and professor Joanna Lombard recently noted that "the power of a William Lyman Phillips landscape is the complete acceptance of his vision, demonstrated in the fact that most people now view his parks as discovered landscapes, utterly natural in origin. To the knowledgeable observer, though, the artful orchestration of site, landscape, and architecture into cultural legacy is the result of a particular genius, nurtured by years of experience, travel, and education. The design principles under which Phillips relied were adapted distinctively to each site, as well as immediate, thorough, and analytical understanding of local geology, climate, and ecology. His weaving of the universal and the local into a

2. Lombard, Joanna. "The Landscape Design Principles of William Lyman Phillips in the First Heritage Parks," in *Building Eden: The Beginning of Miami-Dade County's Visionary Park System*, edited by Rocco Ceo (Pineapple Press, Sarasota, Florida: 2018), p. 46.



Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, also designed by William L. Phillips

new form rearranges the natural landscape to reveal not only its unique beauty but also its ability to connect generations across time to each other, as well as the profound journey of life.”²

Phillips established this nuanced and site-specific bone structure for many of his legacy park designs in Miami-Dade County, “starting with his work at Greynolds Park in North Miami in 1933 and continuing through the 1950s on a wide range of projects.” For 21st-century park planners, landscape architects, municipal stewards, and advocates, Phillips’s design established the foundation for the present-day landscape of many of these parks, including Crandon Park.

The bone structure established by Phillips in the 1950s, along with related programming undertaken by Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation, amply served Miami-Dade’s half a million residents at the time. By the early 1990s, when landscape architect Artemas P. Richardson, formerly of the Olmsted Office, was engaged to update Phillips’s master plan, the region’s population had swelled nearly 400 percent to 1.9 million. Planning would also have to gird the park for combating hurricanes as powerful as Andrew, which hit the region in 1992 and today ranks as the eighth-costliest hurricane in U.S. history.

With a population now approaching 2.8 million, Miami-Dade County is Florida’s most populous county and the seventh-most populous county in the United States. As a result, public open spaces like Crandon Park, which are rich in environmental, historical, and recreational assets, face increased pressure to properly serve a bigger and more diverse population.

It has now been nearly three decades since Richardson updated the *Crandon Park Master Plan* in 1995. Though he was semi-retired and in his mid-seventies, we can see today how the former Olmsted Office principal brought a deep understanding of Olmsted traditions, philosophies, and values to the work. The plan has served the Park’s bone structure well, while addressing the damage from Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

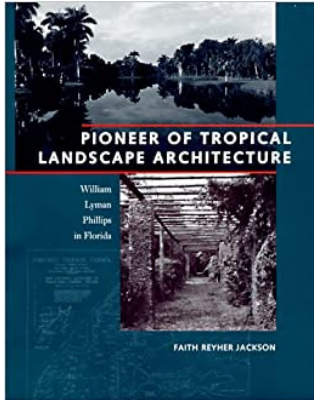
Today, we are fortunate that as landscape architects, our vast foundational knowledge, depth of understanding, commitment to shared values, and a broadening scope of services that is brought to park master planning efforts have been greatly



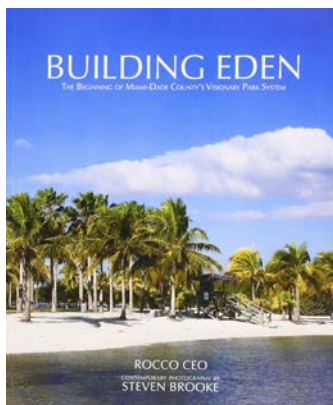
Artemas P. Richardson was hired by Miami-Dade County to design a master plan for Crandon Park (Source: Social Registrar Association)



Hurricane Andrew damage (1992)



Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture by Faith Reyher Jackson



Building Eden: The Beginning of Miami-Dade County's Visionary Park System by Rocco Ceo

expanded. When dealing with dynamic ecological systems, sustainable design is a universal given, while our expanded tool kit addresses such topics as sea-level rise (and other environmental risks), universal access for all, vegetation management and renewal, and a comprehensive strategy for multi-modal circulation—all weighed and evaluated against a much deeper foundational knowledge base that places history and culture on an equal footing with nature and ecology.

The William Lyman Phillips collection at The University of Miami notes that Phillips' last major project was the design of Crandon Park and Baker's Haulover Park. Looking back some thirty years ago, when Richardson was engaged at Crandon Park, the garden "El Retiro" in Lake Wales, Florida—also known as the Pinewood Estate—was the only Phillips design listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, endowed with a greater understanding of Phillips's contributions to Florida, seven of his designs have been recognized with a listing in the National Register. And one, Bok Tower Gardens, has been elevated to the higher honor of a National Historic Landmark.

When Faith Jackson published her biography of Phillips, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture* (University Press of Florida, 1997), which was followed a few years later by Rocco J. Ceo and Joanna Lombard's *Historic Landscapes of Florida* (Deering Foundation and University of Miami School of Architecture, 2001), a new awareness and appreciation for Phillips' design contributions came to the fore. In the more recent volume *Building Eden: The Beginning of Miami-Dade County's Visionary Park System* (Pineapple Press, 2018), Ceo's concluding remarks apply equally to Crandon Park and the work that lies ahead: "This book is a beginning, and should be advanced with more detailed and comprehensive studies of each of the parks and the people who built and enjoyed them, because parks are memory places, repositories of our life experiences, and they speak about our values as a culture."³

Today's master-planning efforts for Crandon Park are timely and urgent. They enable us to honor and leverage the park's unique and significant assets, ranging from the environmental, ecological, historic and cultural to the scenic, recreational, and educational.

3. Ceo, Rocco. "Conclusion," in *Building Eden: The Beginning of Miami-Dade County's Visionary Park System*, edited by Rocco Ceo (Pineapple Press, Sarasota, Florida: 2018), p. 145.



3

Relevant History

The Development of Crandon Park



Historic aerial of Crandon Park (1962)

While today one can easily observe Crandon Park's degraded state, we concluded it necessary to determine what happened along the way that allowed such a magnificent site to fall into disrepair.

Crandon Park's history can be told through the individuals and events that have affected its shape, function and cultural meaning through the years. The following sections, arranged in general chronological order, illustrate the relevant history and background of Crandon Park, starting from the early 20th century until 2000, when the final (and current) version of the Master Plan was finally completed.



Mashta House, estate of the Matheson Family on Key Biscayne.



Cape Florida Lighthouse in Bill Baggs Florida State Park, Key Biscayne.

3.1 William J. Matheson's Key Biscayne

1902-30 Crandon Park's First Patron

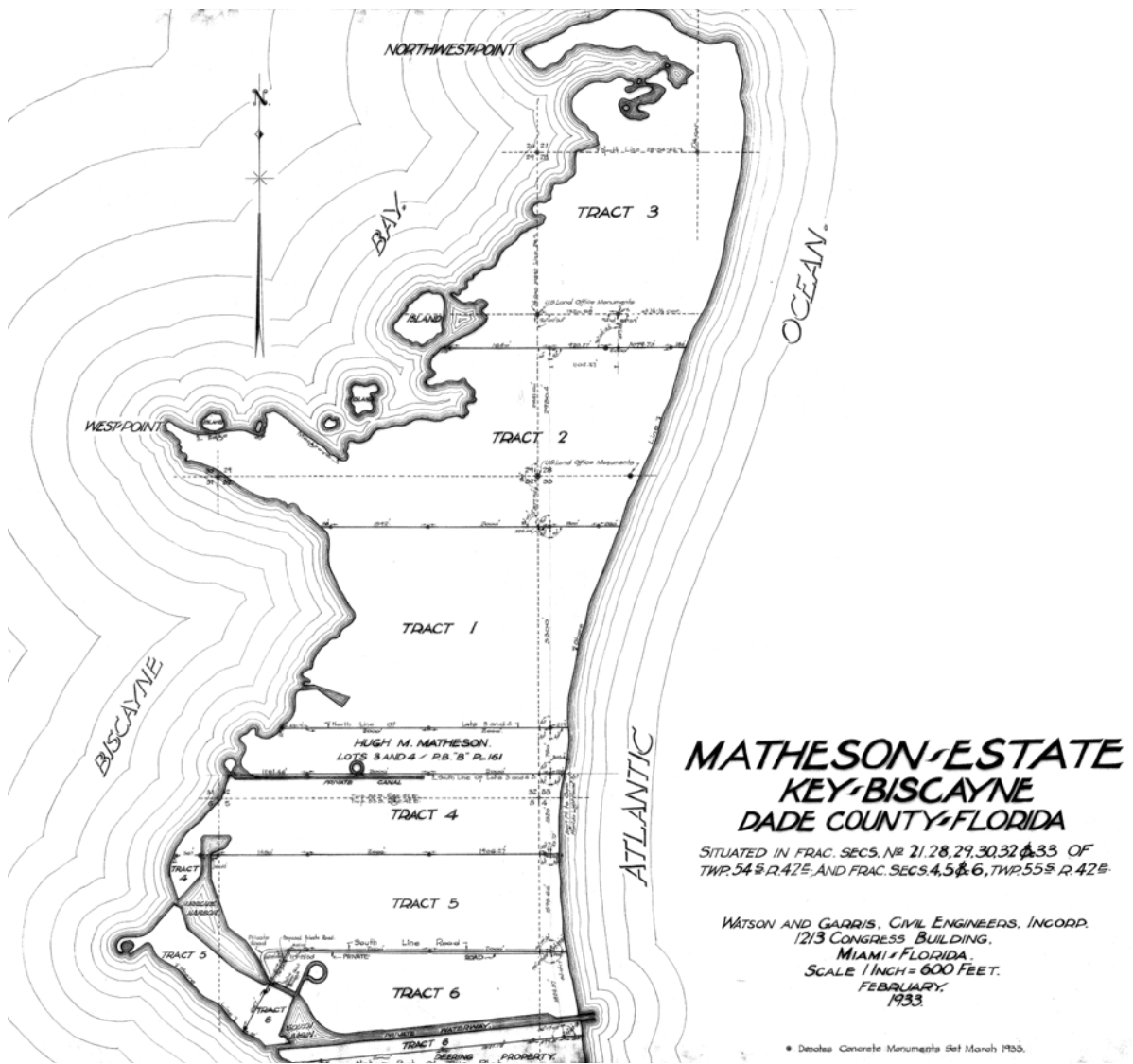
In the early 1900s, wealthy and prominent figures from around the country began to discover Florida, building winter homes and estates. During this time period Miami's population was about 1,700, Henry Flagler opened the Royal Palm Hotel in 1897, and botanist David Fairchild first visited a garden in Miami in 1898.



