

The Birth of Kendall

Part 1 – In The Beginning

Scott F Kenward, DMD

May 2009

When Florida achieved statehood in 1845, Dade County was little more than a vast block of dense, mosquito-infested wilderness. Stretching from the Hillsboro Inlet at the northern edge of present-day Broward County to Indian Key, five miles south of Islamorada, Dade County hosted only 159 residents in 1850.

That same year, to encourage the development of agriculture, transportation and other productive uses for federally owned swampland, the US Congress enacted into law the Swamp Land Act of 1850. This legislation, with its loose and ill-defined definition of what constitutes a wetland, allowed the state of Florida to eventually claim, between 1880 and 1903, all the land west of Red Road (SW 57th Avenue), between SW 104th Street and NW 7th Street. The state of Florida could then sell the land to individuals, reserve it for state use, or donate it to developers and entrepreneurs for construction of canals and railways.

By the time of the nation's Centennial in 1876, railroads had already spanned the continent and united the country in an unprecedented transportation network. The economy began a huge expansion, growing almost ten-fold in the last quarter of the 19th Century. This explosive growth required massive infusions of capital – more than Americans alone could supply – and so, European entrepreneurs invested in American railroads, mining, cattle ranches and land in prodigious amounts.

One such entrepreneur was Sir Edward James Reed, a retired Chief Constructor of warships for the Royal Navy and a member of the British Parliament, representing South Wales. Reed saw great potential in the rapidly developing railroad network of North Florida and between 1881 and 1885, was the prime mover and majority stockholder of two Florida railroad companies: The Florida Transit Railroad Company and the Florida Railway & Navigation Company. Reed's railroads crisscrossed the state, connecting Fernandina, Jacksonville, Ocala, Cedar Key and Tallahassee with over 500 miles of track.

Concurrently in 1881, Reed and a syndicate of English investors purchased two million acres of Florida land. The next year, Sir Edward formed the Florida Land and Mortgage Company, based in Bartow, Florida, to hold this property and, hopefully, to sell it off in small parcels at a profit. In 1883, under the provisions of the Swamp Act, the state of Florida sold four million acres of their recently claimed Dade County lands, between SW 88th Street and SW 104th Street, to the FL&M Company in the name of Sir Edward James Reed for the purchase price of one million dollars, or 25 cents an acre.

The Birth of Kendall

For the next twenty years, the Reed-acquired lands in South Dade County lay nearly dormant. Situated about halfway between the emerging communities of Coconut Grove (original spelling until incorporation in 1920) and Cutler, the region was isolated and subject to frequent flooding, discouraging settlement.

However desolate, the area was not without its inhabitants. The Seminole Indians, a renegade group of the Creek Indians from Georgia, had migrated to South Florida in the mid-1700s. Although the US Military, during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), forced most of the tribe to relocate to Indian Country in Oklahoma, there were still 129 Seminole Indians living in Dade County in 1900. A Seminole Indian Village stood just west of what is now Baptist Hospital and a larger one sat on high ground at the present-day intersection of SW 107th Avenue and SW 80th Street.

In 1884, the Florida Land and Mortgage Company appointed Henry John Broughton Kendall, as one of four trustees to manage the company properties in Dade County. The son of the British Consul for Peru, Henry was born in Lima in 1841, returning as an infant with his family to their home in London the following year. The first three decades of Kendall's life remain unknown, but we do know that by age 30 he was a foreign merchant and by age 38 had followed in his father's footsteps, serving as the London Consul for Bolivia.

By the time he travelled to America in 1883, Kendall had risen to the rank of Director of the Union Bank of London, a title he would hold at four additional major British firms over the next two decades. As a trustee of the Railway Investment Company and the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company (which would eventually become Citibank), Kendall helped secure over 10 million dollars in loans for the construction of a tunnel under the Hudson River for steam trains, connecting New Jersey and New York City. Although a financial crisis ended the flow of investment capital from England, killing the project, the work would eventually resume in the 1920s, resulting in today's Holland Tunnel.

The great mystery of Henry Kendall is the 18-year period, between 1884 and 1902, during which he managed Sir Edward Reed's lands in South Dade. There is no evidence that he lived anywhere in South Florida, and we know that he was quite active with his duties as a banker in New York and London at that time, particularly in the 1890s. Kendall was married, with five school-age children and maintained the family home in Hatfield, a suburban town 20 miles north of London, throughout his time in America.

