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MODEL LAND COMPANY RECORDS

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Coral Gables, Florida

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Linear Feet 66

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Henry Flagler, founder and president of the Florida East Coast Railroad (FECR), created the Model Land Company (MLC) in 1896 to manage his rapidly expanding real estate holdings in the state of Florida. The growth and expansion of the FECR was crucial to the development of Florida, and the MLC, with its three subsidiary companies, managed Flagler's "land empire" until its demise in 1967.

Henry Flagler arrived in Florida in 1885 and launched a railroad system that extended the length of Florida's east coast, from St. Augustine to Key West. The railroad spurred the economic development of Florida, and, in turn, the state actively promoted the development of railroads. Both state government and local businesses offered land as an inducement to anyone who could finance the construction of a railroad line.

Under these circumstances, Flagler acquired several million acres of real estate between 1885, the year he purchased two short-line St. Augustine railroads, and 1912, which marked completion of the Key West railroad extension. Flagler obtained a portion of this land from Florida's Internal Improvement Fund (IIF), although he received the bulk of real estate from other Florida corporations. As Flagler secured deeds to lands, he established a "Land Department" within his railroad corporation.

To encourage Flagler's railroad plans, the state of Florida offered him approximately 2,050,000 acres of public lands. Flagler received the customary 3,840 acres per mile allotted to railroads for his work in northern Florida. The State legislature also passed a special land grant law to award Flagler 8,000 acres per mile for the extension of his line south of Daytona.

The Swamp Land Grant Act of 1850 authorized the federal government to "patent" or "deed" selected swamp lands to the State of Florida provided that the state grant these lands to developers interested in drainage and reclamation. The revelation that the state legislature awarded valuable lands to railroads led the federal government to terminate the land grant program. As a result, the state did not provide a great deal of the land promised Flagler.

Political considerations also complicated the acquisition of

land by Flagler. Progressives in Florida's Democratic party, including Governors William Sherman Jennings and Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, obstructed Flagler's efforts to obtain lands. Jennings argued successfully against railroads receiving land intended for drainage projects. Facing such opposition, Flagler initiated a series of lawsuits to acquire these lands. A protracted legal battle ended in compromise, as Flagler accepted 260,000 acres, less

than ten percent of his original grant. The location of Flagler's property varied; portions were located in Broward, Dade and Palm Beach Counties, but the largest portion, 210,000 acres, belonged to the swampy Cape Sable area.

Flagler continued to pursue additional land acquisitions, however, with notable success. Facing obstacles with the IIF, Flagler began to acquire real estate indirectly from other corporations. Two corporations, the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company (FCLCTC) and the Boston and Florida Atlantic Coast Land Company (BFACLC), received abundant public lands, yet faced financial difficulties in canal construction and business ventures. Flagler subsidized the canal company for \$100,000 in return for debenture bonds and a note for the difference in the two amounts. Flagler was also named head of the company although he did not own any large block of stock. Flagler then financed dredging projects and promised to transform these land holdings into valuable real estate by building a railroad.

By 1895, good relations began to deteriorate. Albert P. Sawyer, head of the BFACLC feared a takeover of the FCLCTC and attempted to force Flagler out of the company. Although Flagler would not relinquish his power in the company entirely, he agreed to exchange the subsidy note he held for land in southern Dade County at a rate of \$6.00 per acre. To entice Flagler to build the railroad on their land, the FCLCTC and the BFACLC also "donated" lands to Flagler. The FCLCTC promised 1,500 acres per mile for the extension south of Lake Worth, and the BFACLC agreed to provide 10,000 acres for the Miami extension. Other individuals and corporations made similar pledges.

Rather than provide the railroad an outright land grant, the BFACLC donated land in the form of a one-half interest in its planned immigrant communities. George Miles, a company official, proposed this plan to protect the BFACLC from "being discriminated against by...the railroad company...if they decided to offer advantages to settlers which we would not be in a position to

parallel." The BFACLC and the railroad began their joint venture in 1896, and organized the colonies of Modello and Hallandale. Disputes soon arose over the freight rates charged by the railroad.

By 1902, Miles suspected the FECR of financially suppressing the BFACLC to prevent construction of a canal along the east coast. Although no evidence exists to support this suspicion, Miles urged against the appointment of joint land agents. However, the BFACLC's lands continued to be sold through Flagler's "alphabet soup" of corporate enterprises by the Miami-based MLC agents until the 1920's.

As Flagler received land titles from the IIF, the BFACLC, other companies and individuals, he established a special "Land Department" of the FECR to manage operations. James E. Ingraham, former president of Henry S. Sanford's South Florida Railroad Company, served as Land Commissioner. Ingraham, a Wisconsin railroad engineer, came to Florida in 1874. In 1892, he surveyed the Everglades for a possible railroad route for Henry B. Plant's railroad system. Ingraham caught Flagler's attention when he reported that the east coast would serve as a more practicable route. Flagler immediately hired Ingraham and eventually placed him in charge of all land holdings.

Ingraham soon made Flagler's real estate holdings as profitable an enterprise as the FEC railroad and hotels. The key to Ingraham's early success proved to be advertising. Ingraham distributed booklets, pamphlets and a magazine, the Florida East Coast Homeseeker, in which he described the attractions of Florida's east coast as well as the lands for sale at most points along the railway. By 1896 the Land Department was incorporated as the Model Land Company (MLC), and Ingraham appointed president. Although Flagler first intended the MLC to serve as his colonizing agent for Modello and other colonies in South Florida, the MLC soon became the primary land company in the Flagler System.

Henry Flagler owned all capital stock of the FECR and the MLC. He also established the MLC as a separate corporation for "business and bookkeeping purposes." In 1902 Flagler's auditor began the transfer of titles of FECR lands to the MLC. In addition to allowing financial transactions to appear as "the true and proper sums received, paid and due by each of the said companies," this

separation and transfer of titles also had the advantage of improving the financial status of the railroad company for purposes of borrowing on bond markets. In 1909, Flagler instructed his auditor to place all lands "for farming or for other than railway purposes" in the MLC account. In 1911, the FECR transferred lands in Dade, Palm Beach, Brevard, Volusia, St. Lucie and Monroe counties.

Flagler also created three subsidiary land companies to sell lands in specific areas. The companies served as separate corporate divisions for bookkeeping purposes. A central office in St. Augustine oversaw administration of the land companies. The Fort Dallas Land Company (FDLC), created on March 17, 1896, sold Miami-area lands; the Perrine Grant Land Company (PGLC), organized on May 6, 1899, sold Perrine lands; and the Chuluota Land Company (CLC), established 1912, sold Chuluota (Central Florida) lands. The four companies together with the FECR and the Federal East Coast Hotel Company (FECHC) constituted the Flagler System. The land companies assumed control of the majority of Flagler's real estate holdings, and the FECHC and the FECR retained property pertaining to their respective businesses.

The three subsidiary land companies differed in the types of property sold, in dates of operation and levels of success. The FDLC, the agency used for Flagler's Miami development, possessed the most valuable property. Flagler purchased eighty per cent of the company's stock for \$ 8,000; he then divided the remaining twenty per cent between two FECR Vice Presidents, Joseph R. Parrot and James Ingraham. Ingraham, as president of all the land companies, controlled FDLC sales. The FDLC sold lots ranging from \$ 50 to \$ 100, and constructed cottages which sold for \$ 1,500. By 1899 sales were booming and in 1902 property sales totalled approximately \$ 182,600. The FDLC survived until 1908 when it was "amalgamated with the Model Land Company" to "simplify the work and reduce the operating expenses." FDLC profits, totalling \$ 248,000, and several Miami lots and buildings, were transferred to the MLC.

The PGLC managed valuable farmlands located along Biscayne Bay, eighteen miles south of Miami and extending 6 miles west. Information compiled by George Robbins, an FECR attorney who had extensive correspondence with the Perrine heirs, as well as an abstract of title, allowed Miami attorneys Hudson and Boggs to trace the title of the Perrine Grant for the MLC in 1914. Their research revealed the circumstances enabling Flagler to acquire an interest in the Perrine property.

In 1838, the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida granted land to the Tropical Plant Company of Florida, directed by Henry Perrine, J.A. Webb and Charles Howe. During that same year, the Congress of the United States also granted a township of land to Dr. Henry Perrine, provided that every section in the tract have "an actual settler engaged in the propagation or cultivation of useful tropical plants" by 1846, or eight years after the passage of this act. If Perrine failed to meet this condition, the land would be forfeited to the United States. After Perrine was killed by Indians during a war with the Seminoles, Congress renewed the conditions of the grant in 1841 for another eight year period for the benefit of Perrine's widow and his children.

Mrs. Ann Perrine requested the aid of Charles Howe, a former associate of Henry Perrine, promising him a twenty per cent interest in the land if he could have it surveyed and settled in accordance with the conditions of the grant. Howe surveyed the land and brought thirty-six Bahamian families as settlers. Conflicts with the Seminole Indians, however, soon drove these new settlers off the land.