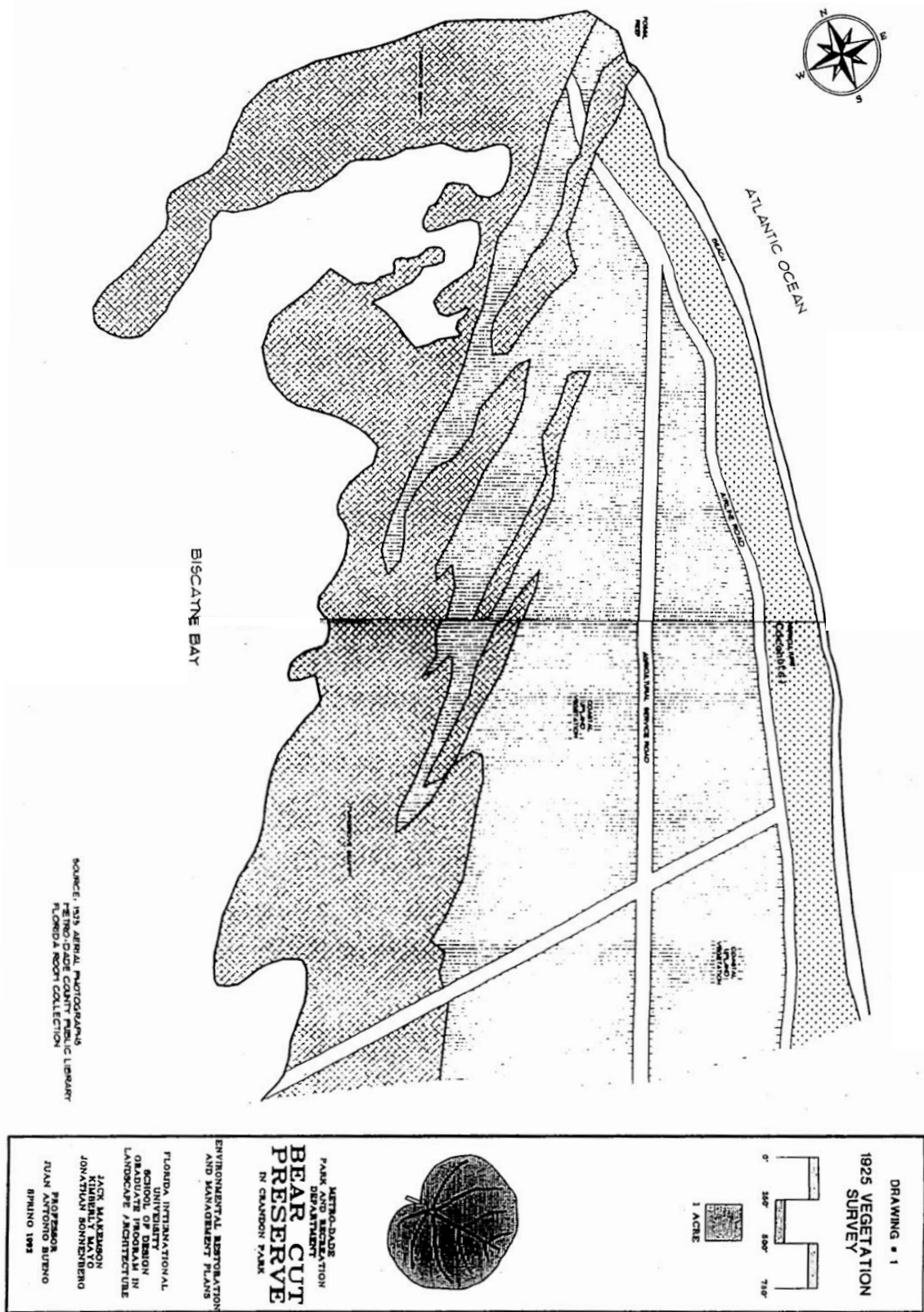
William J. Matheson (1856 - 1930), an industrialist and great landowner of Key Biscayne who was Crandon Park's first patron.

In 1902, 46-year-old industrialist William J. Matheson built his first Florida property in Coconut Grove. Shortly after, Matheson assembled ownership of the northern two-thirds of Key Biscayne, a barrier island located across Biscayne Bay from Coconut Grove. On the bayside of the key, Matheson built an estate called the Mashta House. At the time, the island's only man-made structure was an out-of-service lighthouse, and the key was only accessible by boat. Matheson began clearing land and experimenting with different tropical and subtropical crops, including limes, mangoes, avocados and coconut palms. The latter would become the primary crop—and the basis for business on the island. His son Hugh was put in charge of managing the land and the 60 workers living and working on Key Biscayne.¹

1. Jerry Wilkinson, "Life and Times of William John Matheson," *Keys Cultural History* (Historical Preservation Society of the Upper Keys, April 2001), <http://www.keyshistory.org/Matheson-1.html>.



Map of the Matheson Estate (1933). The land covering Tracts 1, 2 and 3 were deeded to Miami-Dade County in 1940 and became the future Crandon Park. Tracts 4, 5 and 6 were also eventually sold for commercial and residential development, setting the foundation for the Village of the Key Biscayne.



1925 Vegetation Survey illustrates how the land along the Atlantic Ocean shoreline was covered with coconut plantations. (Source: Appendix L in Crandon Park Master Plan (1995))



An early photo of the Matheson coconut plantation captures the spirit of the inspiration for Crandon Boulevard, glimpses of which are still present today.

The Coconut Palm Plantation

By 1920, there were approximately 36,000 coconut palms, *cocos nucifera*, growing on Key Biscayne. "The first important introduction of a coconut variety was when Matheson financed the bringing in of the Malay Dwarf coconut palm from the Federated Malay States and established them on his Key Biscayne plantation," David Fairchild wrote in 1921.² His statement proved true when in the 1970s, a lethal yellowing destroyed many of South Florida's coconut palms except the Malay Dwarf varieties.

As a 1925 *Vegetation Survey of the Bear Cut Preserve* (pictured left) and 1933 survey of the Matheson-Estate illustrates, land along the shoreline of what became Crandon Park (Tracts 1, 2 and 3) was covered with coconut plantations.³ Expression of this historic vernacular land use and cultural remembrance of the Matheson family's munificence was most apparent in the original design of Crandon Park's central boulevard, which was lined with coconut palms. Matheson planned to develop Key Biscayne into a residential and commercial area, much like Miami Beach. He arranged for annexation of the island by the City of Coral Gables, in hopes they would develop a causeway over the Bay to allow access by motor vehicles.

In 1926 a hurricane devastated Miami and ushered in the Great Depression years before the rest of the United States began to experience hardship. And the coconut plantation was abandoned in 1932, two years after Matheson's passing.

2. Jerry Wilkinson, "Life and Times of William John Matheson," *Keys Cultural History* (Historical Preservation Society of the Upper Keys, April 2001), <http://www.keyshistory.org/Matheson-1.html>

3. Richardson et al. *Crandon Park Master Plan* (1995): Appendix L "1925 Vegetation Survey."



Historic postcard of the New Rickenbacker Causeway between Crandon Park and Miami, FL.

3.2 The Birth of Crandon Park and Rickenbacker Causeway

1940s

An Exchange between the Matheson Family and Miami-Dade County

In 1930, Matheson died and left his Key Biscayne estate and plantation to his three children, Malcolm, Anna and Hugh. Only Hugh lived in Florida.

In 1940, County Commissioner Charles Crandon approached the three heirs with a proposed trade. Dade County would construct a causeway connecting Key Biscayne to the mainland. This would enable the three Mathesons to commercially develop and sell the remainder of their island properties, Tract 4, 5 and 6. In return, the three Mathesons would convey to the County Tracts 3, 2 and most of Tract 1 for use as a County Park.

The trade was concluded with 904 acres deeded to the County. The deed stipulated that the land shall be "perpetually used and maintained for public park purposes only."⁴

The 1940 deeds obligated the County to develop a causeway connecting Key Biscayne to the mainland and:

4. Florida Sea Grant Extension Program, et al. *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* (14 November 1989), p. 2. A Preliminary Planning & Analysis Report Prepared for the Dade County Metro Recreation and Parks Department.

...construct through [the Park] a roadway extending from the causeway entrance to Key Biscayne on the north by a direct route through aforesaid Proposed Park Area to the south boundary thereof, and thence in a southerly direction through the remaining lands on Key Biscayne to a point on the private canal which runs in an easterly and westerly direction from Bay Biscayne to the Atlantic Ocean through Tract 6.⁵

5. Matheson Indenture (13 July 1939), p. 2.

6. Matheson Deed (25 April 1940), p. 1.

The 1940 Matheson Deed further states:

In case said [bridge] work shall not be completed as aforesaid, or in case at any time it shall be definitely abandoned before completion or the use of said proposed park area for park purposes shall be abandoned, said land shall be reconveyed and released to [Anna Matheson Wood, Malcolm Matheson, and Hugh Matheson], [their] heirs, grantees or assigns, upon his or their request, in good, clean and sightly order and condition.⁶

On April 25, 1940, the land was officially designated a public park, later to be named "Crandon Park" after County Commissioner Charles Crandon. Although delayed by World War II, the causeway was completed shortly thereafter. The Rickenbacker Causeway opened in 1947, connecting mainland Miami to the Matheson Tracts via a four-lane road.