The Birth of Kendall

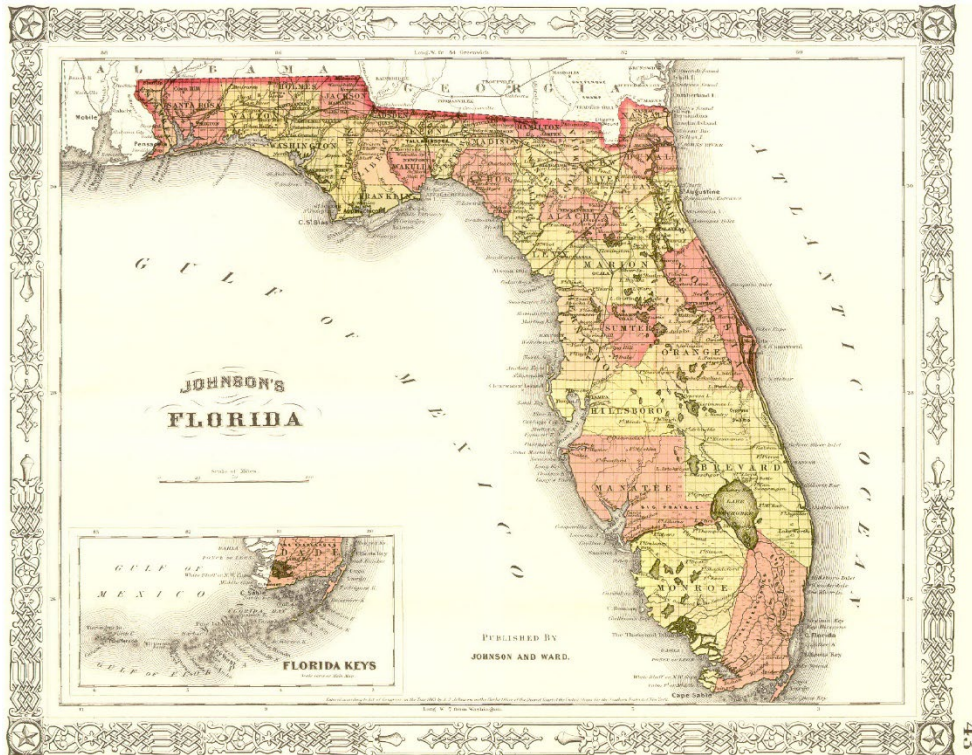
Nevertheless, by the time he retired to England, the FL&M Company lands in Dade County had come to be identified with Henry Kendall. Perhaps it was due to his ever-present name on deeds to acreage purchased in the area, his personal visits to inspect the property, or his connections with local realtors and bankers. In any case, the region now had a name - Kendall - but in 1903 another Henry would bring far greater change to the area. Henry Flagler's railroad was coming, and soon Kendall's decades of isolation would be gone forever.

Dr. Kenward is a lifelong resident of the Village of Pinecrest, Florida. He may be contacted through his website: www.kenwardmedia.com

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The Birth of Kendall



Map of Florida – 1863



Map of South Florida - 1863

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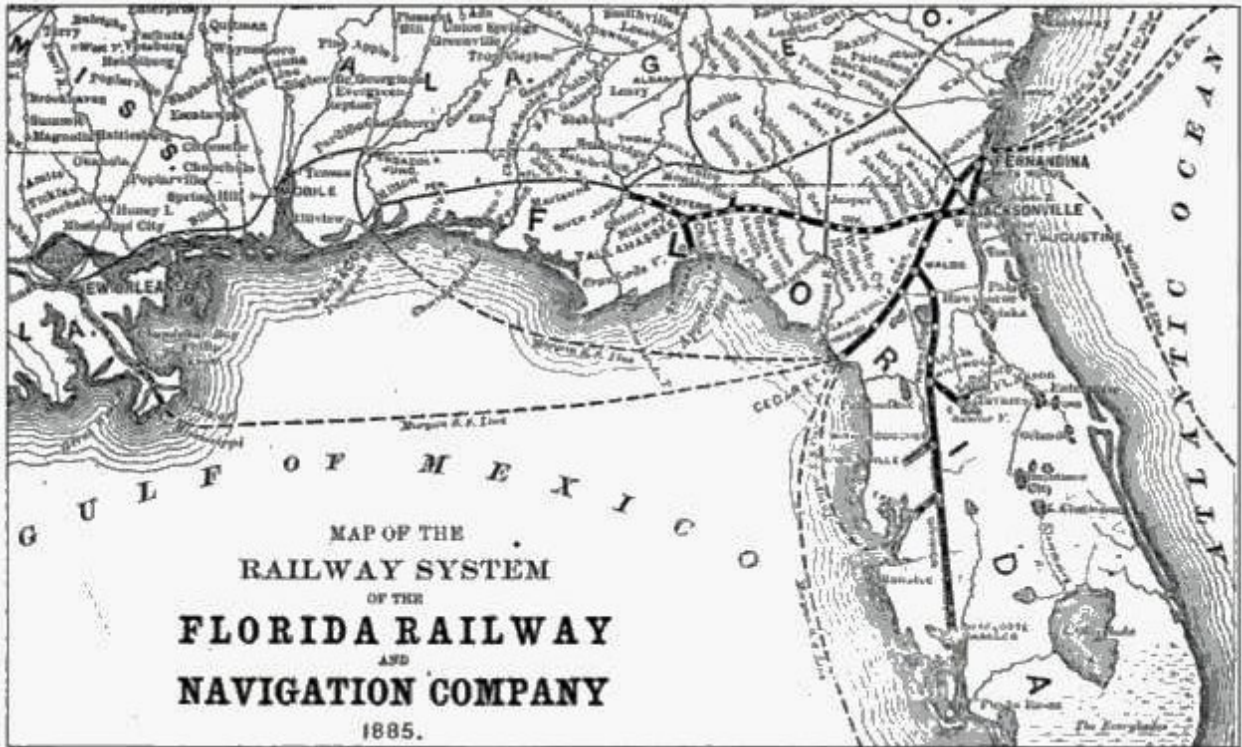


Sir Edward James Reed



Florida Transit Railroad Coach, built in 1881

The Birth of Kendall



Map of Sir Edward Reed's railroad empire in 1885



Engine No. 46 of the Florida Railway & Navigation Company was built in 1885

The Birth of Kendall



Kendall pinelands



Seminole Indian family in Kendall

The Birth of Kendall



Seminole wigwam of palm leaves built around Sabal palmetto

The Birth of Kendall

Part 2 – Father & Mother

Scott F Kenward, DMD

May 2009

While trustee Henry Kendall was quietly managing Sir Edward Reed's property in South Dade County in the 1880s for the Florida Land & Mortgage Company, Henry Morrison Flagler was falling in love. Newly remarried to Alice Shourds after the tragic death from illness of his first wife, Mary, the 53-year-old New Yorker and co-founder of Standard Oil brought his bride to St. Augustine for a honeymoon in 1883. Flagler was smitten with the historic city but found the hotel and transportation systems woefully inadequate. Realizing the potential of Florida to attract visitors from northern states, Flagler relinquished his day-to-day involvement with Standard Oil and set his sights on the Sunshine State.