In spite of the Perrines' failure to meet the conditions of the grant, the heirs attempted to secure a patent to the land in 1862. Their efforts bore no success until 1896 when the FECR intervened on behalf of the Perrines, obtaining the patent, and settling claims with independent homesteaders who had settled on the land. The FECR also assisted the heirs in a second lawsuit initiated by the American Contract and Finance Company, a New York corporation assigned the interest of Charles Howe and others. The Supreme Court of Florida finally decided in favor of the Perrine heirs in 1899. According to MLC records, "After securing the patent, the [Perrine] heirs, ...undertook to convey an undivided one-half interest in the grant...to the Federal East Coast Railroad Company."

To FECR representatives the deed was "open to serious and fatal objections as to certain of the grantors." The deed was ineffective to convey the claims of one heir "as her signature and her husband's lack witness;" the sanity of another grantor at "the time of conveyance" was "extremely doubtful" and a third did not sign the document "at all."

As a result of these circumstances, litigation concerning the title to the Perrine land continued. James Thomas Walker, for example, sued the MLC and the FECR in 1911 for his interest in the grant because the companies had negotiated the purchase with Walker

while he was in the New York State mental asylum. Ingraham was notified of a suit filed in the United States Court in the State of Rhode Island and instructed his Miami sales agent to "simply reserve the lands set aside in the suit with Mr. Walker and not to make any explanation of it to anybody." There are no records of the suit in the MLC Records, although the MLC sold the Walker lands in 1913.

In spite of early legal problems, the PGLC was profitable and survived into the 1960's, longer than the other subsidiaries. The third subsidiary company proved unsuccessful. The Chuluota Land Company was unable to sell the 11,000 central Florida acres allotted it by the MLC, and was phased out of the Flagler system during the 1930's.

The main office of the MLC, located in St. Augustine, managed the lands belonging to the land companies, although numerous sales agents operated throughout the state. The practice of employing agents began during Ingraham's operation of the Land Department. Occasionally, railroad agents doubled as MLC representatives and provided information on soils, crops and farm production on lands at various stations. The original MLC sales agents included Frederick S. Morse, Miami; F.J. Powers, Homestead; J.B. McDonald, West Palm Beach; Austin and McNeil, Okeechobee; C.D. Brumley, Chuluota; Miller Hallows, Ft. Pierce; and others. The original Miami agent, Frederick Morse, maintained extensive files which clarify the role of the local sales units within the larger corporation, especially their significance in bringing local politics within the realm of MLC control.

The relationship between the Miami agent, Frederick Morse, and the MLC began in 1907 with Morse acting as "special agent for the Railway Company during the time it was building in and out of Miami." He purchased much of the right-of-way and other properties between Miami and Key West for the FECR. The agency, officially titled Frederick K. Morse Real Estate and Fire Insurance, "was planned and developed for the sale of MLC land jointly with the Boston Company Land" which Mr. Ingraham formerly sold in his St. Augustine office. Like other agents, Morse worked on a commission basis.

Morse's successors, Frank J. Pepper and Burr S. Potter, began working with the Morse agency in 1910. Pepper came to Miami in 1907 and worked for the Engineering Department of the FECR, then

engaged in construction of the Key West extension, until he became a partner with Morse. After Morse's death in 1920, Pepper "took Mr. Burr S. Potter in as a partner." "Pepper and Potter" became the official sales agent for MLC land in their territory which is designated as:

"... that part of Palm Beach County South from South line of Boyton Canal, Broward County, and Dade County to West line of Range 37 East and to South line of Twp. 61 South including Key Largo Lands, excepting and reserving there from all lands and lots in the City of Miami."

Pepper and Potter devoted "practically all their time and attention to the sale of company lands." They made sales, collected payments on contracts, attempted to prevent the expansion of city limits to keep taxes down and kept local records and surveys. The agency sold the lands of the MLC, the PGLC and occasionally the FEC Hotel and Railroad Companies.

In 1927, the agents relocated to the Ingraham Building on Biscayne Boulevard. The agency prospered in the 1920's, benefitting from the real estate boom of 1924-26, but struggled throughout the economic depression of the 1930's. According to Pepper, "... Miami banks began to fail in 1928, with the Southern Bank and Trust Company, and in 1930 with the Bank of Bay Biscayne. Then is when our troubles began. Our bank accounts became frozen and real estate stopped moving, and of course, our income (commissions) likewise stopped." During the 1930's the agency lost its northern clientele, while local sales grew increasingly difficult. Local farmers began to suffer from tariff laws and poor markets, and they could neither afford to buy new land nor make payments on the land they farmed. A lack of quality farmland compounded the problem; by 1939, Pepper reported that "all our best lands for farming purposes in Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade Counties have been picked over and sold out..."

Conditions improved by the 1940's. Another former associate of Morse, Milo Coffrin, assumed Potter's place within the agency; Pepper and Coffrin, Inc. acted as the MLC local agency. The agency changed its name again in the late 1940's to Frank J. Pepper and Son, Inc. and once again in the 1960's to Frank J. Pepper, Inc. Over the years, the local agency gradually assumed a number of extra duties and came to exercise a certain degree of influence in local politics. Pepper commented on agency activities in the

1920's, and wrote that members of the agency could be found:

"...attending council meetings...and also County Commissioner Meetings in Broward and Dade County in connection with which we are positive thousands and thousands of dollars have been saved the Flagler Companies because of our close attention to these matters and our personal friendship and influence with these officials. We have made it a rule to go over our territory at least once a week...visiting the Court Houses, City Halls, etc., along with our other business to keep up our friendship, acquaintances, and political prestige with these officials, so that when matters come up affecting taxes, zoning, condemnation, or anything else in which your companies are interested, we are informed and in a position to get satisfactory results."

The agency also participated in Drainage District meetings from Lake Worth to Naranja, and also assisted in foreclosure suits by collecting affidavits, testifying and gathering witnesses. Agents maintained records of all these activities, in addition to records of surveys, taxes, sales and all other transactions and information on all significant local events. Their records reveal the depth of the MLC's involvement in local affairs.

The MLC and its ability to influence local development supported Flagler's original intention, "...to work in sympathy with the plans of the FECR for building up along its line, thriving settlements and increase the revenues...from freight and passengers" utilizing the line. Flagler once remarked that, "Every new settler is worth \$ 300 a year to me. He has to bring in everything he uses and send out everything he produces over my railroad." The power of the MLC also helped the subsidiary land companies as they sought profits from land sales. One MLC sales agent writing in 1911 reports that "Mr. Ingraham...instructed me to sell the land at the best possible advantage to the company on the basis that the company is now working for profits in land rather than traffick."

The activities of the MLC and its associated organizations grew to encompass sales and the promotion of Florida throughout the country. The MLC focussed on advertising the agricultural and industrial potential of the land, and employed agriculturalists, horticulturalists, and stockmen to attend to the development of the East Coast.

The MLC influenced the development of the South Florida region from a tropical frontier to a modern civilization, and the company

has had a lasting impact on the area. Through a myriad of activities as a corporate land enterprise, the MLC affected the economic, agricultural, political and social growth of the area. The accomplishments and shortcomings of the MLC, many of which are documented in these records, offer a unique view of regional history.

ENDNOTES

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URL: <http://www.library.miami.edu/archives/papers/model1.html>



DESCRIPTION OF THE RECORDS

The Model Land Company (MLC) Records date from 1907 - 1967 (inclusive) with bulk dates of 1910 - 1940. The MLC Records are housed in one hundred and fifty-nine (159) boxes and total sixty-six (66) cubic feet of files. The MLC Records are arranged in two series: SERIES I: SPECIAL FILES and SERIES II: SALES FILES.

The files consist of the administrative and financial records of the MLC's Miami-based land agent, Frederick S. Morse, and those agencies that followed Morse, including Pepper and Potter; Pepper and Coffrin, Inc.; Frank J. Pepper and Son, Inc.; and Frank J. Pepper, Inc. The files do not represent the comprehensive records of the Model Land Company, although this material constitutes a large portion of the surviving records. Unfortunately, most of the records of the central office in St. Augustine were destroyed between 1963 and 1967.

SERIES I: SPECIAL FILES, is arranged in numerical order by the original "special file" number assigned to documents by company personnel. The "Special file" numbers range from #1 - #2698, although several files are missing. Significant newspaper articles or letters of inquiry on particular properties initiated the creation of many files. Interspersed among files is information on three major areas: real estate transactions, other company business, and topical files. Files contain a variety of documents including correspondence, memoranda, maps, blueprints, clippings, publications, photographs and other materials. Files also include documentation on tax matters, incorporation of towns, alterations of city limits, surveys, company and agency policies and sale prices of lands. Correspondence between the Miami-based agency and the central office in St. Augustine provides additional information on these business matters.