By today's standards, the causeway was ecologically unfortunate. The County acquired the submerged lands adjacent to Key Biscayne and Virginia Key from the State. The bottomlands of this land was dredged for fill to support the bridge's footings, which also required enlarging Virginia Key. The new land masses materially altered the normal tidal flows in Biscayne Bay and added turbidity to what was at the time a pristine body of water.



Historic aerial of Crandon Boulevard and Bear Cut Bridge under construction, which connected to the Rickenbacker Causeway allowing for vehicular access to Key Biscayne and Crandon Park (1940)



Historic postcard of the Key Biscayne Hotel, which opened in 1952. (ca. 1950s)

Catering to a Growing Population in Florida's "Island Paradise" Era

From its inception through the 1950s, Crandon Park served a very specific user: the postwar, car-owning, city-dwelling middle class seeking escape to an "Island Paradise."



Historic postcard of Crandon Park Beach, Key Biscayne, FL. (ca. 1950s)



Mackle Homes were built for returning veterans from World War II and their families, offering the appeal of affordable living, a close beach community and newly invented luxuries such as air-conditioning.

Crandon Park was planned and built at a pivotal point in America's history. World War II had just ended, and veterans were returning home. Between 1944 and 1949, the G.I. Bill would greatly stimulate the economy through low-interest mortgages, stipends and education benefits offered to veterans and their families. During this time, Florida's population swelled from 1.9 million residents in 1940 to 2.7 million inhabitants a decade later.⁷ With a causeway built by the County instead of the City of Coral Gables, Hugh Matheson and Ana Matheson Wood sued the City of Coral Gables to de-annex the island and return its governance to unincorporated Dade County which had fewer development restrictions. They prevailed in the litigation and the island was returned to unincorporated area status.⁸

This stimulus, plus the Causeway's arrival in 1947 triggered a building boom in Key Biscayne of 553 homes built by the Mackle brothers.⁹ This original development was financed with post-WWII GI Bill housing with prices ranging from \$9,000 to \$11,000.¹⁰ These same 75' by 100' Mackle house lots would later sell for as much as \$1.5 million

A new, peacetime prosperity attracted a wave of national and international tourists, and from 1940 to 1950, Miami's population doubled from approximately 268,000 to 495,000.¹¹ Population growth continued throughout the second half of the twentieth century, significantly boosted by emigration from Latin American countries experiencing political upheaval, particularly Cuba. Miami-Dade has since emerged as an international melting pot of the subtropics, and America's gateway to Latin America.¹²

7. Florida Department of State, "World War II and Post-War Boom" (2020): <https://dos.myflorida.com/florida-facts/florida-history/a-brief-history/world-war-ii-and-post-war-boom/>.

8. Key Biscayne to Westwood Lakes. *The Mackle Company*. <http://themacklecompany.com/femjrstorypublic/09-keybiscayne.html>.

9. Jerry Wilkinson, "Life and Times of William John Matheson," *Keys Cultural History* (Historical Preservation Society of the Upper Keys, April 2001), <http://www.keyshistory.org/Matheson-1.html>.

10. Key Biscayne to Westwood Lakes. *The Mackle Company*. <http://themacklecompany.com/femjrstorypublic/09-keybiscayne.html>.

11. Richard L. Forstall. *Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990*. 1995. Population Division, US Bureau of the Census. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/fl190090.txt>.

12. Miami-Dade County, *Miami-Dade County Parks and Open Space System Master Plan* (2007), p. 35.



Historic aerial showing Crandon Park and Virginia Keys before development (1940).

3.3 Charles Crandon Makes Possible a Key Biscayne Public Park

1942-47 Early Plans for the Park: Miami-Dade County's Vision of a Pleasure Ground Park

An early conception of Crandon Park presented in the *Ultimate Plan of Proposed Ocean Beach Recreational Park* (1940) (pictured left) portrays a picturesque recreational park. It evoked images of an Olmsted-inspired landscape catering to a changing populace's needs. Along with many looping routes and "bridle" paths for horseback riding, the conception features a bathing beach, picnic grounds, a yacht club and basin, two large lakes with docks and a canoe club, a play field and playground, riding stables, tennis courts, a golf course with clubhouse, swimming pools, a camping area, cabanas, an administrative center, and several parking lots.¹³

13. Board of County Commissioners, *Proposed Dade County Ocean Beach Development Program for Biscayne Key Beach and Beach North of Baker's Haulover* (Folder and maps present plans and purposes in acquiring beach land at Biscayne Key and Baker's Haulover Bridge.) Board of County Commissioners, Dade County: Miami, FL, April 1940): n.p.

14. Ibid.

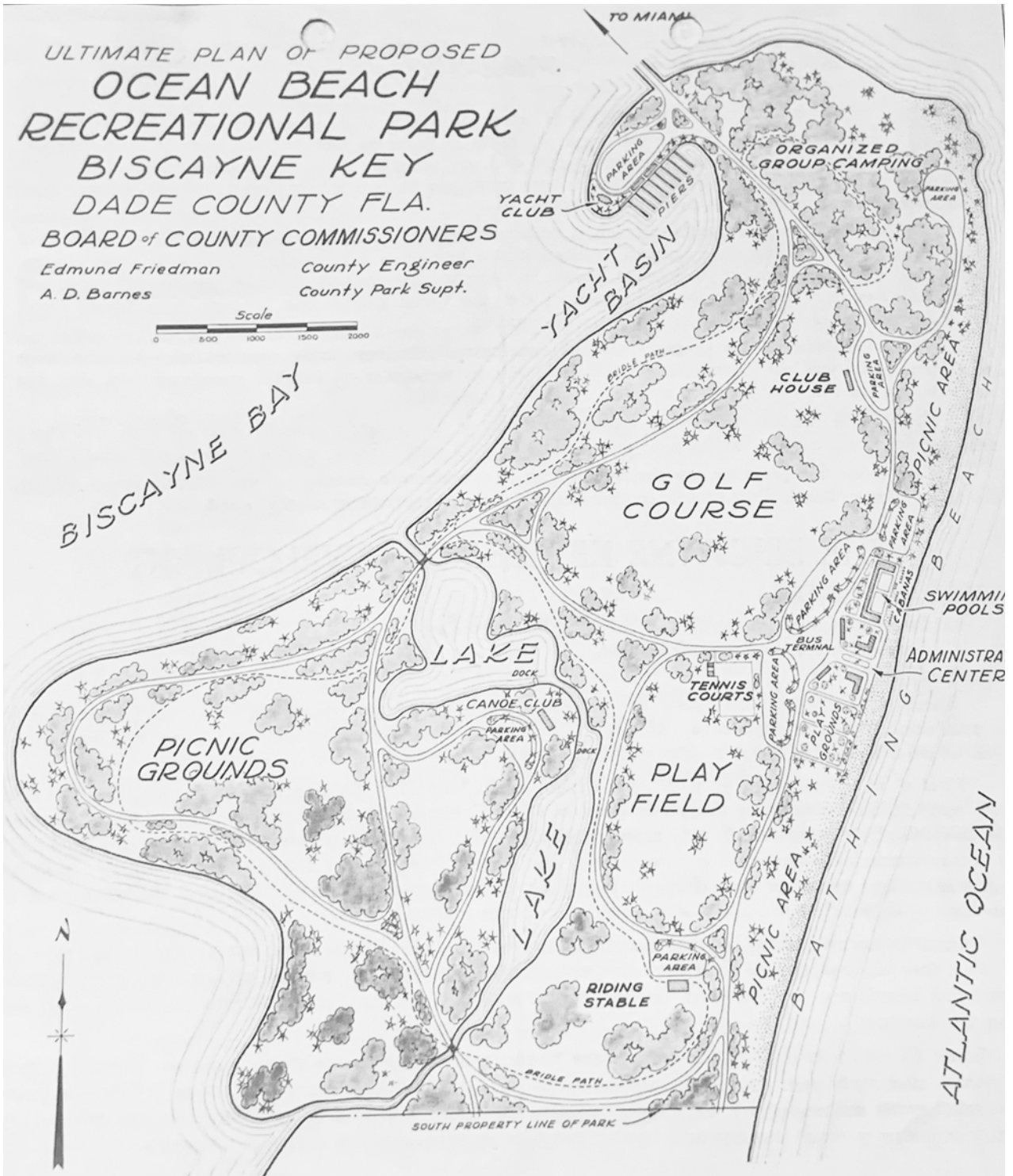
15. Ibid.

Charles H. Crandon, Chair of the Board of County Commissioners and Park's namesake, noted that many of South Florida's beaches at that time were privately owned, while Miami Beach was facing overcrowding issues. "The development of this park and beach will bring unlimited thousands to South Florida," he said. "It will create millions of dollars' worth of taxable property."¹⁴ At the time, it was estimated that Crandon would have to accommodate 4,000 to 5,000 cars and a minimum of 10,000 people.¹⁵

ULTIMATE PLAN OF PROPOSED
**OCEAN BEACH
 RECREATIONAL PARK**
 BISCAYNE KEY
 DADE COUNTY FLA.

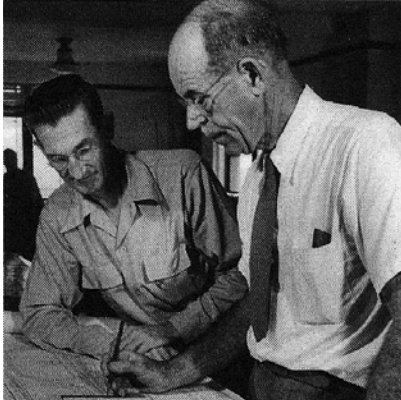
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Edmund Friedman County Engineer
 A. D. Barnes County Park Supt.



Ocean Beach Recreation Park (1940) illustrates a picturesque recreational park initially proposed by A.D. Barnes, Miami-Dade County's first Park Superintendent and Edmund Friedman, the County Engineer.