He returned to St. Augustine in 1885 and began to build both his home and his Florida empire. Flagler purchased four North Florida railroad companies over the next four years and by 1889, could provide service from Jacksonville to Daytona Beach. By 1894, Flagler had extended his railroad system south to West Palm Beach, building luxurious hotels, planting impressive citrus groves and giving birth to new towns around the railroad stations along the way.

Henry Flagler was content to have West Palm Beach remain the southern end of his railroad line. He built two magnificent hotels, the Royal Poinciana and The Breakers in Palm Beach, near Whitehall, his 55-room, 60,000 square-foot winter home. But 70 miles to the south, a determined widow with 644 acres of land on the Miami River had plans for Mr. Flagler and his railroad.

Julia Tuttle had moved to the shores of Biscayne Bay from Cleveland, Ohio in 1891 after the death of her father, having inherited her late husband's iron foundry wealth and her father's Florida land. She had visions of a new city at her new home and wrote Flagler on several occasions over the next two years, imploring him to extend his railroad south to the Miami River. Flagler wasn't interested. But as the story goes, a hard freeze hit Florida in February of 1895, completely destroying Flagler's countless citrus groves. Julia's Miami River property was spared by the freeze and so she seized the opportunity and sent Flagler a box of orange, lime and lemon blossoms from her own grove. Henry got the message and by June, a deal was made to extend the railroad to the fledgling community in exchange for 100 acres of free land for both Flagler's Royal Palm Hotel and the new railroad station, as well as half of Tuttle's remaining 526 acres north of the Miami River.

The Birth of Kendall

Flagler's newly renamed Florida East Coast Railway reached Biscayne Bay in April, 1896. Flagler dredged a channel, built streets, instituted the first water and power systems, and financed the town's first newspaper, the *Metropolis*. When the town incorporated on July 28, 1896, its 700 citizens wanted to honor the man responsible for its growth by naming it "Flagler." He declined the honor, persuading them to use an old Indian name, "Miami." Nevertheless, through their foresight, efforts and achievements, Tuttle and Flagler owned the well-earned titles, "Mother and Father of Miami."

In January 1897, Flagler opened his opulent five-story, 450-room Royal Palm Hotel, featuring Miami's first electric lights, elevator and swimming pool. The hotel would dominate Miami social life for more than two decades, as the city grew to world-class resort status itself, surrounding its new centerpiece. The Royal Palm was severely damaged in the Category 4 hurricane that flattened Miami on September 18, 1926. Dilapidated and termite-infested, the property was condemned and torn down in 1930, later to become the site of the DuPont Plaza Hotel.

By 1901, Flagler had decided that his Florida East Coast Railway should be extended from Biscayne Bay to Key West. At the time, Key West was Florida's most populated city and it was also the United States' closest deep-water port to the canal that the US government proposed to build in Panama. Flagler wanted to take advantage of additional trade with Cuba and Latin America as well as the increased trade with the west that the Panama Canal would bring. As it proceeded south from the Miami River, the railroad built stations at several intervals, and in the process created a series of new communities in South Dade.

All along the route of the FEC Railway's right of way, the State of Florida awarded the railroad company thousands of acres of land for each mile of track. Henry Flagler created the Model Land Company in 1896 to market this land both as farmland and as platted town lots and in the process, became one of the county's largest landowners. In that same year, Flagler hired John J. Hinson, a resident of Cocomanut Grove, to work on the survey team that was laying out the new town of Miami. Hinson was a farm boy and carpenter from central Florida, who travelled arduously by foot, steamer and sailboat to Biscayne Bay as a young man, seeking adventure in the new frontier.

Having proved his worth on the survey team, Flagler appointed the 32-year-old Hinson as a foreman on the FEC Railroad when construction on the Homestead extension began in 1901. The newly laid track passed through Kendall in 1903 and terminated in Homestead in 1904, the same year that the new railroad station in Kendall was completed. The Kendall railroad station no longer exists but would now be located at the southeast intersection of SW 100th Street, also known as Smoak Road and 77th Avenue, also known as Kendal Avenue, just west of US1.

The Birth of Kendall

In return for bringing his railroad to Kendall, the state of Florida gifted Flagler's Model Land Company 170 acres of what would someday be prime Pinecrest acreage. The area, known initially as Kendal Grove, was bounded on the north and south by SW 100th Street and SW 108th Street, on the west by Dixie Highway and on the east by SW 72nd Avenue. It is not clear if Reed's Florida Land & Mortgage Company was compensated for this appropriation of its land, but if reimbursed at the original purchase price, Sir Edward would have received a check for \$42.50.

It should be noted that the spelling, Kendal, was commonly used in the area for roads, land and even the first post office in the early days of settlement. It is believed that this was simply a common misspelling of the name Kendall – understandable because Henry Kendall's ties to the area had ceased at least a year before the construction of the railroad station.