Tax issues were of great concern to MLC officials, and the files document negotiations with local officials to lower taxes. Tax agents had success in arranging for the MLC to pay regular

taxes on their smaller properties and limit taxes on larger, more valuable properties. The agency also used other means to reduce taxes, including efforts to prevent the expansion of city limits. City lands bore greater tax rates, thus the MLC sought to prevent the incorporation of most towns. The agency maintained files on efforts to determine the city limits of the following communities: Deerfield, Pompano, Oakland Park, Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, Perrine, Hallandale, Miami, Homestead and Florida City. The MLC also kept records on the incorporation of the following towns: Princeton (1915-16), Hallandale, (1921), Redland County (1925), Pompano (1927-33), and Floranada.

SERIES I, SPECIAL FILES, also documents thousands of real estate transactions. The documents described below are found in many files. Actual file headings often contain the date and location of the transactions. Some locations are denoted by a three number code for the: Section Number, the Township (Twp.) Number and the Range Number.

DOCUMENTS

Timber Permits:

MLC holdings included many acres of pine lands. The company issued timber permits to lumber companies, or an occasional farmer who wished to supplement farm income, to allow the cutting and selling of timber. The permits specified a limited geographic area and recorded the length of time approved for harvesting timber. The fee charged was determined by the amount of timber removed from the land.

Sales Contracts:

With the exception of the 1930's, the agency abided by a policy of selling, never renting, land. Sales contracts bound

farmers to their property, and prevented farmers from moving to new lands. Files contain requests for land, correspondence between the buyer and the agency on price, location, description of lands, followed by the negotiation of terms for sales contract.

Extended Contracts:

These documents allowed payments on sales contracts to be delayed for a specified period of time. Extensions were often granted to farmers during "hard times." Occasionally, the company allowed farmers to forego interest payments if payment of the principle was possible.

Mortgages:

Mortgages replaced sales contracts during the 1920's and constitute a large portion of the records.

Exchange of Lands:

Occasionally one contract holder would agree to exchange land with another, requiring certain paperwork.

Deed for Easement:

This deed allowed a company or individual to use land owned by another for a specific purpose. Easements were granted for the purpose of constructing canals, bridges, and power lines.

Options:

Options were granted only in cases of large purchases.

Inquiry for Land:

These files contain requests for land, information on the availability of the land, the price and quality of the land.

Assigned Contract:

A contract holder sometimes assigned his responsibility for fulfilling the contract, as well as his land, to another individual or company. Contracts were assigned by soldiers who left to fight in World War I as well as by many farmers unable to complete the payments on their lands.

Surveys:

Surveys were conducted for purposes of creating plats of MLC holdings and settling disputes over boundaries.

Land Deeded Back:

These files record the return of land to the company.

Canceled Contract:

Failure to receive a contract extension resulted in the voiding of a contract and the return of the land to the MLC.

Lease:

Property was leased only in rare cases, almost never to homeowners. The company granted leases to certain groups to support their activities, such as the "Veterans of All Wars" and the National Soil Fertility League, and to businesses.

Deed Issued for Contract:

Once a contract holder had completed payments, a deed was issued to him and his property was recorded.

A significant number of files contain information on a wide range of topics. These "Topical Files" document important economic, political and social aspects of South Florida's development. Topics represented in this series include:

TOPICS

Audobon Society:

The Audobon Society campaigned to protect wild birds in the Florida Everglades as well as in New York, the center of the millinery industry. The Society began efforts to guard Florida rookeries in 1902 when it hired a Flamingo resident, Guy Bradley, to protect local egrets. The popularity of sightseeing, hunting and fishing in the Cape Sable area, however, made Bradley's task difficult.

The creation of the Everglades National Park in the 1930's seemed to imply the end of legal hunting in the area and the

answer to the Society's hopes. The MLC, at the time, expressed uncertainty on the subject of issuing new hunting permits. A test case in 1938 upheld the legality of the permits, and the Company continued this service. As a result, the Audobon Society strengthened the Everglades campaign. Local representative, James Earl Moore, repeatedly sought the aid of the MLC in "protecting bird life in the Cape Sable Area. . . " especially "some rare species which there is danger under the present condition of being extinct." The Audobon Special File contains correspondence documenting the requests of the Society to post warning signs on a rookery island and eventually to block off the entrance to the area through Cuthbert Lake. The conflicting demands of hunters, fishers and boat rental businesses are also included, as well as the MLC's decisions regarding these competing interests.

Special File Number: 2,194

Canals:

These files contain materials that explore the location of canals in the state.

Special File Numbers: 13; 17; 127; 185; 521; 1,408; 1,506

Chicken Key:

The acquisition of "Chicken Key" proved a complex process. Charles Deering expressed interest in Chicken Key, an island in Biscayne Bay with an area of about 15 square miles, and Frederick Morse undertook the numerous steps involved in securing the property for Deering. Morse applied for a "Special Certificate of Location" to provide a legal claim on

the land. He placed a "Notice for Publication" from the U .S. Land Office in local newspapers for five weeks. The notice described the location of the land and instructed "any and all persons claiming adversely the lands described, or desiring to object because of the mineral character of the land or for any other reason, to the disposal to applicant" to file an affidavit of protest in that office. Morse also posted this notice on the island and obtained an affidavit stating so.

Prior to approval of the application, the government must survey the land, and Morse had to prove that the island existed prior to the 1850 Swamp Land Grant. The island, if underwater at that time, would be considered the property of

the state of Florida. Morse gathered affidavits asserting that the land was "not in 1850 swamp and overflowed land." Experts were consulted in this matter, including John K. Small, Head Curator of the New York Botanical Garden. Small who had conducted " a special study of the plants and the vegetation of Southern Peninsular Florida and the Keys," submitted photographs of mangrove trees located on the island, estimated at 200 years old. These photographs, preserved in MLC files, substantiated claims that the island existed for at least several centuries.

After Morse succeeded in protecting his claim to the Key from the state, he was forced to contest a second adverse claim made by Mr. Thomas A. Walsh of Brooklyn. Walsh had purchased the Key from Mr. William Fuzzard in 1904 for \$ 500 but neither man had a title to the property. Since Fuzzard was a friend of Morse, Morse agreed to pay Walsh \$ 500 for the land.

Morse then took the final required step and filed legal notice of the plat of the Key for five consecutive weeks. This notice stated that a detailed map had been filed by the land office of both Chicken and Commodore Keys, making the land available for purchase. Morse presented the warranty deed for the property to Mr. Deering in 1920, concluding the transfer of the property. Although Mr. Walsh continued to pay taxes on the island and to claim title to the property, the land was securely in the hands of Charles Deering.

Special File Number: 390

Colonization/Immigration:

The FECR planned "colonies" and encouraged immigration to increase the population and settlement rate along the east coast. A number of cities and towns began as a "colony" planned or supported by the railroad. Flagler's "Land and Industrial Department" encouraged the immigration of colonists from Norway, Sweden, Japan and other countries. On occasion, the FECR land department played an active role. Flagler aided in the development of a Danish colony, White City, after the death of its founder in 1893 . The MLC and the BFALC cooperated in organizing Modello and Hallandale, colonies for Swedes and Danes. The FECR also participated in the establishment of the Japanese colony at Yamato, present-day Boca Raton. Agency files document the MLC's attempts to arrange similar immigration projects in the Lake Worth area during the 1920's.

The Lake Worth district, subjected to annual floods, proved extremely difficult to promote as a settlement. However, several farmers settled on the Company's Lake Worth land by 1920. Pepper's description of the area included grim observations, such as a notation of a family surveying their property from their porch which was surrounded by water. To improve the potential for agriculture, the MLC organized a drainage district to drain the lands of excess water and improve farming opportunities.

Initially, the MLC considered financing the drainage project together with the Boston Company to remedy the situation and to improve the value of the lands. Since the expense would be considerable, other alternatives were weighed. The MLC explored the establishment of a Company Farm, to disprove the growing belief that the land could not be farmed. Changing the farmers attitudes had become imperative. In a 1922 letter to Ingraham, Pepper reports that "There is one thing for certain and that is we are not going to get local farmers interested in the district, at least until others have gone in there and demonstrated a success."

Many farmers expressed reluctance to "put any more labor and fertilizer in the ground" until they saw results from even one successful farm in the area. The farmers experienced many seasons of over drainage during the cropping season and flooding during the winter season. They also complained of the burdensome drainage tax. Although the Company Farm idea is discussed in correspondence, there is no indication of its creation.

Other alternatives which Pepper suggested to Ingraham included colonization of the land and the sale of the property. He wrote that the MLC "should either colonize it ourselves by Japanese or others whom we might find desirable," or put it on the market together with the Boston Company's holdings. Pepper was already in contact with Syrians and with Japanese in California.