William L. Phillips and the Emergence of Florida Landscape Architecture



Landscape architect William L. Phillips (right) and County Park Superintendent A.D. Barnes (left) working together.

Landscape architect William L. Phillips played the leading role in creating Crandon Park's original *Vision Plan* in 1942. Among his qualifications, he had served as consultant to the National and Dade County parks system, designer of Matheson Hammock Park, and a partner at the revered Olmsted Brothers firm.

Phillips spent most of his 56-year-long career in Florida studying tropical botany and gaining the title as the "dean of Florida landscape architecture."¹⁶ Early in his career, Phillips had denied himself recognition by signing his drawings under the Olmsted Brothers name.

Phillips's role as Crandon Park's first design visionary would mark a key step in the development of a unique Floridian landscape.¹⁵ Tropical vegetation had previously been considered somewhat inferior by North American landscape architects. Phillips himself had referred to royal palms as "feather dusters"¹⁷ while working in the Panama Canal Zone during 1913-1914. But he would come to develop a new appreciation for the tropical planting palette. As his biographer Faith Jackson writes: "It was [in the Canal Zone] that he fell in love with the tropics and began his study of tropical vegetation. He would devote much of his professional life to this interest, becoming a pioneer in the use of tropical plants in landscape design and for a considerable time a leading authority in tropical botany for horticultural purposes."¹⁸

Today, many of Phillips's parks are widely considered among Florida's finest, protected and celebrated through National Historic status. He is praised for his "sensitivity, perception of harmony of form and space, and ability to weave the elements of light, water, sound and character into his design on the Florida landscape,"¹⁹ transforming "arid palmetto scrub barrens into magnificent gardens and [enhancing the] natural settings of tropical and subtropical plants."²⁰

Phillips, who died in 1966, would solidify his role as the premier Florida landscape architect through his work for Fairchild Botanical Gardens.

16. Jackson, Faith. *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture: William Lyman Phillips in Florida* (University of Florida, Miami, FL: 1997), xvi.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Jackson, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture* (1997), p. 136.

19. Jackson, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture* (1997), p. 27.

20. Jackson, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture* (1997), xvi.

The range of Phillips's Miami work is extensive. He produced iconic scenes, such as the great allée of coconut palms at Crandon Park..., and more contemplative landscapes, such as the oolitic limestone gardens at the University of Miami and the greens of Woodlawn and Inman cemeteries. His landscapes include hundreds of private homes, businesses, and clubs, including the **Indian Creek Country Club** and the **Biscayne Bay Yacht Club**, as well as public thoroughfares, including the **Venetian and Rickenbacker Causeways**. Across Florida his major works include a **Riverfront Promenade for St. Augustine**; **Bok Tower Gardens** and **Mountain Lake in Lake Wales**; **Highland Hammock Park** in Sebring; **McKee Botanic Gardens** in Vero Beach; and at the southern tip of the peninsula, the **Overseas Highway to the Keys**.

— The Cultural Landscape Foundation

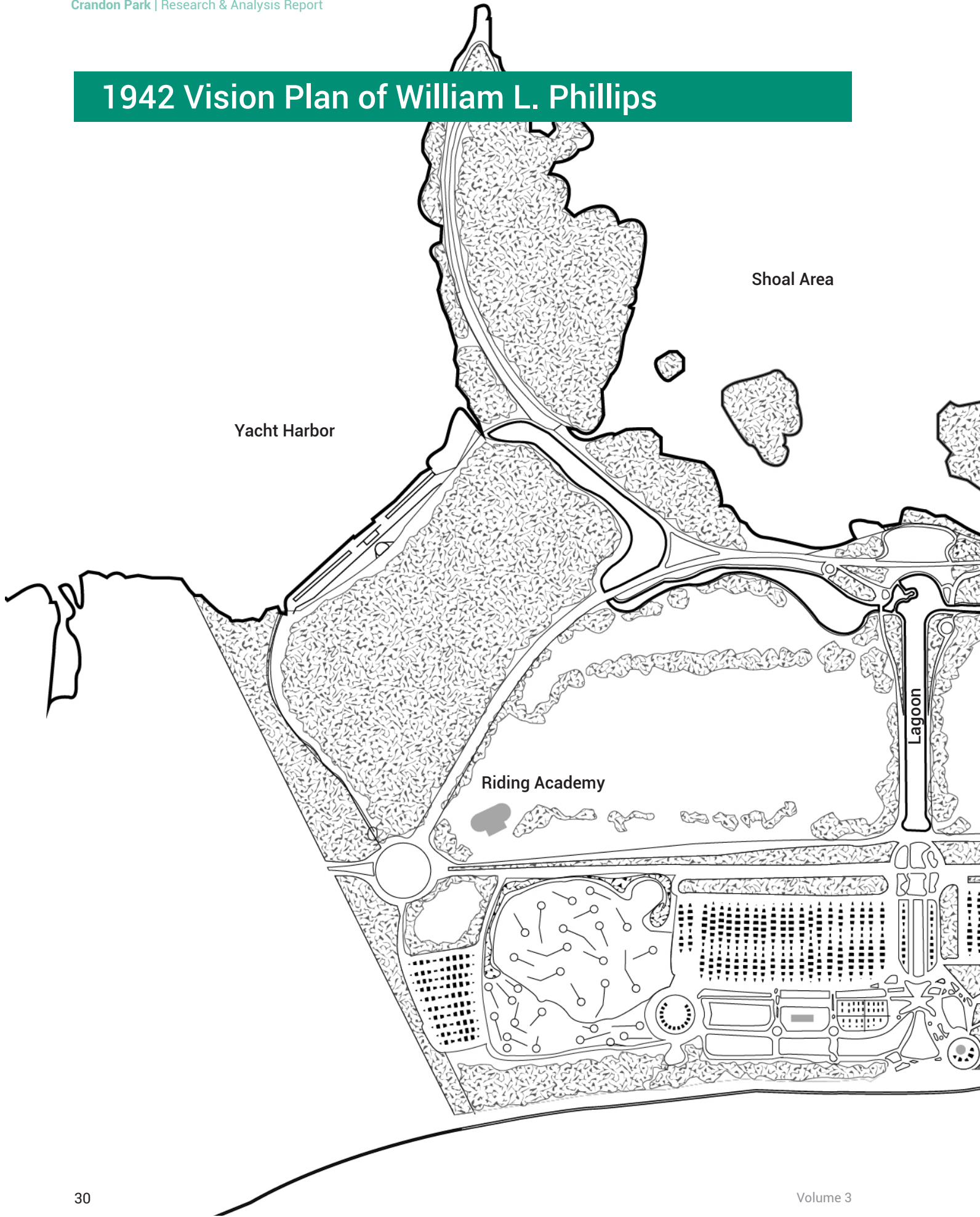


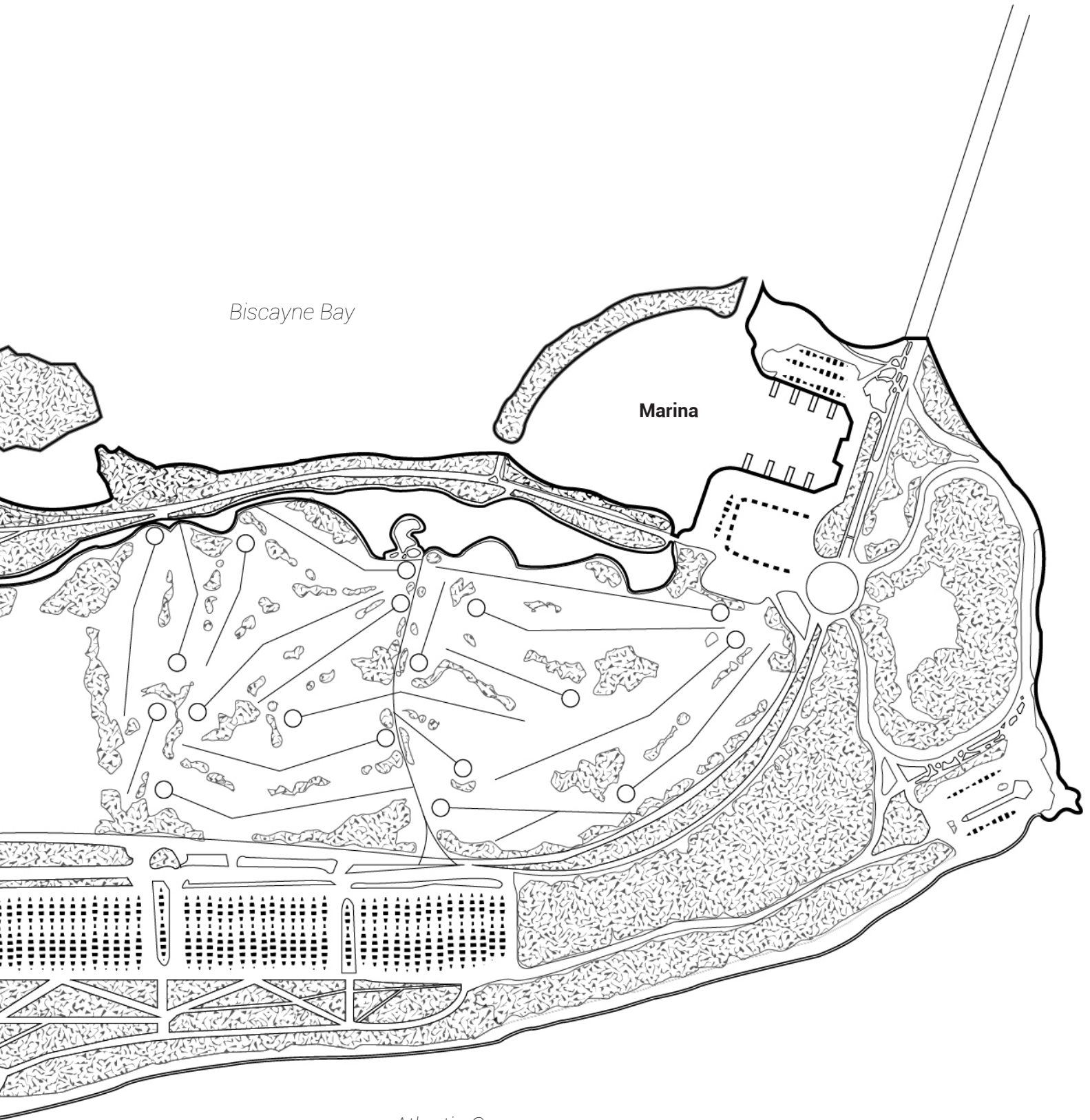
Fairchild Tropical Garden designed by William L. Phillips.
Source: https://www.nicepng.com/ourpic/u2q8w7a9q8i1u2w7_fairchild-tropical-botanic-garden-coral-gables-fl-fairchild/#