Henry Flagler's Kendal Groves were designed to illustrate the value of the agricultural land in the area to potential investors. Flagler needed a dependable manager for his showcase Kendall property and John Hinson fit the bill.

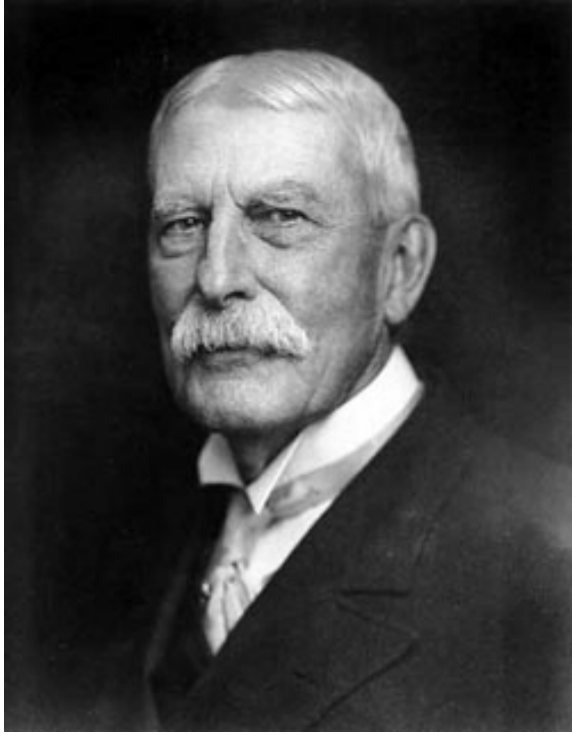
The stage was set. After 59 years of dormant statehood, Kendall, Florida was about to begin the transition from an isolated wilderness to a thriving community.

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The Birth of Kendall



Henry Morrison Flagler



The Royal Poinciana Hotel – 1896

The Birth of Kendall



The Main Hall at Whitehall, West Palm Beach

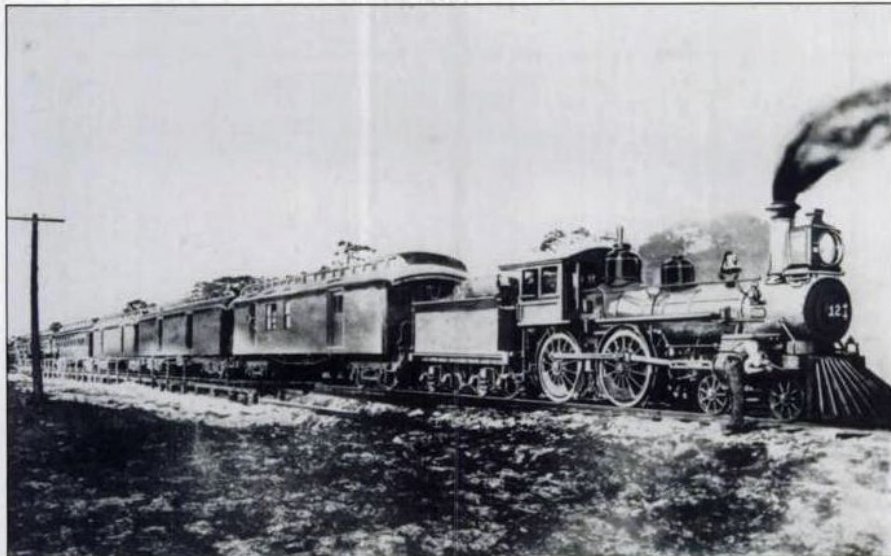


Julia Tuttle – The Mother of Miami

The Birth of Kendall



Miami's first railroad station at NE 2nd Avenue & Biscayne Boulevard



Steam locomotive No. 12 with a seven-car passenger train and a post office car directly behind the engine was the first train into Miami. This famous, retouched photo shows smoke blowing the wrong way.

The Birth of Kendall



Royal Palm Hotel and Grounds – 1912



Royal Palm Hotel Swimming Pool – 1912

The Birth of Kendall



An FEC locomotive leaves the Larkins (South Miami) station, headed south for the next stop, Kendall. The view is to the northeast, showing the intersection of two-lane Dixie Highway and Sunset Drive.

The Birth of Kendall



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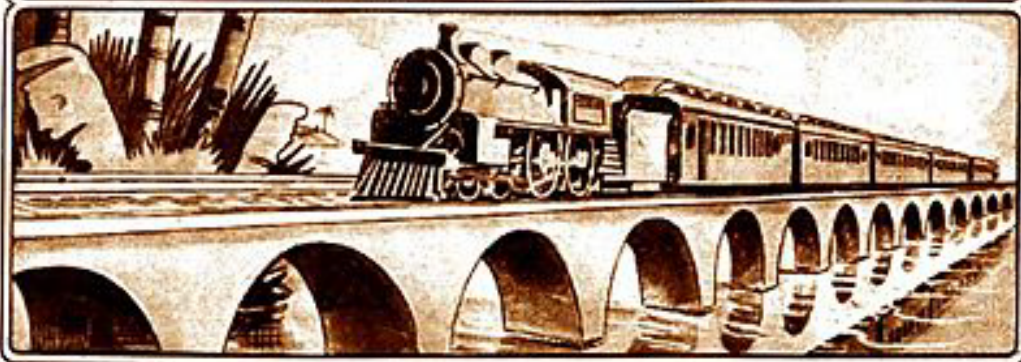
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Florida East Coast Railroad Advertisement - 1913

The Birth of Kendall

Part 3 – Flagler Grove

Scott F Kenward, DMD

June 2009

Trustworthy surveyor and railroad foreman, John J. Hinson was appointed manager of Henry Flagler's Kendal Grove in 1904 at the age of 35. The decision was made to clear a northwestern portion of the acreage for use as a citrus grove. The remaining strip of land around the south and east of the grove would remain undeveloped and serve as protection against disease, fire and "other objectionable features." The working grove would then be defined by SW 100th Street on the north, SW 104th Street on the south, Dixie Highway on the west and a line about 100 yards west of SW 72nd Avenue on the east.