In Ingraham's response to Pepper's letters, he stated, "As to the colonization by the Japanese..., or Syrians I have never seen in any of our relations with the Japanese at Yamato,

anything that was objectionable. They are hardworking, intensive, and persevering. As far as I know, the Japanese are more self-assertive as to their social rights than any of the others that you discussed with me." No indication is given of whether this quality was a desirable one in prospective colonists; however, Ingraham suggests the English as a second, preferable possibility.

"I am inclined," he wrote, "to think that if a properly sustained effort to was made, that we could reach a class of young Englishmen and Englishwomen, and perhaps good Irishmen and Irishwomen, good educated people, who want to make a new start, and these people make the very best colonists in the world. They assimilate readily, they are socially acceptable, and they don't know what failure means." Subsequent correspondence between Ingraham and the Miami agency called for a meeting between Pepper and Potter, as agents responsible for much of the Lake Worth lands, and Mr. J. B. McDonald, an agent operating in Palm Beach county, and the British Consulate. The purpose of the meeting was to "discuss the matter of encouraging some British immigration of high class."

Although no further developments of this idea are recorded in the files, another colonization plan materialized a year later when Mr. Alfred Minssos of Norway approached the MLC with his own immigration plan. Minssos "who had lived in the U.S. for 10 years, and who in 1916 was a member of a commission sent to this country to study and investigate the cooperative features used by our manufacturers" proposed to bring one hundred Norwegian families to the Lake Worth area. Each would be required to possess \$ 2,500 cash in addition to the funds necessary to purchase their houses and five acre lots. Minssos promised to construct a community center, streets, a store and clubhouse, and would improve the area by planting shrubs and flowers. To begin this venture, he requested a donation of company land.

The MLC agreed to provide several acres after Minssos demonstrated the viability of his colony by successfully settling the majority of the families. The company was cautious, but expressed its hope that "... this colonization improvement will prove to be only the beginning of a permanent setting up of that back country by a substantial set of farmers and good citizens, and to this end, it goes without saying, that everybody is interested..."

Special File Numbers: 1,257, 1,321

Court Cases:

The files contain correspondence and records concerning U.S. Government and Seaboard Airline Railway condemnation suits, foreclosure suits and suits against squatters and trespassers.

Three significant cases occurred between 1911-1915 concerning the settlement of homestead claims on lands owned by the MLC. Files on these cases detail the complications related to vague federal provisions for granting public lands to Florida and illuminate the doubts many people harbored about the legitimacy of land companies operating during this period.

Suits settling homestead claims were brought by homesteaders who contested MLC titles to certain lands. The homesteaders or individuals who settled on the land argued that the property was public land owned by the federal government and therefore open to claims. The MLC had to prove to the court that the federal government transferred the lands in question to the state under the Swamp Land Grant of 1850. If the state owned the land, the homesteaders could have no claim upon it, and the MLC titles would be protected. Although only one of these cases determined an MLC title to be invalid, the homestead suits proved to be lengthy ordeals which damaged the reputation of the MLC.

One case, J. W. Blanding v. MLC (1912-1915) began when Blanding contested the MLC title to land in Homestead. According to the Company, the state deeded this land to Sir Edward James Reed who deeded it to the Land and Trust Company of Florida (LTCF). The LTCF conveyed this parcel with other lands to the MLC. Apparently the MLC held reservations about the legality of the transfer and distinguished the land from regular transactions by referring to it as "Model-Reed land" in financial records. The investigation conducted on the title of these lands revealed that the lands were never transferred to the state. As J. E. Ingraham wrote, it looked "as if there might be a good mix up in these unfortunate transactions." This situation resulted in unfavorable publicity for the MLC and caused some Homestead residents to become "rather excited about this rumor."

In order to preserve title to the property, the MLC had to demonstrate that the land was swamp land in 1850 and therefore

should have been transferred to the state at that time. The company's local agents gathered "swamp land affidavits," signed statements attesting to the fact,

that at the date of the Swamp Land Act September 26, A.D. 1850, the greater part of each said quarter sections were wet and unfit for cultivation, and except for the

artificial drains since made, the greater part of each of said quarter sections would now be wet and unfit for cultivation...

The agency recorded the names of witnesses, records of the fees paid witnesses and other relevant information in files. The case appeared to be settled in 1913 when Chief Justice Lamar of the Supreme Court of the United States issued a decision "against the homesteading of lands conveyed by the state and to which the U. S. could be the only legal claimant." The judgement providing that homestead claims would no longer be upheld if they involved lands claimed by a state should have concluded the Blanding case. However, by 1914, the MLC land still had not been deeded to the state.

In 1915 the United States government finally patented, or officially deeded, the lands to the State, completing the MLC title. On January 28, 1915, Mr. Dewhurst, the FEER attorney notified Ingraham that "The Secretary of the Interior has rendered a decision in our favor for the whole SW 1/4 at Homestead."

S. P. Lewis initiated a second case involving the Reed land in 1911. This case involved the land in section 12-56-39. As in the Blanding case, the MLC argued that the state conveyed the land to Sir Edward Reed in 1883, and that the title came to the MLC through the Florida Land and Trust Company in 1903. However, the MLC attorney, Mr. Dewhurst, employed a different strategy to prove that the land should have been transferred to the state. During the course of the case, documentation in the files of the General Land Office in Washington listed the land under the description of "swamplands patented to the state." The land was, however, omitted from the list of swamp lands in the Surveyor General's office. Dewhurst argued that a simple clerical error had caused the misunderstanding and that the property had, in fact, been patented to the state.

The State's title was recognized in 1912, but S.P. Lewis filed a "swamp contest affidavit" in a final effort to keep the land. He secured affidavits and witnesses to testify that the land being contested was not swampland and that it should have been retained by the federal government. In order to demonstrate that the land was not "wet and unfit for cultivation," neighbors argued that tomatoes could be successfully grown on surrounding tracts of land. In spite of this testimony, Lewis won his case and was allowed to keep his land.

A third case involving a Homestead claim occurred in 1912. The case, MLC v. Jack Davis, was settled, like the Blanding case, in favor of the MLC. Although these homestead claims were few, they generated a great deal of controversy and negative publicity. Flagler, with his keen business sense, foresaw the negative consequences of these legal battles. Shortly before his death in 1913 Flagler warned Pepper of the dangers of settling homestead claims in court. Flagler argued that even if the MLC won all such suits, the Company could still lose a great deal of business:

...I have a feeling that we ought not stay in the Courts and have our titles under a cloud, if we can adjust them for a reasonable amount of money or in any other way. I do not know what Mr. Dewhurst has done beyond the fact of bringing suit. There is a side of this that the lawyer should not be concerned with and that is the business side of it; and it looks to me that either you or some representative of yours might be able to reach these parties in such a way as to straighten up and clear out titles better than if this litigation is continued.

Flagler's fears were well-founded, and the MLC suffered from these public squabbles. An unfriendly relationship with the newspaper, the Miami Metropolis contributed to this situation.

A "general belief" developed in Dade County that "the titles of the MLC are not good, due to attacks upon it by the Miami Metropolis." An outraged Ingraham instructed Pepper to convince the Metropolis that they would be harming Miami far

worse than the MLC if they continued to print stories on the "Homestead Affair.". The MLC was strong enough to withstand the attacks. "The MLC's holdings extend from Jacksonville to Key West and will be enlarged rather than diminished, and I think it is powerful enough to protect the deeds it issues." Ingraham observed that the Miami real estate market could be more vulnerable. Newspapers should be careful since "A very little thing will sometimes stop a `boom' and create a panic..."

Special File Numbers: 15; 35; 67; 71-72; 79; 154; 201; 220; 562; 823; 930; 1,145; 1,532; 1,606; 1,891; 2,299

Donations:

Flagler and his organizations often donated property and money to "worthy causes" throughout the east coast area. The files contain numerous requests for aid from religious and civic organizations as well as from city and county officials. Petitioners able to raise matching funds for MLC donations and those able to erect substantial buildings received the largest amounts of money and land. The MLC preferred "helping those who could help themselves" since the construction of clubhouses, churches and other facilities would draw more settlers to the area, improve land sales and increase railroad freight activity.

Special File Numbers: 29; 38; 60; 65-66; 122; 130; 162; 166; 168; 232; 242; 247; 328; 448; 500.5; 568; 587

Drainage:

A large portion of Florida land south of Orlando was originally wet lands, and drainage proved essential to the development of the region. The MLC, and other large landowners, had an important stake in the drainage process. The company initiated drainage operations, financed dredging projects and attempted to influence the policies of state drainage district boards.

The files document examples of company-initiated drainage operations. In correspondence, F.S. Morse and J.W. Krome discuss a plan to drain the prairie land of the Perrine Grant into Biscayne Bay. Morse was responsible for obtaining the necessary information. Krome gave his opinion as construction engineer that the fall was sufficient for drainage into the Bay.

Other instances of proposed drainage projects appear in the records. In one such case, Carlton Marshall of Pompano requested an option so that he could ditch the land, install drainage pumps, and determine whether his drainage method could make the land suitable for farming. The MLC granted Marshall the option and agreed to sell the land at the price he named because if Marshall succeeded, "...it would no doubt be of great assistance in the sale of the balance."