Fairchild Tropical Garden designed by William L. Phillips.
Source: https://www.nicepng.com/ourpic/u2q8w7a9q8i1u2w7_fairchild-tropical-botanic-garden-coral-gables-fl-fairchild/#

1942 Vision Plan of William L. Phillips

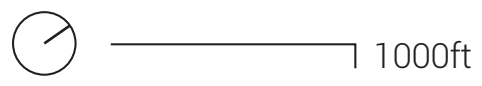




Biscayne Bay

Marina

Atlantic Ocean



Designing a Tropical Retreat for the People

Phillips began to research and design Crandon Park in 1941, alongside A.D. Barnes. That year, Crandon sent the two to Jones Beach in New York “to study parking and traffic facilities, access roads, and cabana and refreshment areas.”²¹ Below is a description of their resulting design vision presented to the County in 1942, some of which was not implemented when the park was built in 1947.

General Layout

The park was designed around two axis, one running north-south, and one crossing east-west. The long north-south spine, which was (and remains today) Crandon Boulevard, essentially divided the park with a four-lane barrier. An east-west axis was designed to reconnect the two sides, open up views from Crandon Boulevard to the ocean and Biscayne Bay, and provide physical east-west access for park users. Only half of this critical axis was ever implemented—the large grass oval to the east of Crandon Boulevard. The other side, to the west of the road, was to be an oval lake of the same dimension. This critical framework of Phillips's design was not constructed.

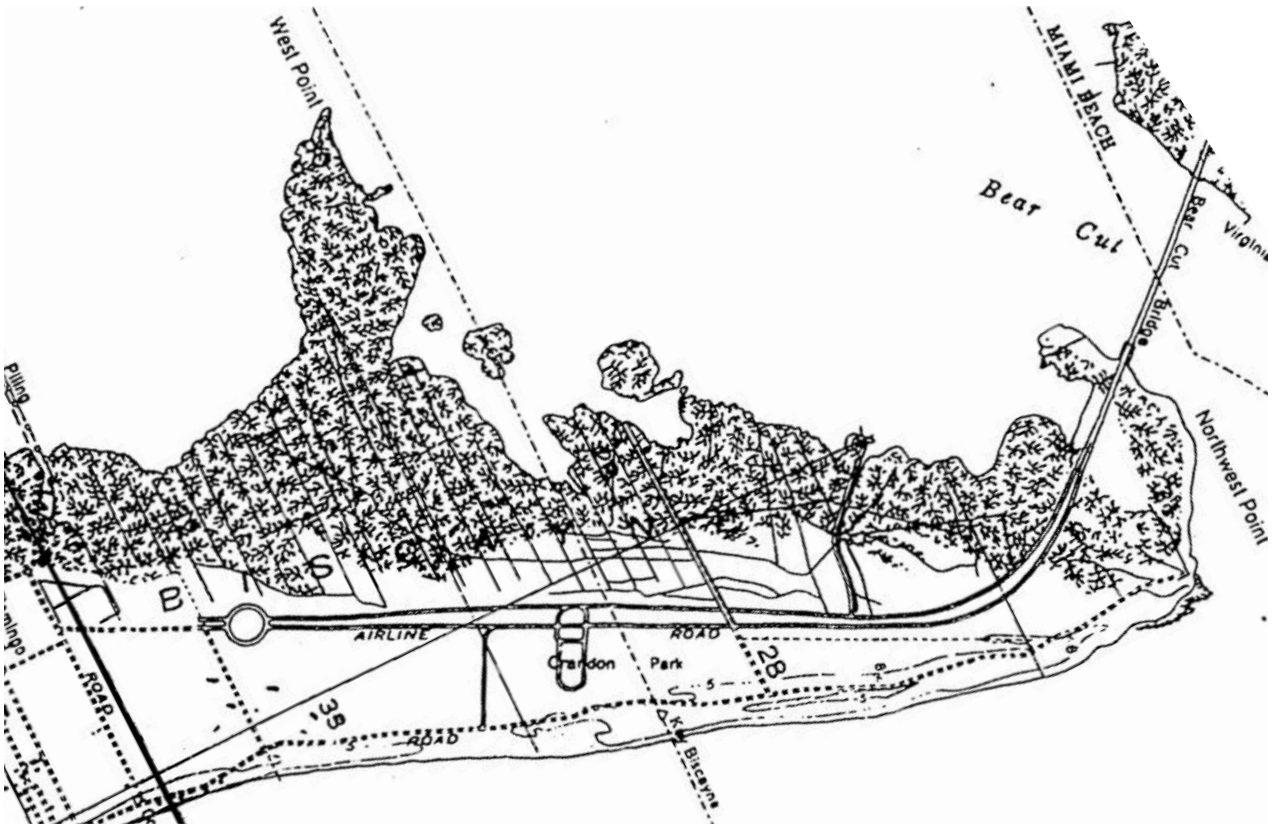


Jones Beach designed by Robert Moses (1939).



Crandon Park officially opened to the public in 1947 and was originally designed to accommodate thousands of cars for beach visitors.

21. Jackson, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture* (1997), p. 166.



1947 U.S. Government Topographical Survey of Crandon Park. Source: Appendix R in Crandon Park Master Plan (1995)

Amenities

Similar to the County's Ultimate Plan, the Vision Plan activated most 975 acres of the land, including acres of wetlands.²² The design included many recreational attractions: a beach with cabanas, a golf course, an archery range, a marina, a yacht harbor, stopping places for fishing and launching boats, and a children's park with a carousel and a miniature train that carried visitors through the natural hammock.²³ Facilities were provided for picnics and barbecues, along with parking spaces for up to 5,000 cars.²⁴

Much of Phillips's 1942 *Vision Plan* was never implemented, including a riding academy, yacht harbor, canoe club, a waterfront trail along the Biscayne Bay, and boardwalks through the mangrove areas.

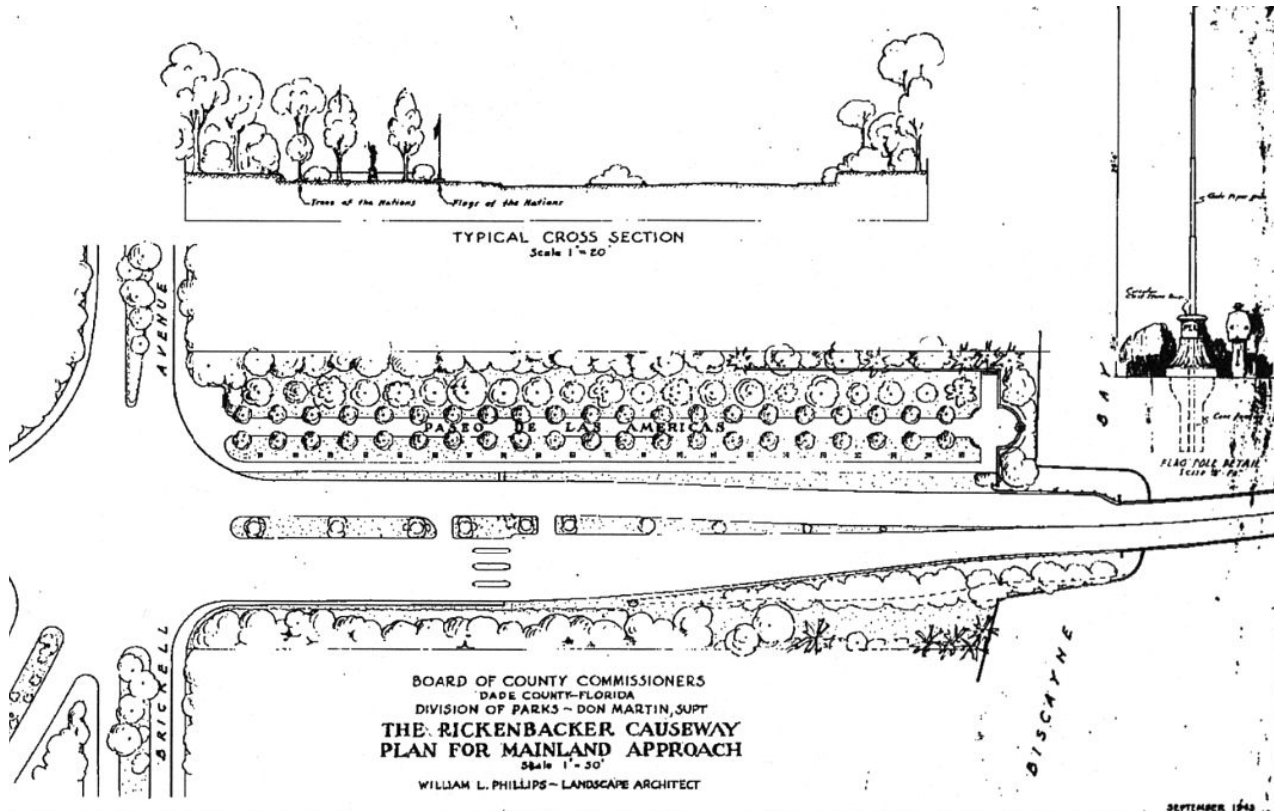


Picnic Grounds under the coconut palms in Crandon Park. (c.1940s)

22. At the time, filling wetlands by dredging offshore bottom lands was commonplace.

23. Jackson, *Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture* (1997), p. 169-170.

24. *Ibid.*



The Rickenbacker Causeway Plan for Mainland Approach (1943) by William L. Phillips. It shows a separated, parallel pedestrian path

Circulation

Phillips's design accommodated a vast number of expected automobiles, evident by its five sprawling parking lots, and a four lane spine road, which featured two large roundabouts (only one of which was built). In general, the access roads feeding off Crandon Boulevard were not implemented per Phillips's plan.