Hinson, a large man standing over six feet tall and weighing over three hundred pounds, had the land cleared and set out the citrus grove on the tract in about 18 months. During the first three or four years of operation, Hinson reported personally to Flagler on all details of the work. Often en route to the Keys on his special coach, Flagler would stop at Kendall and take Hinson aboard, question him thoroughly on all matters pertaining to the grove, and put him off in Homestead to take the next train back to Kendall.

The first permanent resident of both Kendall and what would become the Village of Pinecrest, Hinson built his home in Kendal Grove on the southeast corner of Flagler Boulevard (SW 102nd Street) and US 1, facing the unpaved Dixie Highway. The home was cool and comfortable, with a wide porch that ran around the perimeter and windows and doors for every room opening onto the porch. Although no electricity ran into Kendal Grove, Hinson had a windmill that furnished running water to the two baths in the home, the citrus packing house and the worker's quarters, east of the house.

John Hinson became Dade's first County Commissioner of South Dade (District 4) on July 6, 1909, serving on the five-member board for seven and a half years. During prohibition and later during the depression, many of the men of Kendall supported their families by bootlegging. According to rumor, Mr. Hinson was a kingpin of the business, selling liquor on a wholesale basis, unmolested by authorities. No doubt his service as Commissioner encouraged the police to look the other way.

In June 1913, Hinson, a widower since his first wife, Ada Lee, died in 1909, having had two sons and a daughter, married schoolteacher and widow, Elizabeth Dowling, who had two sons and a daughter of her own. Elizabeth gave up her newly appointed position as Assistant Principal of Larkins School (South Miami) to marry John and manage the household. The six children were brought up in the Grove, completing Kendall's first family.

The Birth of Kendall

Hinson built a small 20' by 20' store west of the tracks on Kendal Avenue (SW 77th Avenue) just north of Smoak Road (SW 100th Street). In April 1914, Kendall's first Post Office began operation out of the Hinson store. Early on, Hinson's retail business consisted primarily of trade with the local Seminole Indians and occasional use of one of his four combination-lock post boxes.

Kendall's first resident, entrepreneur and County Commissioner, John J. Hinson, died in 1928 at the age of 59.

In October 1920, wealthy citrus grove owner and real estate developer, George Edgar Merrick, purchased the 200 acres of Model Land Company now known as Flagler Grove for \$110,000 or \$550 an acre. At the time, Merrick was just beginning the development of Coral Gables on 1,600 acres of pinewoods and citrus grove just a few miles to the north. Merrick saw the potential of Kendall real estate and intended to develop Flagler Grove as his next project, but it was only six months later that he had a change of heart. In April of 1921, George Merrick found himself overextended with his land holdings and to concentrate his efforts on the completion of Coral Gables, sold Flagler Grove to his business partner, Richard H. Rice.

Dick Rice had come to Miami from Arizona as a teenager in 1903 with his father, Tom, and settled in the Shenandoah neighborhood of Miami. He attended Miami High, married Key West schoolteacher Naomi Mayolini in 1911 and made his fortune with his Coconut Grove Boat Yard and his father's citrus grove and real estate holdings.

Although by 1923 the Florida land boom was in full swing, with real estate prices skyrocketing in a flurry of northern investment, Dick Rice maintained the Flagler Grove as a profitable working citrus grove throughout the 1920s. Rice hired Bahamians to pick fruit who were paid by the box. Asa Smith, a leader in the Coconut Grove Bahamian community, worked for the grove for forty years and could look at a grove and accurately estimate the size and quality of the fruit, as well as how many boxes could be picked. Asa was responsible for gathering the harvesting crews together each season to pick the 70 acres by hand.

When the Great Hurricane of '26 arrived in September of that year, the town was destroyed, the boom had turned to bust, and Miami had a three-year head start on the Great Depression. After the storm, Rice and Smith had the unpleasant task of resetting all 7,000 grapefruit trees, with the aid of a carload of two-by-fours. Fifty thousand boxes of unripened fruit lay rotting on the ground, unfit for sale.

In the depths of the Great Depression in 1933, Dick and Naomi Rice moved into the Hinson House in Flagler Grove with their four children, Dick Jr., Billy, Ruth and Bobby. Naomi pulled some strings with a friend whose husband worked for FP&L and had electricity brought into the home.

The Birth of Kendall

In addition to the wholesale business, the Rices ran a roadside fruit stand from the property, and Naomi sold decorative boxes with a jar of homemade guava jelly in each box. They did a brisk business, especially during the tourist season. Dick Rice tried his hand as a restaurateur, opening the Village Barn Grill in a log cabin style building and serving such specialties as squab, frog legs, and lobster from Italian and French chefs. Unfortunately, customers could not be convinced to travel so far south of the city for gourmet fare.

Just as the trees were recovering from the 1926 storm, the Category 5 Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 hit Islamorada, decimating Flagler's railroad to Key West and undoing all of Rice's grove restoration. The weary family offered Flagler Grove for sale at \$30,000, but in the depths of the depression, got no offers.