In addition to facilitating the drainage process, Flagler and his companies exerted control over the drainage district boards created by Governors Jennings and Broward. The first comprehensive drainage law established a drainage board which levied taxes, planned canal routes, and ordered dredges. Flagler and the Boston Company united with other large land owners to oppose the drainage tax. They won a lawsuit against the state, and in 1906, the drainage commissioners drew new boundaries for the drainage district, excluding most of these companies' lands.

Various state-organized drainage districts continued to supervise drainage for a number of years. The local MLC agency maintained files on these districts and participated in landowners leagues, organizations of large land holders who joined forces to fight unfavorable drainage board policies.

Two drainage districts, the Broward Drainage District (BDD) and the Southern Drainage District (SDD) in particular, posed problems for the MLC. When Sidney Harrison, the secretary of the company, learned of their organization, he complained about the "objectionable features" of the BDD bill in a letter to Frederick Morse. The bill authorized the board "to levy an unlimited amount of taxes for an unlimited amount of years." The board possessed similar broad powers in regard to its ability to issue bonds, to change the boundaries of the district, and to utilize funds. Furthermore, there was no appeal from the board.

Harrison, however, reported that the MLC succeeded in having all of these features altered by amendments after "considerable controversy with the Representatives and Senators introducing this bill." Harrison also informed Morse that a similar effort concerning the SDD bill was underway and instructed him to "see the Editor of the Miami Herald and give him our side..." in case it became known that "our companies are opposing the Bill in its original form."

Special File Numbers: 268; 410; 425-426; 501; 651; 655-655.5; 676; 714; 911; 1,037; 1,059-1,061; 1,171-1,172; 1,245; 1,247; 1,321; 1,325; 1,337; 1,626; 1,644 - 1,645; 1,689; 1,864; 1,881; 1,892; 1,906; 2,193; 2,197; 2,307; 2,448; 2,449-A

Economic Depression, 1929:

Issues pertaining to the "Great Depression" are documented in files relating to policies of land rental to farmers unable to make mortgage payments, and the influence of the Depression on land sales and mortgage collections.

Special Files Numbers: 1,573; 2,085

Everglades:

The MLC had an enormous impact on the history of the Everglades. The region known as Cape Sable is documented in a number of files recording land transactions and plans to develop roads, experimental farms and other facilities. James Ingraham initiated the drainage and development of the area. As an employee of Henry B. Plant's South Florida Railroad, Ingraham explored the Everglades for construction of a railroad route to the Keys. He reported that the land was unsuitable for a railroad but had enormous potential for farming. Plant was uninterested, but Flagler pursued this information and eventually acquired and began the process of draining the land so it could be sold as farmland.

In addition to promoting the sale of the land and encouraging the establishment of agricultural experiment centers by providing low rate leases, the company constructed roadways and advertised hunting and fishing attractions. Records regarding the transformation of the Cape Sable area into Everglades Park begin in 1928 with Ernest Coe's enthusiastic announcement of the campaign for "preserving this Cape Sable section of South Florida as a national park for all time." Coe, a local landscape artist, became known as the "Father of the Everglades." Early correspondence reveals local landowners and land companies had no objection to the park except that they did not "consider... all the agricultural lands in that area should be included in its boundaries or that their lands should be confiscated without proper reimbursement therefore,..."

The bill drafted in 1929 provided that the lands could be taken by the government by condemnation, causing the land owners to fear that they would receive less than market value for them. During the late 1920's and early 1930's the MLC continued to follow the progress of the park. The MLC gathered the addresses of all landowners in November of 1931 and arranged for a meeting of "all the larger landowners in order that we may be all of one accord if and when the land is purchased or taken by condemnation for park purposes."

The files contain maps showing various proposed boundary lines, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, memos, transcripts of radio broadcasts, and other materials documenting the controversy over the park. Numerous letters to congressmen and records of landowners meetings provide evidence of the MLC's effort to work with large landowners, oil companies and land companies providing oil leases in the Everglades area. These groups opposed the park and sought to preserve oil and mineral rights for a set period of years.

In 1934 President Roosevelt signed the Enabling Act allowing the "creation of the Everglades National Park, in Monroe, Dade, and Collier Counties,...within the boundaries to be determined by the Secretary of the Interior." Ingraham sought out Coe, who at this time served as Chairman of the Everglades National Park Association, in order to determine the boundaries of the park and to plan future action in response to the condemnation of MLC land.

The Company also compiled a report on the 270,760 acres it owned, placing their value at \$ 5,036,800. The report describes drainage activities performed, crops raised and the industries that could be developed on these lands. The report argues that if the lands are taken for park purposes industry and farming should not be curtailed. "If these lands...were set aside for a park or game preserve, attractive activities could be carried on without interfering with the industrial development of the land."

On April 2, 1947 the Secretary of the Interior finally selected the lands for the park. The MLC sold the property to the government.

When plans to extend the park boundaries arose in the 1950's, the MLC and its local Miami agency took action. A letter from

Pepper to the main office revealed that "15 interested landowners and oil men first had...a 'policy' meeting,.. from which we adjourned to the Court House for a meeting with the Board of County Commissioners." The commissioners, according to Pepper, seemed interested in the landowners views, but reluctant to" take a definite stand on their behalf due to the presence of Pennekamp, a Herald reporter who supported the park.

Special File Numbers: 1,869-1,870; 2,195; 2,293; 2,375; 2,383; 2,389; 2,419; 2,455; 2,596; 2,677.

Farming and Industry:

Files relating to farming and industry contain materials on the promotion of farming and industry in the region, farming conditions, and other topics.

Special File Numbers: Miscellanea, 103; 141; 203-04; 307; 325; 326; 334; 335; 339; 364; 451; 525-526; 826; 936; 1,180; 1,274; 1,629; 1,634; 1,809, 1,841; 1,854; 1,863; 1,884; 1,886; 1,919

Film Companies:

Correspondence and materials relating to attempts to locate motion picture film companies in Miami are also contained in this series.

Special File Numbers: 403; 1,571; 1,947; 2,061

Fisher, Carl:

Files document the activities of this Florida businessman, a prominent figure in the development of South Florida.

Special File Numbers: 208; 652

Housing Projects:

Throughout the early twentieth century blacks migrated to Florida from southern states, as well as from Haiti and the

Bahamas. South Florida, offered employment opportunities during this time period and attracted large numbers of blacks.

Henry Flagler contributed to this trend by employing many black workers in his hotel and railroad construction projects.

Strict residential segregation affected the settlement of the region's growing black population. An area on the northwest border of the downtown business district--"Colored Town," later called "Overtown"--was the one of the first areas settled by blacks. Smaller communities also emerged in Coconut Grove and Homestead. MLC agency files contain mortgage documents for many black Homestead residents, several of whom purchased large tracts and resold the property to other buyers. The records of mortgages acquired by blacks note the individual's racial origins.

By the late 1920's Overtown grew to be an overcrowded slum area, with relocation of residents restricted due to racial zoning policies. When the city's business leaders moved to enlarge the downtown business district in the 1930's, they initiated the first steps to move blacks out of the downtown area. "New Deal" public housing projects provided the opportunity for businessmen to implement expansion and resettlement plans. The Dade County Planning Board also perceived the removal of blacks from the downtown area as desirable and discussed the creation of planned communities elsewhere in the city.

MLC agency files record the business transactions involved in two of these housing projects. The first, the Liberty Square Project of the 1930's, was constructed on 62 acres of land bounded by NW 12th St.(East); NW 67th St. (North); NW 15th Ave. (West); and NW 62nd Ave. (South). This area was later called Liberty City. Work on the project began in 1935, and by 1937 the first families had moved into Liberty Square "from an extremely congested colored section of the City of Miami." All of the 234 houses were soon occupied. Files contain a plat showing the project location, documents indicating the goals and operating methods of the associated consumers' cooperative, and a list of the various government agencies involved. Files also record the financial transactions between James E. Scott, local project manager, and the MLC. Scott's dedication to the establishment of Liberty Square is apparent.

Although the government eventually provided a loan, Scott borrowed funds from personal acquaintances to meet initial

payments. Correspondence provides descriptions of the improvements made on the property and the overall success of the undertaking.

The second major housing development documented in the files is Richmond Heights, located eight miles south of Miami and one and one half miles west of Dixie Highway. Files dating from 1946-55 describe this project and provide mortgage records. According to a Miami News article, former Pan American pilot Captain Frank C. Martin "spotted and selected" the location for this community after "having flown over Dade County for a score of years." Martin purchased 3,000 acres of pine land from the MLC. The government occupied 800 acres for Richmond Air Base. After consulting a member of the Coral Gables Board of Realtors, Martin decided to use the remaining land to establish a planned "Negro development."