As a former student of and employee of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., (1870-1957), Phillips's design for Crandon Boulevard also took inspiration from such Olmsted design principles as an orchestration of movement and composition by separating different kinds of choreographed movement.

This was evident in Phillips's design of Crandon Park by way of a grand pedestrian promenade that he called "Paseo de las Americas," which would take visitors from mainland Miami, across the Rickenbacker causeway, through Crandon Park, and terminate at the entry of the Village of Key Biscayne. Unfortunately, like other important aspects of Phillips's vision, this objective of creating separate circulation realms between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles was not realized when the Park was built. And is still not realized in today's current Park condition.



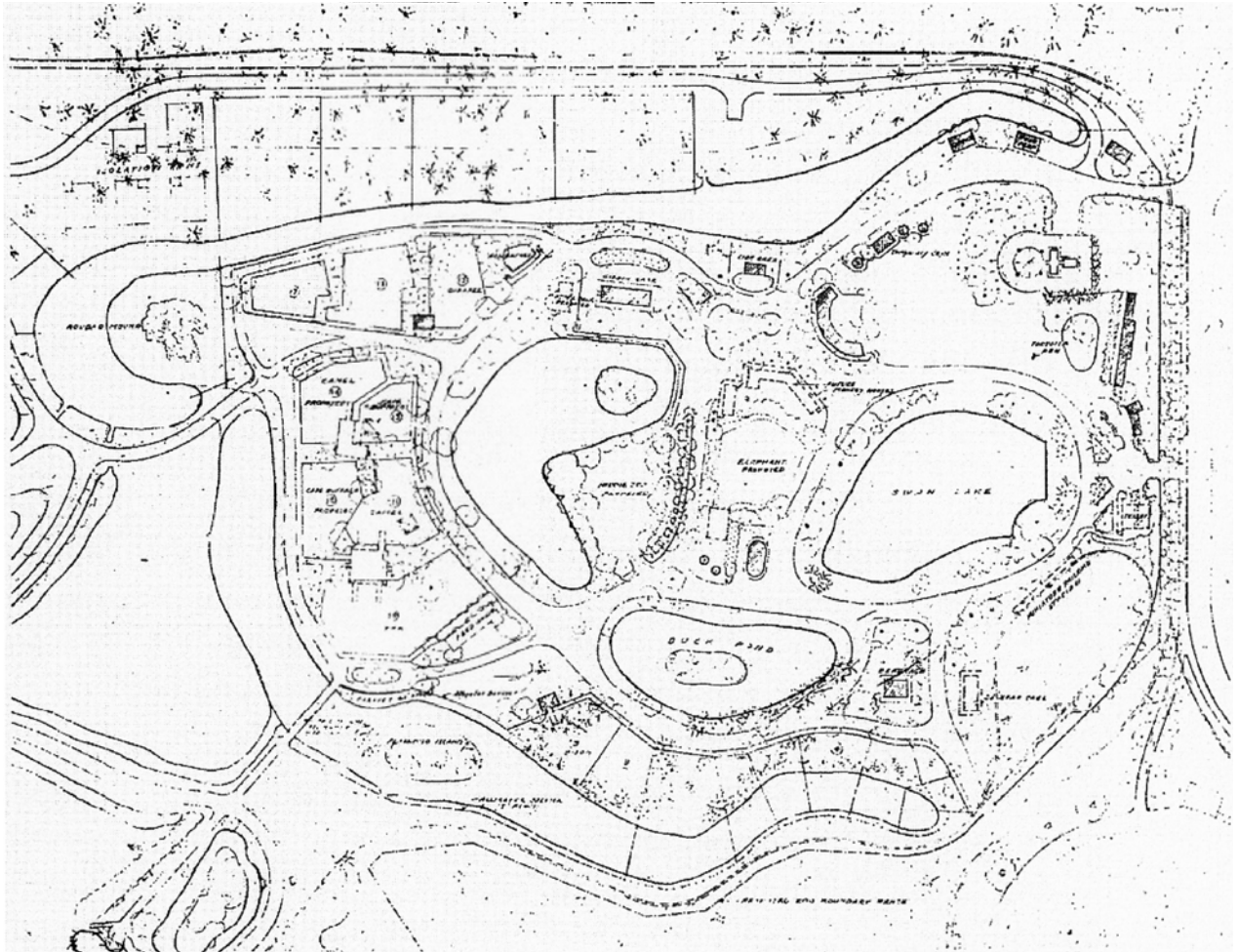
Historic postcard showing the Coconut palm tree-lined Crandon Boulevard running through Crandon Park.

Planting Design

The signature plant in the park was the coconut palm, planted by the thousand in the dunes and beach area. Phillips's application of coconut palms and a wide range of other tropical plantings demonstrate how Crandon Park had been at the forefront of celebrating Caribbean and South Seas landscapes.

*Recognizing the Park's previous existence as a coconut plantation, **Phillips lined Crandon Boulevard with Coconut Palms, supplementing these was a dense background planting of native trees and shrubs.** In the median strip this planting screened the north and south-bound lanes from one another, creating for each set of lanes a sense of serenity — with walls of green contributing to a park-like ambiance and withdrawal from the tensions of city traffic. The median plantings were echoed on the outside sides of the Boulevard as well — the whole resulting in a drive between and beneath arching branches and fronds. Crandon Boulevard provided a special welcome and set the character of the Park for the visitor. It combined recognition of the Park's historic heritage and its unique native vegetation.*

— The Crandon Park Master Plan (1995), p. 24



Crandon Park Zoo Plan by William L. Phillips (ca. 1950s)



Historic photo of the monkey cages of the Crandon Zoo.



Children playing at Crandon Zoo.

Crandon Zoo and Amusement Park

In the 1950s, the Crandon Zoo, previously built on the grounds of the current Crandon Gardens, was constructed as a later addition to the Park.²⁵

Phillips, together with lion tamer Julia Allen Field, had designed the animal enclosures and ponds within a circular plan. Lush tropical vegetation and open air habitats also made the zoo into an exquisite garden.

Up to the mid-60s, Crandon Zoo had been a major public attraction. In 1965, however, Hurricane Betsy struck Key Biscayne killing more than 200 zoo animals, and destroying many zoo structures. The zoo was formally closed to the public in 1980, and was relocated inland.²⁶

The old zoo grounds have since been retrofitted into "The Crandon Gardens." While the Gardens retain the geometries of Phillips's original plan, the site is sorely underutilized, sprinkled with aging and abandoned zoo structures.



Swan Lakes in the Crandon Zoo (1975).
Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/88298>

25. James A. Kushlan and Kirsten Hines, *Images of America Key Biscayne* (Charleston, S.C: 2014), pp. 87 - 115.

26. Kushlan, et al, *Images of America Key Biscayne* (2014), pp. 87 - 115.



Calusa Playhouse in Calusa Park was the center of local activity. Source: http://www.islandernews.com/civic_corner/it-would-be-our-place-historical-society-gauging-interest-in-reviving-calusa-playhouse/article_0284f612-6582-11e6-ba40-27e28a4351c8.html



Crandon Park Marina under construction (1953).

3.4 Recreational Facilities are Built to Buoy Park Visitorship

1960s-80s

Key Biscayne's Local Park

Spurred by an increasing demand for neighborhood parks within walking distance of residents, the County launched an "aggressive agenda for the continued growth of the Parks System to keep up with increasing demand"²⁷ and to compete with "national recreation standards that had been developed for the burgeoning suburbs of post-World War II America."²⁸

In the 1960s, Calusa Park was built to provide recreational facilities for the local community of the unincorporated Village of Key Biscayne. It included four tennis courts, a playground that no longer exists today, and the wooden Calusa Playhouse, which is no longer accessible. The latter was a historic building originally located on the Matheson coconut plantation.²⁹

Crandon Park Marina

Between 1968 and 1969, the Crandon Park Marina, which would become a prime boating destination, was completed with an improved boat ramp and a parking area for cars with boat trailers.³⁰

27. Miami-Dade County, *Miami-Dade County Parks and Open Space System Master Plan* (2007), pp. 12-13.

28. City of Miami Parks & Recreation Department and Planning Department. *Miami Parks and Public Spaces Master Plan* (2007): p. 27.

29. Metro-Dade County Park & Recreation Department, The Nature Conservancy, and Fairchild Tropical Garden. *Crandon Park Natural Areas Protection Plan* (1 October 1991), p. 11.

30. A.D. Barnes. *History of Dade County Park System: The First Forty Years* (1929-1969) (Miami, FL: Metropolitan Dade County, 1986): p. 201.



Crandon Park Marina was home to chartered boats, and fishing fleets (1961). Source: Images of Key Biscayne, p. 70.



Blue marlin hung on the pier. Source: Images of Key Biscayne, p. 70.



Sundays On the Bay Restaurant. (ca. 1969.) Source: <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/322231>



Crandon Park Golf Course formerly known as the Links at Key Biscayne (1968)
Source: *Images of Key Biscayne*, p. 69.

The Golf Course

Around the same time, the Golf Course and its clubhouse were built to fulfill Phillips's design—and to meet the growing, suburban appetite for recreational facilities. The Links at Key Biscayne—now Crandon Park Golf Course—was funded and developed by ITT. It opened in 1969 as an 18-hole championship course, attracting a favorable popular response.³¹ The golf course hosted a senior PGA event called the Royal Caribbean Classic from 1987 to 2004.