In January 1937, the Grove was finally sold to realtor, Kenneth S. Keyes of the Keyes Company, who created Flagler Grove Estates, Inc., developing it into small groves and home sites with two-bedroom, one-bath homes on acre lots for \$5,750. Under the motto, *"The Gateway to Better Living at Lower Cost,"* Keyes promised in his 1941 brochure that, *"Here are ideal country home sites that offer you breathing space, privacy, and above all, economical, happy living. The land is high, and the soil deep and exceptionally fertile. Here you can raise flowers, vegetables, avocados, limes, mangos, oranges, grapefruit and other tropical fruits. Several homes have already been built by people you would be glad to have as neighbors."*

The site of the Hinson Home was sold to zoo animal broker, Alton V. Freeman, in August of 1938 and was transformed from pioneer home and packing house into a world-famous tourist attraction, Miami's Rare Bird Farm.

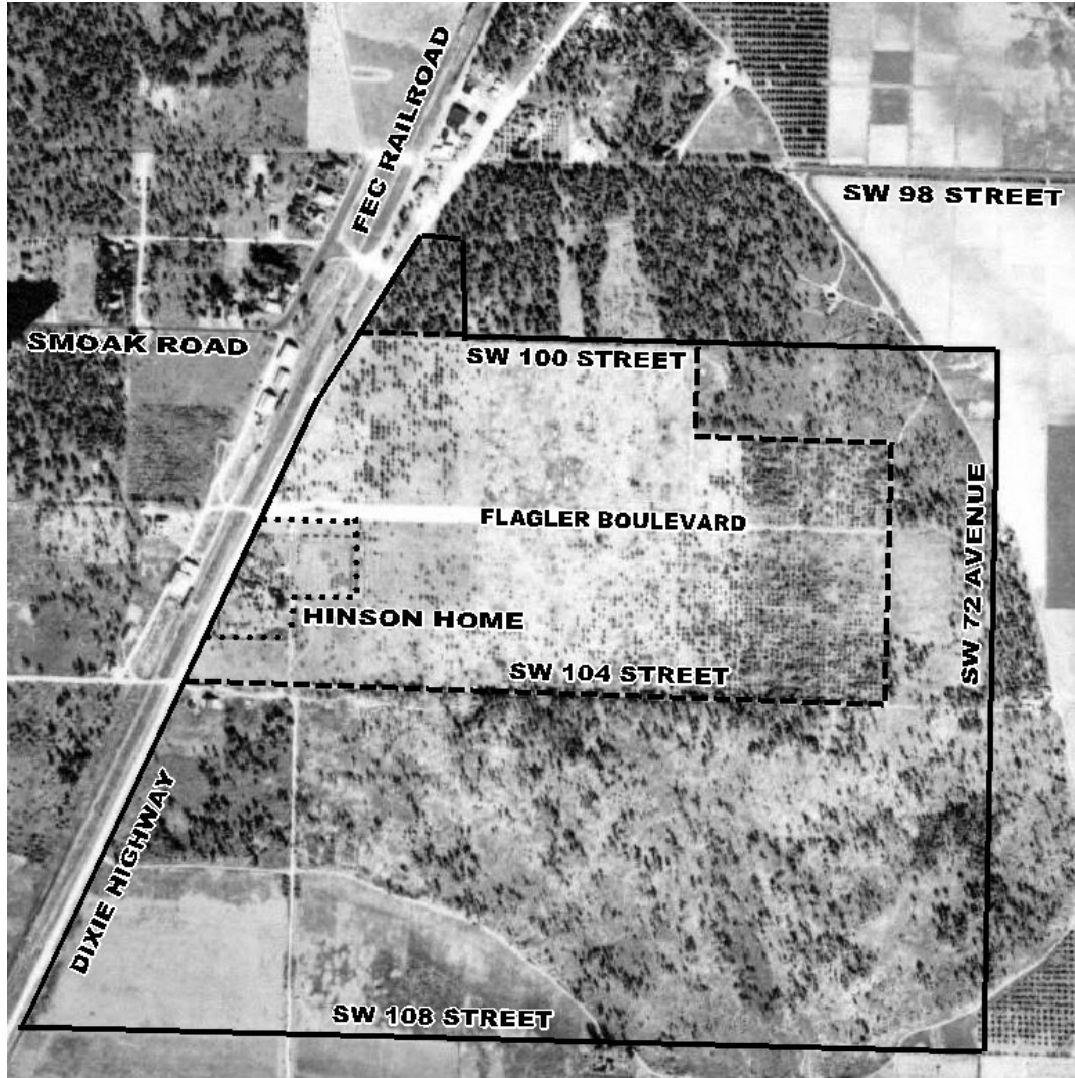
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The Birth of Kendall



1938 aerial map illustrating the Flagler Grove property – defined by a solid line, the working grove – defined by a dashed line and the Hinson Property – defined by a dotted line. By the time of this photograph, the Grove had been badly damaged by the twin blows of two major hurricanes within nine years.

The Birth of Kendall



Oil-burning smudge pot, used to protect temperature-sensitive citrus groves from freezing temperatures.



Grave marker of John Hinson's first wife, Ada Lee, located at Pinewood (Cocoplum) Cemetery in Coral Gables.

The Birth of Kendall



The 1926 Hurricane created a 12-foot storm surge and left 55,000 FPL customers without power for days. Many of the estimated 325 to 800 lives that were lost, perished after the eye passed over Miami Beach and downtown for 35 minutes, tempting residents to roam outside, unaware of the devastating back side of the passing storm.