Martin's community included plans for schools, roads, parks, churches and recreation centers in addition to housing. Construction began in 1950, and several residents moved into the area by May, 1951. As in the case of Liberty City, "practically all" Richmond Height's home buyers "came from the Central Miami or Coconut Grove Slum Districts." In spite of businessmen's hopes for the Liberty Square project in the 1930's, the downtown area remained the home of significant numbers of blacks until about 1960.

Tensions between black and white residents occasionally developed in spite of segregated housing policies. Files discuss the re-zoning of an area on Coral Reef Drive between Richmond Heights and white neighborhoods. A resident requested MLC support for a petition to obtain a business district zoning so that business facilities could be constructed between these communities, both for the convenience of the "colored people" and for creation of a "neutral buffer." According to the writer, "This is especially so when you consider that white ownership of this business property is practically assured." Another file mentions an incidence of violence against a black man who moved into a white neighborhood.

Special File Numbers: 2,324; 2,326

Key West Extension:

Subjects documented include the reservation of lands for

public water supply, the settlement of damage claims, the purchase of property in the Keys for construction and securing the right of way for the railroad.

Special File Numbers: 41; 54-55; 90; 97; 101; 114; 116; 146; 164; 165; 180; 278; 303; 316

Land Sales to the Federal Government:

Sales of lands to the federal government are detailed in several files.

Special Files: 550; 585; 849; 1,323; 1,520; 2,082; 2,281; 2,298; 2,327; 2,333; 2,356; 2,361

Miami Country Club:

Files document the history of the Miami Country Club which contained one of the first golf courses constructed in the United States. The Royal Palm, a hotel in the FEC Hotel Company chain, managed these facilities and hosted numerous tournaments which generated publicity for Miami.

When the Royal Palm closed in 1928, the country club was "organized by three hundred prominent Miami business men." The new club administrators leased the club house and golf course from the FEC Hotel Company and kept these facilities open on a year-round basis. In 1944, the Miami Country Club concluded a purchase on an option with the Hotel Company for the club house, golf course and all other assets on the premises. Even after the Hotel Company sold this property, close ties were maintained; Frank J. Pepper became a member of the club's board of directors so that the Flagler interests would be represented.

The special files contain financial and administrative records dating from 1933-44, as well as information on golf tournaments and special country club events. In addition, records document FEC Hotel Company rentals of the property for the years 1936-37. (See also: Royal Palm Property)

Special File Numbers: 2,022; 2,155-A; 2,329

Migratory Labor Camps:

Files document two federal government efforts to locate migratory labor camps in South Florida. In 1940, a representative of the Farm Security Administration made inquiries on MLC land in the Pompano, Pahokee and Homestead areas. Since a local farmer donated two eighty-acre tracts for the establishment of a black and a white labor camp, the MLC was unable to sell any land on this occasion. Another camp to accommodate what one news article called "Florida's own `Oakies'" was established in 1941. The government requested a tract of MLC land in the Lake Okeechobee vicinity, but this piece of property was under lease.

Special File Numbers: 1,946; 2,214

Parks:

The City of Miami leased Royal Palm Park for one year as a park, freeing the company from an annual tax on this property.

The MLC attempted to persuade Homestead to provide a similar arrangement, but the City of Homestead could not afford to lease the property known as the "triangular tract," sixty acres bordered by Krome Avenue. The MLC, however, sold other lots to Homestead for parks and pledged to help the city by clearing underbrush and preparing the property for "beautification."

Files also document the establishment of Boca Raton Park and Playground. The city's mayor, George A. Long, provided the land for a baseball field and park but he requested that the MLC donate an adjoining piece of land. The MLC supported the Mayor's project and agreed to the donation.

Special File Numbers: 597; 1,328; 1,354

Publicity:

Flagler operated his railroad, hotel and land businesses during the 1890's with a policy of national and local publicity. Flagler purchased an interest in several Florida newspapers, and he and his associates employed a variety of methods to increase demand for lands. The Travellers Information Company promoted the Flagler System in thirteen northern cities. "Florida on Wheels" a special railroad car constructed to tour the Midwest was another innovative idea.

By 1900, a new attitude had replaced Flagler's initial interest in publicity . At this point, he told Ingraham that "it seems to me that the East Coast is so well known that we ought to stop all expensive advertising." Ingraham apparently continued to advertise, but concentrated on the northern market almost exclusively.

One exception to this policy is recorded in the "Special Files." When Mr. F.W. Decroix, requests the MLC to take out an ad in his new publication The Illustrated Review: A Florida Magazine for Florida, Ingraham instructs Pepper to purchase space for an ad because of current circumstances. "... we ordinarily do not advertise much in local papers, for the reason that we spend our money in the North, where we endeavor to draw our customers from, but I realize that the 'fake companies,' et cetera are bringing about a suspicion with regard to Florida enterprises, and it therefore may be very desirable for us to put ourselves before the public in a straightforward and legitimate way."

The local agency did not engage in the business of advertising itself, but it did distribute copies of "Lure of the South Land" to northern agents when requested. It also gathered photographs of Miami to be compiled into albums "used in soliciting homeseekers." Ingraham requested pictures of "the different buildings and improvements in and around the Miami area as contained in the ... Miami booklet issued by your board of trade ... or... any other cuts showing the developments in and around Miami..." The Agency collected pictures including Miami Herald photographs of a successful local tomato farm, Everglades Magazine photos of a cattle farm and other views of Biscayne Bay and Dixie Highway.

The only other evidence of agency advertising supplied by the files is information on a sign advertising Key Largo Lands. The agency had to submit extensive paperwork to obtain a permit to keep the sign which was eventually destroyed in a hurricane during the 1940's. The agency refused to replace the sign because by this time neither the local agency nor the St. Augustine agency believed that advertising was profitable:

 this office has never yet been able to trace a sale... directly as the result of such a sign, or similar advertisement in Northern papers... either Mr. Ingraham or Mr. Harrison informed me that was the experience of the St. Augustine office.

Special File Numbers: 70; 75; 397; 456; 2,370

Right of Way:

Files concerning the determination of the "right of way" for a number of significant locations are found in this series.

Special File Numbers: Coconut Grove, 177; Lemon City, 140; Miami, 56; Miami and Homestead, 1,361; Okeechobee-Miami Extension, 1,252; Pompano, 1,535; Miscellaneous, 534; 535; 1,391

Roads:

Files include information on requests for the donation of property or funds to support road construction, information concerning the location and plans for roads and requests for deeds from the MLC.

Special File Numbers: 2; 3; 20; 60; 109-110; 134; 152; 159; 163; 167; 179; 186; 191; 202; 209; 212; 213; 215; 230; 240; 258; 274; 302; 467; 497; 500.5; 532; 817; 840; 1,191; 1,405; 1,408; 1,471; 1,491; 1,536; 1,674; 1,711; 1,949; 2,038; 2,164; 2,190-2,190-A; 2,195; 2,281; 2,292; 2,340; 2,362; 2,409

Royal Palm Property:

Extensive documentation concerning the lease and sale of Royal Palm property is contained in this series. (See also Miami Country Club)

Special File Numbers: 680; 781; 1,675; 1,678; 1,755; 1,811; 1,832; 2,046; 2,155-2,155-A; 2,213; 2,246; 2,301

Trespassers and squatters:

Files include correspondence regarding the problem of trespassers and squatters on company lands and company influence in drafting and passing of related laws.

Special File Numbers: 6; 25; 121; 155; 205; 269; 300; 440; 505; 512; 1,895

World War I:

Files document MLC cooperation with the Food Preparedness

Commission to ensure an adequate wartime food supply. Ingraham wrote that he realized the necessity for

a large increase of acreage in corn, sweet potatoes, and other products raised in the South, not only for the sustenance of the South during the period of the war, but in order to supply the entire country and assist to the utmost of our ability in making up the shortage of crops which is anticipated throughout the North and West, and that as much as possible surplus...may be shipped over to the Allied Nations in Europe...

From 1917 to 1918, the MLC maintained records of farm crops, enabling the Food Commission to predict the various yields of produce. The company also took applications, ordered seed and distributed goods to farmers. The MLC offered to furnish free seed to all Broward County farmers who would grow a summer crop of corn. In spite of its desire to aid the war effort, the Company would not concede to the use of its land for growing extra crops. Ingraham asserted that "We are doing our share in furnishing free seed without furnishing free land."

Special File Numbers: 265, 498, 556

Zoning:

Files contain correspondence between local officials, the agency and other large landowners.

Special File Numbers: 1,957; 2,153; 2,326

SERIES II: SALES FILES, is arranged in sub-series according to the type of document: Mortgage documents, Quit claim deeds, Warranty deeds, Easements and Timber permits. The Mortgage documents are usually labelled with a number preceded by the letters "PP, PG, or PC" indicating an individual Mortgage contract.