31. Crandon Golf at Key Biscayne" *The Florida Golf Course Seeker*: <http://theflgorfcourseseeker.blogspot.com/2013/11/crandon-golf-course-at-key-biscayne.html>

A Decline in Funding and Visitorship

Up to the mid-1970s, Crandon Park was proving enormously popular, attracting almost two million visitors annually. However, with the closure of the Zoo, attendance dropped by nearly half. While families had been the dominant visiting group, regular visitors were now mostly teens and individuals.³²

To diversify its visitorship, and plan anew use for the zoo property, an interdisciplinary design team of park planners, landscape architects, visual artists and County officials created the *Master Plan for The Gardens at Crandon* in 1987.³³ During this period, however, the Park was facing serious, new financial challenges. Grappling with municipal financial difficulties in the 1980s, the overall Miami-Dade County parks system began to suffer from reduced operations and budgeting.³⁴

Crandon Park Tennis Center

In response to the downturn in visitors, the Parks Department “moved aggressively into revenue enterprise operations and public/private partnerships to offset funding cuts. One such deal was made in 1986 with the creation of Lipton Tennis Center, now renamed the Crandon Park Tennis Center. It was designed to host the Miami Open, a world-class tennis tournament that would bridge the North American, European and South American tennis markets.³⁵

Chairman of the Lipton Tournament Butch Buchholz fell in love with Crandon Park despite being operated at the time by the County as an illegal landfill. Buchholz recounts: “There was a dead dog in there, old refrigerators, sofas. The smell was just terrible. But going over the bridge was really beautiful — you could see the skyline. It felt like a postcard. And the fact that they wanted to do something to get rid of the dump felt like it made sense.”³⁶ After signing a \$15.9-million contract, Miami-Dade County agreed that the Lipton Tournament could be established at Crandon Park provided that a 12,000-seat stadium could be built by December 1991. Miami-Dade loaned the organizers money to build seventeen courts with temporary seating, along with a clubhouse, so that the tournament could be held during the interim.³⁷



Master Plan for the Gardens at Crandon Park (1987) was proposed by an interdisciplinary Design Team under contract to the County and Art in Public Places. However, it was never realized.

32. Design Team under contract to the Metropolitan Dade County Park and Recreation Department and Art in Public Places “Introduction” in *Master Plan for the Gardens at Crandon Park* (1987): n.p.

33. Ibid.

34. City of Miami Parks & Recreation Department and Planning Department. *Miami Parks and Public Spaces Master Plan* (2007): pp. 29.

35. Jerry Iannelli, “Bruce Matheson Single-Handedly Kills the Miami Open,” *Miami New Times* (5 March 2016): <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/bruce-matheson-single-handedly-kills-the-miami-open-8318885>

36. Ibid.

37. Metro-Dade County Park & Recreation Department, The Nature Conservancy, and Fairchild Tropical Garden. *Crandon Park Natural Areas Protection Plan* (1 October 1991), p. 11-12.



Nadal vs. Del Potro playing at Crandon Park Tennis Center Miami Open in 2009.

While the tennis tournament enjoyed community support and was an economic boon, not all constituencies were pleased with the use of the Park for this purpose. Grumbling turned into litigation with the announcement of an agreement to build a permanent tennis stadium in the Park. The plaintiffs included a host of local citizens and two out of town descendants of Malcolm Matheson (Malcolm Matheson, one of the three heirs of William John Matheson, had conveyed Tract 2 to the County in 1940 as part of the park for a causeway arrangement). The basis for Malcolm Matheson's heirs inclusion in the suit was the deed conveyed by Malcolm Matheson that limited the County's park use to public park purposes only.³⁸

While litigation was pending, the County entered into an agreement with the tennis promoters to solve a problem that had been around since the earliest design of the Park. Almost all of the parking was east of the boulevard. The tennis facility like the golf course was west of the boulevard. Moving thousands of people across a busy four lane highway while cars were attempting to enter and exit the parking lots created a traffic and pedestrian nightmare. For a few years the County constructed elevated walkways over the boulevard, but that required tennis patrons to climb a long stairway on one side and descend an equally long one on the other side. Few liked this arrangement and over time, people simply swarmed across the four lane road creating a traffic hazard.

38. In the course of the litigation, the only plaintiffs found to have standing to complain about use of the park for non-public park purposes were the two Matheson heirs.

In an effort to address this circumstance, the County drew plans and employed contractors to raise the boulevard in front of the tennis facility to create an “underpass” that would allow pedestrians to cross from east to west without crossing traffic. It was a plan with a few obvious limitations, not the least of which separating grades for pedestrians did not separate grades for motor vehicles entering and exiting the Park across a busy four lane highway.

Only few knew of the plan to build the underpass until bulldozers showed up to tear down the dense foliage in the median. Within hours, upset citizens gathered in protest, marching on the road to stop the bulldozers. The overpass plan was abandoned and the median replanted.³⁹

Litigation eventually gave way to negotiation, and construction of the stadium was allowed provided that the public would have full access to the facility during the tournament period, and that a master plan would be prepared for the park to guide all future development of the land.⁴⁰ This master plan is referred to within this Report as the *Crandon Park Master Plan* (2000), and remains the active master planning document for Crandon Park. For details, refer to **Volume 4 | Master Plan Evolution**.

The Miami Open was played for 31 years at Crandon Park and was hugely successful. With the passage of time its facilities had become dated and the competition great. It presented to the County plans to substantially improve the Tennis Center for both tournament and recreational use which the County presented to voters (pursuant the County Charter). Almost 73% of the voters voted yes.⁴¹ Notwithstanding the huge showing of public support for the tournament the necessary amendments to the Master Plan were not approved and the event relocated to Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens in 2019.

Today, the stadium is used only for County office space and the single tennis court it contains. Today, the stadium is largely unused and considered abandoned. Its future use is unclear.



Lipton Tennis Center (now the Crandon Park Tennis Center) hosted the international Miami Open.

39. Oscar Musibay. “His Own Private Paradise,” *Miami New Times* (4 April 1996): <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/his-own-private-paradise-6361646>.

40. Ibid.

41. *Bruce C. Matheson v. Miami-Dade County*, Case No. 12-47448 CA 05. Affidavit of Penelope Townsley, December 12, 2013, p. 3.



Center for Environmental Education (CEE) was established in 1971 in the Bear Cut Preserve to educate school children about the key's coastal ecology.

3.5 A Focus on Environmentalism

1970s-
90s

The Center for Environmental Education and Bear Cut Preserve

America's "environmental movement" gained momentum and increased awareness in the 1970s regarding issues of nature and preservation. Activists expressed a desire to preserve natural systems and natural beauty, and called for the planning process to incorporate ecology and natural design principles.⁴² During this time, the Center for Environmental Education (CEE) opened in 1971 at the Park's north end, now called Bear Cut Preserve. Designed to educate school children about marine and coastal hammock habitats, the center was situated near the seagrass flats and the remnant coastal strand hammock. Though housed in modest structures, the CEE would come to play a much-appreciated role as a community anchor, catering in particular to inner-city children.⁴³ It remained in operation for almost 25 years until it transformed into today's Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center, as described below.

Amid growing support for environmental preservation, the U.S. Department of Interior designated the area at the north end—now known as Bear Cut—as a National Environmental Study Area. The zone was also recognized by Metro-Dade County Commission in 1978 as a Dade County Environmental Study Area.⁴⁴

42. City of Miami Parks & Recreation Department and Planning Department. *Miami Parks and Public Spaces Master Plan* (2007): p. 12.

43. James A. Kushlan and Kirsten Hines, *Images of America Key Biscayne* (Charleston, S.C: 2014), pp. 73; Margo Haraks, "Nature's Classroom" South Florida Sun Sentinel (22 November 2000). <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-2000-11-22-0011210320-story.html>.

44. Metro-Dade County Park & Recreation Department, The Nature Conservancy, and Fairchild Tropical Garden. *Crandon Park Natural Areas Protection Plan* (1 October 1991), p. 12.

Florida's Degraded Ecosystem and its Effect on Biscayne Bay

Best captured in *Time* magazine's 1981 front cover entitled, "Paradise Lost: South Florida," the 1980s was a difficult period for the County: "Raw sewage made Biscayne Bay a cesspool. Miami had the highest VD rate of any city. The highest rate for TB, too. It was tainted by dengue fever, malaria, typhoid. And kids who went wading contracted Florida sores."⁴⁵

South Florida's degraded environmental conditions in the 1980's resulted from a pattern of ecological neglect and unchecked industrialization that had started in the early 1900s, when inland drainage operations had begun in the Everglades. In ensuing decades, invasive plants such as *Melaleuca* were introduced to the native landscape to assist with draining efforts, the Miami River was dynamited, and flawed engineering reports contributed to Florida's environmental crisis.⁴⁶ The entire ecosystem of south Florida, including Biscayne Bay, would ultimately undergo major environmental decay because of extensive coastal development, pollution, and habitat loss. The Miami River, which feeds into Biscayne Bay, was channeled to direct water away from the Everglades. "As a result of a century of modifications to hydrology, Biscayne Bay has changed from a subtropical estuary fed by coastal rivers, tidal creeks, and groundwater seepage, including submarine springs, to a pulsed system that alternates between marine conditions and extreme low salinity conditions near canal discharge sites. Freshwater now enters the bay as an intense point source rather than as distributed input over time and space."⁴⁷



Invasive *Melaleuca* trees were introduced to assist with draining efforts. Source: <https://lflank.wordpress.com/2016/01/18/floridas-invaders-melaleuca/>

45. Phillip Wylie, "Paradise Lost - And Regained" *Time* (23 November 1981): p. 13.

46. "Everglades Timeline," *Reclaiming the Everglades*: <http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/timeline/timeline6.htm>.

47. "Acount Biscayne Bay" *Discover Biscayne Bay*: <http://www.discoverbiscaynebay.org/history.htm>



Everglades National Park in southern Florida is the largest subtropical wilderness left in the United States. Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Everglades-National-Park>

Focus on Restoration



Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years (1989) was the first to propose a "comprehensive master plan" for Crandon Park.