The '26 Hurricane brought massive destruction well inland, flipping wooden homes like playing cards and leveling citrus groves.

The Birth of Kendall



George Edgar Merrick



Dick Rice

The Birth of Kendall



Merrick had big plans for developing Flagler Groves but was forced to sell to Dick Rice in 1921 to complete the development of Coral Gables.

The Birth of Kendall

Part 4 – The Rare Bird Farm

Scott F Kenward, DMD
July 2009

On August 3, 1938, seven acres of Flagler Grove, including the historic Hinson/Rice property, which was the site of the first home in both Kendall and what would later be the Village of Pinecrest, located at the southeast corner of Flagler Boulevard (SW 102nd Street) and US1, were sold to zoo animal broker, Alton V. Freeman for about \$40,000.

Alton Freeman, a veteran of the US State Department and fluent in Spanish, served as a commercial attaché at the US Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela. A self-described “combination of slave trader and riverboat gambler,” Freeman soon discovered a brighter financial future in animal brokerage than as a bureaucrat. He procured and sold wild birds and animals to large metropolitan zoos in the US, Europe and the Far East, as well as to research institutions in the United States, including the National Institute of Health, the University of Wisconsin and the Air Force.

Doing business with a letterhead that read: “For the Protection and Procreation of the World’s Diminishing Wildlife,” Freeman spent years making an annual round of the world’s zoos, keeping up contacts and visiting the animals he helped procure. After years of battling government regulations, quarantine issues, bad weather, unpredictable transportation schedules and the Pidgin English of native shippers, Freeman made the decision to settle down and cash-in on the booming South Florida tourist attraction industry. He collaborated with the owners of two New England bird farms; C.L. Sibley, of the Sunnyfields Bird Farm at Wallingford, Connecticut, and G. Fred Yessler, of the L’Chauwiechen Bird Farm at Great Barrington, Massachusetts, to create the Miami Rare Bird Farm – the largest bird farm in the world.

Yessler specialized in ornamental pheasants, bringing 39 varieties to Miami, including the rare Imperial pheasant, now found only in Vietnam. He offered a complete collection of jungle fowl and more than twenty varieties of quail and partridge to the new attraction. Sibley supplied his world-famous collection of waterfowl – ducks, geese, swans and cranes. He additionally brought his collection of beautiful peafowl, rare doves and pigeons and even a Cassowary, the largest wild turkey in existence, to Kendall. Freeman built a giant walk-in aviary in the Rare Bird Farm, allowing visitors to feed the colorful toucans, macaws and cockatoos and of course, take pictures to their heart’s content. A dozen ostriches, some nine feet tall, and the largest private collection of flamingos in the US roamed the grounds freely, mingling with the patrons.

The Birth of Kendall

Not content with his extensive bird collection, Freeman used his expertise as an animal broker to supply the Rare Bird Farm with a wide variety of wild animals. Always eager to turn a profit, he would often bring in some exotic creature, only to sell it a short time later to a zoo or research institution. A steady flow of zoo animals passed through the farm including anteaters, baboons, monkeys, cheetahs, ocelots, tapirs, llamas, Key deer, jaguars, Bengal tigers, elephants and zebras.

Freeman took advantage of the existing status of Flagler Grove as an agricultural center, expanding on the citrus grove theme to create a “vast, luxuriant tropical garden.” Some 68 varieties of tropical flora were on display at the Bird Farm, carefully landscaped amongst man-made wading pools for the flamingoes and comfortable benches and chairs for the tourists. Various palms and tropical fruit trees were showcased, including oranges, guavas, papayas, avocados, tamarinds, sapodillas and mangoes.

Alton Freeman and his wife, Frances, built a home in 1953 next door to the farm, just east of the property, with their school-age children. Favorite animals often found their way into the Freeman house, some remaining as family pets. At one point, a pink Amazon freshwater porpoise took up temporary residence in the Freeman swimming pool and occasionally a sick chimpanzee would be nursed back to health by Frances, with the aid of house calls from the family physician.

Dr. John K. Robinson, the former Associate Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Miami Medical School, lived next door to the Freemans and had a front row seat to the spectacle of neighborhood zoo life. He writes in his memoirs of a favorite family pet:

“Timmy, the six weeks old gorilla, who was raised along with the Freeman children. When he arrived, he was a very small animal with muscles as hard as steel underneath silky, soft fur. He was in diapers and a tee shirt and could not yet sit alone. Timmy was bottle fed but had to be held upright when feeding to keep him from drowning. He thrived in the home, eventually began to sit alone, and it was not until he began to walk that he seemed different from the other kids... he walked on his knuckles! He was given birthday parties and participated in just about all the kids’ activities, including holding on to their necks and backs while bike-riding, or sitting in the basket of a bicycle while riding up and down the street. For some unknown reason, he was afraid of bells, and whenever the phone or doorbell rang, he would run to Mrs. Freeman, climb up and hang on to her neck for protection. When he got bigger and she could no longer get herself loose from his grasp, she began to be afraid of getting strangled. Eventually, Timmy was sold to the Memphis Zoo, but trouble began immediately, because he was afraid of the animals! An employee of the Milwaukee Zoo heard about the dilemma and agreed to take Timmy for a while and introduce him to zoo life gradually. This worked out well, and he was returned to Memphis and later lived in the Bronx Zoo. Mr. Freeman visited with him on numerous occasions, and was always greeted warmly by this great creature, who ended up weighing hundreds of pounds!”