These initials appear to represent the following: "PG" designates sales made by the Miami agency in the PGLC territory; "PP" indicates sales of MLC land made by Pepper and Potter; and PC

represents MLC mortgages transacted by Pepper and Coffrin. The documents correlate to materials found in Series I, with the exception of the Quit claim deeds, or documents certifying the release of property from its former owner. These files numbered 1-420, date from 1928-1967 and contain less correspondence than SERIES I: SPECIAL FILES. SERIES II: SALES FILES also contains fewer maps and blueprints than are found in SERIES I.

Although some overlap occurs between the two series, SERIES II: SALES FILES may have replaced one function of SERIES I: SPECIAL FILES by 1930. Rather than maintaining more extensive "SPECIAL FILES" on matters of routine agency business, such as individual mortgages, the agency devised the more concise system of "SALES FILES." SERIES II: SALES FILES combined records of transactions completed within the same month and were usually labelled with the month and year. However, some files are identified only by the year or just the term "extended" in cases of extended mortgages. These records also provided locations and dates of all real estate transactions.

Some documents contained in SERIES II: SALES FILES are also found in SERIES I: SPECIAL FILES. Certain mortgages, for example, were originally filed as SALES FILES. An "extended " mortgage often generated additional correspondence regarding contracts, and a "SPECIAL FILE" was then created, and two files were maintained.

SERIES II: SALES FILES contains mortgages on important properties such as the Cape Sable or Everglades land. Others are significant because they record the sale or donation of property to companies such as Florida Power and Light, or to various local government agencies such as the State Road Department.

ENDNOTES

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OTTO G. RICHTER LIBRARY
ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT**

COLLECTION NUMBER 75

MODEL LAND COMPANY RECORDS

Written by
William E. Brown, Jr.
and
Karen Hudson
June, 1993
Coral Gables, Florida

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Henry Flagler, founder and president of the Florida East Coast Railroad (FECR), created the Model Land Company (MLC) in 1896 to manage his rapidly expanding real estate holdings in the state of Florida. The growth and expansion of the FECR was crucial to the development of Florida, and the MLC, with its three subsidiary companies, managed Flagler's "land empire" until its demise in 1967.

Henry Flagler arrived in Florida in 1885 and launched a railroad system that extended the length of Florida's east coast,

from St. Augustine to Key West. The railroad spurred the economic development of Florida, and, in turn, the state actively promoted the development of railroads. Both state government and local businesses offered land as an inducement to anyone who could finance the construction of a railroad line.

Under these circumstances, Flagler acquired several million acres of real estate between 1885, the year he purchased two short-line St. Augustine railroads, and 1912, which marked completion of the Key West railroad extension. Flagler obtained a portion of this land from Florida's Internal Improvement Fund (IIF), although he received the bulk of real estate from other Florida corporations. As Flagler secured deeds to lands, he established a "Land Department" within his railroad corporation.

To encourage Flagler's railroad plans, the state of Florida offered him approximately 2,050,000 acres of public lands. Flagler received the customary 3,840 acres per mile allotted to railroads for his work in northern Florida. The State legislature also passed a special land grant law to award Flagler 8,000 acres per mile for the extension of his line south of Daytona.

The Swamp Land Grant Act of 1850 authorized the federal government to "patent" or "deed" selected swamp lands to the State of Florida provided that the state grant these lands to developers interested in drainage and reclamation. The revelation that the state legislature awarded valuable lands to railroads led the federal government to terminate the land grant program. As a result, the state did not provide a great deal of the land promised Flagler.

Political considerations also complicated the acquisition of land by Flagler. Progressives in Florida's Democratic party, including Governors William Sherman Jennings and Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, obstructed Flagler's efforts to obtain lands. Jennings argued successfully against railroads receiving land intended for drainage projects. Facing such opposition, Flagler initiated a series of lawsuits to acquire these lands. A protracted legal battle ended in compromise, as Flagler accepted 260,000 acres, less

than ten percent of his original grant. The location of Flagler's property varied; portions were located in Broward, Dade and Palm Beach Counties, but the largest portion, 210,000 acres, belonged to the swampy Cape Sable area.

Flagler continued to pursue additional land acquisitions, however, with notable success. Facing obstacles with the IIF, Flagler began to acquire real estate indirectly from other corporations. Two corporations, the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company (FCLCTC) and the Boston and Florida Atlantic Coast Land Company (BFACLC), received abundant public lands, yet faced financial difficulties in canal construction and business ventures. Flagler subsidized the canal company for \$100,000 in return for debenture bonds and a note for the difference in the two amounts. Flagler was also named head of the company although he did not own any large block of stock. Flagler then financed dredging projects and promised to transform these land holdings into valuable real estate by building a railroad.

By 1895, good relations began to deteriorate. Albert P. Sawyer, head of the BFACLC feared a takeover of the FCLCTC and attempted to force Flagler out of the company. Although Flagler would not relinquish his power in the company entirely, he agreed to exchange the subsidy note he held for land in southern Dade County at a rate of \$6.00 per acre. To entice Flagler to build the railroad on their land, the FCLCTC and the BFACLC also "donated" lands to Flagler. The FCLCTC promised 1,500 acres per mile for the extension south of Lake Worth, and the BFACLC agreed to provide 10,000 acres for the Miami extension. Other individuals and corporations made similar pledges.

Rather than provide the railroad an outright land grant, the BFACLC donated land in the form of a one-half interest in its planned immigrant communities. George Miles, a company official, proposed this plan to protect the BFACLC from "being discriminated against by...the railroad company...if they decided to offer advantages to settlers which we would not be in a position to parallel." The BFACLC and the railroad began their joint venture in 1896, and organized the colonies of Modello and Hallandale. Disputes soon arose over the freight rates charged by the railroad.

By 1902, Miles suspected the FEER of financially suppressing the BFACLC to prevent construction of a canal along the east coast. Although no evidence exists to support this suspicion, Miles urged against the appointment of joint land agents. However, the BFACLC's lands continued to be sold through Flagler's "alphabet soup" of corporate enterprises by the Miami-based MLC agents until the 1920's.

As Flagler received land titles from the IIF, the BFACLC, other companies and individuals, he established a special "Land Department" of the FECR to manage operations. James E. Ingraham, former president of Henry S. Sanford's South Florida Railroad Company, served as Land Commissioner. Ingraham, a Wisconsin railroad engineer, came to Florida in 1874. In 1892, he surveyed the Everglades for a possible railroad route for Henry B. Plant's railroad system. Ingraham caught Flagler's attention when he reported that the east coast would serve as a more practicable route. Flagler immediately hired Ingraham and eventually placed him in charge of all land holdings.

Ingraham soon made Flagler's real estate holdings as profitable an enterprise as the FEC railroad and hotels. The key to Ingraham's early success proved to be advertising. Ingraham distributed booklets, pamphlets and a magazine, the Florida East Coast Homeseeker, in which he described the attractions of Florida's east coast as well as the lands for sale at most points along the railway. By 1896 the Land Department was incorporated as the Model Land Company (MLC), and Ingraham appointed president. Although Flagler first intended the MLC to serve as his colonizing agent for Modello and other colonies in South Florida, the MLC soon became the primary land company in the Flagler System.

Henry Flagler owned all capital stock of the FECR and the MLC. He also established the MLC as a separate corporation for "business and bookkeeping purposes." In 1902 Flagler's auditor began the transfer of titles of FECR lands to the MLC. In addition to allowing financial transactions to appear as "the true and proper sums received, paid and due by each of the said companies," this separation and transfer of titles also had the advantage of improving the financial status of the railroad company for purposes of borrowing on bond markets. In 1909, Flagler instructed his auditor to place all lands "for farming or for other than railway purposes" in the MLC account. In 1911, the FECR transferred lands in Dade, Palm Beach, Brevard, Volusia, St. Lucie and Monroe counties.

Flagler also created three subsidiary land companies to sell lands in specific areas. The companies served as separate corporate divisions for bookkeeping purposes. A central office in St. Augustine oversaw administration of the land companies. The Fort Dallas Land Company (FDLC), created on March 17, 1896, sold Miami-area lands; the Perrine Grant Land Company (PGLC), organized on May 6, 1899, sold Perrine lands; and the Chuluota Land Company (CLC),

established 1912, sold Chuluota (Central Florida) lands. The four companies together with the FECR and the Federal East Coast Hotel Company (FECHC) constituted the Flagler System. The land companies assumed control of the majority of Flagler's real estate holdings, and the FECHC and the FECR retained property pertaining to their respective businesses.

The three subsidiary land companies differed in the types of property sold, in dates of operation and levels of success. The FDLC, the agency used for Flagler's Miami development, possessed the most valuable property. Flagler purchased eighty per cent of the company's stock for \$ 8,000; he then divided the remaining twenty per cent between two FECR Vice Presidents, Joseph R. Parrot and James Ingraham. Ingraham, as president of all the land companies, controlled FDLC sales. The FDLC sold lots ranging from \$ 50 to \$ 100, and constructed cottages which sold for \$ 1,500. By 1899 sales were booming and in 1902 property sales totalled approximately \$ 182,600. The FDLC survived until 1908 when it was "amalgamated with the Model Land Company" to "simplify the work and reduce the operating expenses." FDLC profits, totalling \$ 248,000, and several Miami lots and buildings, were transferred to the MLC.