Awakening to such problems, the Florida Legislature passed The Everglades Protection Act in 1991, which began restoration efforts for the Everglades.⁴⁸

During this period, an interdisciplinary team published *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* (1989), a preliminary planning report prepared for Miami-Dade County (then called Dade County Metro) in anticipation of a "new comprehensive master plan."⁴⁹

The study team recommended:

- *The preservation, restoration and interpretation of valuable park ecosystems*
- *The preservation, restoration and interpretation of park history*
- *The unification of scattered park facilities into one cohesive unit*
- *The improvement of existing park infrastructure and recreational facilities*
- *The safety and security of park visitors*
- *The need for renovation and/or new park facilities.*⁵⁰

Although the Report itself was not directly implemented, its recommendation to preserve the northeastern end of the Park (now Bear Cut Preserve) and the mangrove areas on the Park's west side were eventually folded into the *Crandon Park Master Plan* (2000). In addition to Bear Cut, the West Point and its Mangrove Islands, Mangrove Edge along the Golf Course, Ibis Preserve and Rookery Island were also designated as primary preserves.

In 1990, Dade County established the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL) through a countywide referendum that approved a two-year tax increase to acquire, restore and maintain environmentally endangered lands. Acquisitions presently exceed 20,000 acres and include rockridge pinelands, tropical hardwood hammocks, freshwater wetlands, coastal wetlands, and scrub habitat.⁵¹ Crandon Park gained and retains EEL designation.

48. "Everglades Timeline," *Reclaiming the Everglades*: <http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/timeline/timeline6.htm>.

49. Florida Sea Grant Extension Program, The Department of Landscape Architecture College of Architecture University of Florida, The Department of Park Administration and Landscape Architecture Texas Tech University, *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* (14 November 1989), p. 1. A Preliminary Planning & Analysis Report Prepared for the Dade County Metro Recreation and Parks Department.

50. *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* (1989), p. 3..

51. Miami-Dade County, *GreenPrint: Our Design for A Sustainable Future* (Miami-Dade County, FL: 2010): p. 22, 40.



School children prepare for the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center's signature field trip, the Seagrass Adventure, in which students explore the marine life in shallow grass beds just off the beach. Source: Images of Key Biscayne, 73.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center

In response to this refreshed focus on the environment, The Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center, a non-profit organization, was built in 1991. Working in partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation Department, and its own community support groups, the center is "dedicated to environmental education and the encouragement of greater citizen participation in the protection of our natural environment."⁵²

The Nature Center offers education about the Park's rich and storied past, including that of the Tequesta Indians, the site's early inhabitants before English and Spanish settlement in the 16th century. The Center's 6,500-square-foot exhibition features "lobsters and crabs, tropical fish and shells, sea beans and Tequesta Indian artifacts."⁵³

Naturalists provide youth-focused programming designed to help children "understand the interconnectedness of all things . . . The hope is for the children to walk away from this program with a greater sense of their place in the natural world."⁵⁴ The Nature Center remains active today.



These wealk shells, which were used by the Tequesta Indians for digging, were unearthed from Key Biscayne Tequesta sites. Source: Images of Key Biscayne, 12.

52. "Mission" from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center. https://www.biscaynenaturecenter.org/about_us/about_us.html

53. Margo Haraks, "Nature's Classroom" *South Florida Sun Sentinel* (22 November 2000). <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-2000-11-22-0011210320-story.html>

54. Ibid.

3.6 The Village of Key Biscayne

1991

Early Development

Village of Key Biscayne borders Crandon Park and its transformation from a “coconut plantation into a quiet Miami bedroom community” grew in tandem with Crandon Park’s birth. As mentioned earlier, both were initiated by the construction of the Rickenbacker Causeway in 1947.

The pace of development increased significantly in 1969 when President Richard Nixon established his “Florida White House” complex on the bayside of the Island. “The publicity of Presidential visits through 1973 sparked awareness of Key Biscayne as a destination.”⁵⁵ The boom in interest led to the development of waterfront condominiums and apartment buildings.⁵⁶ Then part of “unincorporated” Dade County, developers seeking to build high density condominiums were allowed to meet concurrency requirements for “local parks” by considering Crandon Park as a local park.⁵⁷

55. Village of Key Biscayne and Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, “Master Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Report,” n.d., [http://keybiscayne.fl.gov/clientuploads/Building, Zoning Planning & Public Works/ Planning Division/Comprehensive Master Plan - EAR/EAR_revised8-20-2007.pdf](http://keybiscayne.fl.gov/clientuploads/Building,ZoningPlanning&PublicWorks/PlanningDivision/ComprehensiveMasterPlan-EAR/EAR_revised8-20-2007.pdf)

56. A Brief History of Real Estate on Key Biscayne, The Island Paradise,” *History of real estate on Key Biscayne* (Key Life Reality, Inc.), accessed May 25, 2020, <http://keylife.com/history/>

57. Bird, Bill. Bill Bird to Betty Sime, March 13, 1989. Letter.



Construction of the Mackle Homes on W. Wood and Ridgewood (1950). Source: <https://www.kbhistory.org/page/3/>.



President Nixon and “Bebe” Rebozo at Nixon’s home in Key Biscayne (1969). Source: <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-florida-president-retreats-20151022-story.html>



President Nixon’s “Winter White House” on Key Biscayne.



Key Biscayne Island Paradise Welcome Sign (1972). Source: [https://flashbackmiami.com/2016/06/27/key-biscayne-island-retreat-transformed-by-bridge/#lightbox\[group-8675\]/34/](https://flashbackmiami.com/2016/06/27/key-biscayne-island-retreat-transformed-by-bridge/#lightbox[group-8675]/34/)



The Grand Bay in Key Biscayne

Key Biscayne Becomes Incorporated

"By the late 1980s, Key Biscayne had become a mature suburb within unincorporated Miami-Dade County, known for its quiet natural beauty and small-town character."⁵⁸ Real estate value increased further in 1987 with the opening of the high-span William Powell Bridge, which replaced an existing drawbridge.

After a nine-year campaign by resident activists, the Village of Key Biscayne was incorporated on June 23, 1991. "The vote to incorporate capped a long effort to obtain better services from the County, improved fiscal control, and local control over growth within the Village."⁵⁹

Until 1991, Key Biscayne was part of unincorporated Dade County and subject to the County's development codes that included requirements for the "concurrent" existence of a range of public facilities and services, including local parks for active recreation. As Key Biscayne became recognized as a desirable community in which to live and raise a family, developers acquired undeveloped parcels and sought permits for large scale condominium developments including as much as 25 units to the acre. To comply with local park "concurrency" requirements, the County formally decided to consider Crandon Park as Key Biscayne's local park, declining to require acquisition of local park lands within the community that was being developed.

Over time, designation of part of Crandon Park for local park recreation became a problem.

58. Village of Key Biscayne and Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, "Master Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Report," n.d.: http://keybiscayne.fl.gov/clientuploads/Building, Zoning Planning & Public Works/Planning Division/Comprehensive Master Plan - EAR/EAR_revised8-20-2007.pdf.

59. Village of Key Biscayne, and IBI Group. "Village of Key Biscayne: Recreation and Open Space Recommendations and Recommended Concept Plans for 530 Crandon Boulevard," May 26, 2009.



Key Biscayne art festival (1977).
Source: [https://flashbackmiami.com/2016/06/27/key-biscayne-island-retreat-transformed-by-bridge/#lightbox\[group-8675\]/34/](https://flashbackmiami.com/2016/06/27/key-biscayne-island-retreat-transformed-by-bridge/#lightbox[group-8675]/34/)

Land-use decisions made prior to the Village's incorporation left the community with limited land for parks and recreation. By that time they achieved incorporated status, the only undeveloped land on the island consisted of nine acres in the center of the island slated for a shopping center. The newly formed Village government immediately acquired the land to establish Village Green that while enormously popular is less land for local recreation than that required for concurrency.

While much has changed throughout the years, Key Biscayne's "island paradise" culture continues today, where a laid-back atmosphere contrasts with nearby Miami's tilt toward high-end glitz. A community atmosphere allows children to explore the island without risk, and elderly friends to cruise Crandon Boulevard in golf carts. While the world has evolved to a faster pace, Key Biscayne has managed to maintain a sense of "island living."

3.7 Hurricane Andrew

1992

The Impact of a Natural Disaster

Arriving in August 1992, Hurricane Andrew, a Category 5 storm, would come to represent a turning point in Crandon Park's recent history—and one of the prime catalysts for the Master Plan Update that serves the park today. The storm hit the barrier island, flattening vegetation and severely damaging structures. State naturalists and volunteers spent years removing pines and other exotics, and restoring native vegetation. While this restoration would eventually bring back a natural variety of wildlife, the hurricane's overall impact was of destruction.

"The aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in 1992 left much of the median and roadside plantings denuded, the north—and south—bound lanes in full view of one another, and Mr. Phillips's restful park drive more nearly a busy, arterial highway"⁶⁰

60. *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* (1989), p. 1.



Destruction of Hurricane Andrew on Key Biscayne in 1992.

3.8 Crandon Park's Master Plan

1993-
2000

Overview of the Creation of the Master Plan

While the creation of the present master plan was spurred by debates over the nature of “public” uses associated with the Tennis Center, and made an urgent issue after Hurricane Andrew, a new master plan for Crandon Park had already been contemplated by the County, as indicated in *Crandon Park: The Next Fifty Years* (1989).



Crandon Park Master Plan (1995-2000)

From 1993 to 2000, various drafts of a master plan for Crandon Park had been prepared by Artemas P. Richardson of the Olmsted Office, members of the Dade County Park and Recreation Department, and Bruce C. Matheson of the Matheson family.

Details of the evolution of Crandon Park's Master Plan are discussed in **Volume 4 | Master Plan Evolution** of this Report.



Credits

Prepared for

Citizens for Park Improvement (CPI)

Elaborated by

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