The PGLC managed valuable farmlands located along Biscayne Bay, eighteen miles south of Miami and extending 6 miles west. Information compiled by George Robbins, an FECR attorney who had extensive correspondence with the Perrine heirs, as well as an abstract of title, allowed Miami attorneys Hudson and Boggs to trace the title of the Perrine Grant for the MLC in 1914. Their research revealed the circumstances enabling Flagler to acquire an interest in the Perrine property.

In 1838, the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida granted land to the Tropical Plant Company of Florida, directed by Henry Perrine, J.A. Webb and Charles Howe. During that same year, the Congress of the United States also granted a township of land to Dr. Henry Perrine, provided that every section in the tract have "an actual settler engaged in the propagation or cultivation of useful tropical plants" by 1846, or eight years after the passage of this act. If Perrine failed to meet this condition, the land would be forfeited to the United States. After Perrine was killed by Indians during a war with the Seminoles, Congress renewed the conditions of the grant in 1841 for another eight year period for the benefit of Perrine's widow and his children.

Mrs. Ann Perrine requested the aid of Charles Howe, a former

associate of Henry Perrine, promising him a twenty per cent interest in the land if he could have it surveyed and settled in accordance with the conditions of the grant. Howe surveyed the land and brought thirty-six Bahamian families as settlers. Conflicts with the Seminole Indians, however, soon drove these new settlers off the land.

In spite of the Perrines' failure to meet the conditions of the grant, the heirs attempted to secure a patent to the land in 1862. Their efforts bore no success until 1896 when the FECR intervened on behalf of the Perrines, obtaining the patent, and settling claims with independent homesteaders who had settled on the land. The FECR also assisted the heirs in a second lawsuit initiated by the American Contract and Finance Company, a New York corporation assigned the interest of Charles Howe and others. The Supreme Court of Florida finally decided in favor of the Perrine heirs in 1899. According to MLC records, "After securing the patent, the [Perrine] heirs, ...undertook to convey an undivided one-half interest in the grant...to the Federal East Coast Railroad Company."

To FECR representatives the deed was "open to serious and fatal objections as to certain of the grantors." The deed was ineffective to convey the claims of one heir "as her signature and her husband's lack witness;" the sanity of another grantor at "the time of conveyance" was "extremely doubtful" and a third did not sign the document "at all."

As a result of these circumstances, litigation concerning the title to the Perrine land continued. James Thomas Walker, for example, sued the MLC and the FECR in 1911 for his interest in the grant because the companies had negotiated the purchase with Walker while he was in the New York State mental asylum. Ingraham was notified of a suit filed in the United States Court in the State of Rhode Island and instructed his Miami sales agent to "simply reserve the lands set aside in the suit with Mr. Walker and not to make any explanation of it to anybody." There are no records of the suit in the MLC Records, although the MLC sold the Walker lands in 1913.

In spite of early legal problems, the PGLC was profitable and survived into the 1960's, longer than the other subsidiaries. The third subsidiary company proved unsuccessful. The Chuluota Land Company was unable to sell the 11,000 central Florida acres allotted it by the MLC, and was phased out of the Flagler system during the 1930's.

The main office of the MLC, located in St. Augustine, managed the lands belonging to the land companies, although numerous sales agents operated throughout the state. The practice of employing agents began during Ingraham's operation of the Land Department. Occasionally, railroad agents doubled as MLC representatives and provided information on soils, crops and farm production on lands at various stations. The original MLC sales agents included Frederick S. Morse, Miami; F.J. Powers, Homestead; J.B. McDonald, West Palm Beach; Austin and McNeil, Okeechobee; C.D. Brumley, Chuluota; Miller Hallows, Ft. Pierce; and others. The original Miami agent, Frederick Morse, maintained extensive files which clarify the role of the local sales units within the larger corporation, especially their significance in bringing local politics within the realm of MLC control.

The relationship between the Miami agent, Frederick Morse, and the MLC began in 1907 with Morse acting as "special agent for the Railway Company during the time it was building in and out of Miami." He purchased much of the right-of-way and other properties between Miami and Key West for the FECR. The agency, officially titled Frederick K. Morse Real Estate and Fire Insurance, "was planned and developed for the sale of MLC land jointly with the Boston Company Land" which Mr. Ingraham formerly sold in his St. Augustine office. Like other agents, Morse worked on a commission basis.

Morse's successors, Frank J. Pepper and Burr S. Potter, began working with the Morse agency in 1910. Pepper came to Miami in 1907 and worked for the Engineering Department of the FECR, then engaged in construction of the Key West extension, until he became a partner with Morse. After Morse's death in 1920, Pepper "took Mr. Burr S. Potter in as a partner." "Pepper and Potter" became the official sales agent for MLC land in their territory which is designated as:

"... that part of Palm Beach County South from South line of Boyton Canal, Broward County, and Dade County to West line of Range 37 East and to South line of Twp. 61 South including Key Largo Lands, excepting and reserving there from all lands and lots in the City of Miami."

Pepper and Potter devoted "practically all their time and attention to the sale of company lands." They made sales, collected payments

on contracts, attempted to prevent the expansion of city limits to keep taxes down and kept local records and surveys. The agency sold the lands of the MLC, the PGLC and occasionally the FEC Hotel and Railroad Companies.

In 1927, the agents relocated to the Ingraham Building on Biscayne Boulevard. The agency prospered in the 1920's, benefitting from the real estate boom of 1924-26, but struggled throughout the economic depression of the 1930's. According to Pepper, "... Miami banks began to fail in 1928, with the Southern Bank and Trust Company, and in 1930 with the Bank of Bay Biscayne. Then is when our troubles began. Our bank accounts became frozen and real estate stopped moving, and of course, our income (commissions) likewise stopped." During the 1930's the agency lost its northern clientele, while local sales grew increasingly difficult. Local farmers began to suffer from tariff laws and poor markets, and they could neither afford to buy new land nor make payments on the land they farmed. A lack of quality farmland compounded the problem; by 1939, Pepper reported that "all our best lands for farming purposes in Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade Counties have been picked over and sold out..."

Conditions improved by the 1940's. Another former associate of Morse, Milo Coffrin, assumed Potter's place within the agency; Pepper and Coffrin, Inc. acted as the MLC local agency. The agency changed its name again in the late 1940's to Frank J. Pepper and Son, Inc. and once again in the 1960's to Frank J. Pepper, Inc. Over the years, the local agency gradually assumed a number of extra duties and came to exercise a certain degree of influence in local politics. Pepper commented on agency activities in the 1920's, and wrote that members of the agency could be found:

"...attending council meetings...and also County Commissioner Meetings in Broward and Dade County in connection with which we are positive thousands and thousands of dollars have been saved the Flagler Companies because of our close attention to these matters and our personal friendship and influence with these officials. We have made it a rule to go over our territory at least once a week...visiting the Court Houses, City Halls, etc., along with our other business to keep up our friendship, acquaintances, and political prestige with these officials, so that when matters come up affecting taxes, zoning, condemnation, or anything else in which your companies are interested, we are informed and in a position to get

satisfactory results."

The agency also participated in Drainage District meetings from Lake Worth to Naranja, and also assisted in foreclosure suits by collecting affidavits, testifying and gathering witnesses. Agents maintained records of all these activities, in addition to records of surveys, taxes, sales and all other transactions and information on all significant local events. Their records reveal the depth of the MLC's involvement in local affairs.

The MLC and its ability to influence local development supported Flagler's original intention, "...to work in sympathy with the plans of the FECR for building up along its line, thriving settlements and increase the revenues...from freight and passengers" utilizing the line. Flagler once remarked that, "Every new settler is worth \$ 300 a year to me. He has to bring in everything he uses and send out everything he produces over my railroad." The power of the MLC also helped the subsidiary land companies as they sought profits from land sales. One MLC sales agent writing in 1911 reports that "Mr. Ingraham...instructed me to sell the land at the best possible advantage to the company on the basis that the company is now working for profits in land rather than traffick."

The activities of the MLC and its associated organizations grew to encompass sales and the promotion of Florida throughout the country. The MLC focussed on advertising the agricultural and industrial potential of the land, and employed agriculturalists, horticulturalists, and stockmen to attend to the development of the East Coast.

The MLC influenced the development of the South Florida region from a tropical frontier to a modern civilization, and the company has had a lasting impact on the area. Through a myriad of activities as a corporate land enterprise, the MLC affected the economic, agricultural, political and social growth of the area. The accomplishments and shortcomings of the MLC, many of which are documented in these records, offer a unique view of regional history.

ENDNOTES

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