The Birth of Kendall

Because so many of the animals roamed the grounds freely, a series of amusing incidents punctuated life in Flagler Grove in the '40s and '50s. A kangaroo escaped the farm one day and hopped down Flagler Boulevard. Fortunately, it was so fond of Frankie, a farm employee, that Frankie was able to ride down the street in the back of a pickup truck and entice the animal to jump in with him for a ride back home. State troopers knocked on Freeman's door one morning at seven o'clock, informing Alton that his penguins were crossing Dixie Highway and backing up traffic as far south as Perrine. There was some speculation, never proven, that the incident was more likely a publicity stunt than an innocent escape.

A lasting memento of the Rare Bird Farm is the presence of the Red-whiskered Bulbuls in the Kendall area. In 1960, the Freeman children accidentally left the door to an aviary open and a half-dozen or so of the Bulbuls escaped. The birds, originally from Calcutta, India, adapted well to southeastern Florida's similar climate and vegetation and began nesting the following spring in the bushes of neighborhood yards. Although they prefer to nest near to where they hatch, by 1970 the Bulbuls had migrated as far south as Princeton and had reached a population of about 250. A major component of the Red-whiskered Bulbul's diet is the fruit of the Brazilian pepper tree, so although the population of the species has declined in South Florida to about 100, the Bulbul may unfortunately be contributing to the spread of this noxious and invasive plant.

Kendall's Space Pioneers

Perhaps the most noteworthy of the creatures that resided at the Rare Bird farm were a pair of monkeys named Able and Baker and a pair of chimpanzees named Ham and Enos. Able, a seven-pound rhesus monkey from Independence, Kansas and Baker, an 11-ounce squirrel monkey from Peru, were acquired by Freeman, raised at the Rare Bird Farm and sold to the US Space Program. On May 28, 1959, Able and Baker became the first primates to survive spaceflight after they rode in the nosecone of a Jupiter AM-18 missile to an altitude of 360 miles and a distance of 1,700 miles down the Atlantic Missile Range from Cape Canaveral, Florida. They withstood forces 38 times the normal pull of gravity and were weightless for about nine minutes. A top speed of 10,000 mph was reached during their 16-minute flight.

The monkeys survived the flight in good condition, but Able died four days after the flight from a reaction to anesthesia, while undergoing surgery to remove an infected medical electrode. Miss Baker lived another 25 years at the US Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama, receiving up to 150 letters a day from fascinated schoolchildren. Baker died from kidney failure in 1984, and her funeral was attended by more than 300 people. Even now, visitors will sometimes leave a banana or two at the gravesite in Huntsville, in memory of one of America's first space pioneers.

The Birth of Kendall

Ham, the chimpanzee, was born in Cameroon in July 1957 and was immediately brought to the Rare Bird Farm in Kendall. He was sold to the Air Force in 1959 and was sent to Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico for 18 months of pre-flight training, where he was trained to push levers in response to flashing blue lights. On January 31, 1961, the 37-pound chimp was secured into a Mercury capsule aboard a Redstone rocket and launched into space for a 17-minute, 155-mile suborbital flight. Ham was tested 100 times during the flight, responding to the flashing blue lights successfully 98 times. A post-flight exam showed him to be exhausted and slightly dehydrated but otherwise happy, healthy and hungry. The successful flight paved the way for Alan Shepard to make the first manned suborbital flight only three months later.

On November 19, 1961, after 1250 hours of training, another Rare Bird Farm resident chimp named Enos, aboard the Mercury Atlas 5, lifted off from Cape Canaveral into the first orbital flight. The mission took about three hours, with the capsule splashing down after the second orbit, just south of Bermuda. According to observers, Enos jumped for joy and ran around the deck of the recovery ship enthusiastically shaking the hands of his rescuers. Enos' flight was a full-dress rehearsal for the next Mercury launch on February 20, 1962, which would make Lt. Colonel John Glenn the first American to orbit the Earth. Sadly, Enos died of antibiotic-resistant dysentery only a year after his history-making trip. He now rests in a place of honor in front of the International Space Hall of Fame at Alamogordo, New Mexico.

The Grove Grows Up

By 1961, rising land values and the looming construction of the Palmetto Expressway only one block to the north, prompted Freeman to accept an offer from J. Abney Cox, Jack Knowles and Walter Peterson and sell the Rare Bird Farm after some 20 years of operation. The Freemans moved to Spruce Pine, North Carolina, where Alton continued to board and breed exotic creatures at his Zoo Animal Refuge for years, eventually retiring to southwest Florida. Alton Freeman died in Naples, Florida in 1982 at the age of 71.

The Rare Bird Farm property was sold in sections and has maintained its character as a mix of commercial and residential acreage. The Freeman home has remained a private residence on the easternmost acre of the original property. Dade Savings, later to become CenTrust, erected a bank building on the southwestern acre in 1963. The bank has remained in steady operation over the decades, transitioning to AmeriFirst in 1979, Great Western Bank in 1992, Washington Mutual in 1997 and most recently, Chase in 2009.

The Birth of Kendall

Robert A. and H. William Prah, of Prah Brothers, Inc. construction company, built a Howard Johnson motel on the eastern three and a half acres (excluding the Freeman home), which opened in early 1962. The Prah brothers and Finlay L. Matheson formed Palmetto Motel, Inc. and leased the northwestern five acres of Flagler Grove, containing both the motel and the adjacent Howard Johnson's restaurant, from Cox, Knowles and Peterson, with an option to purchase the property after five years.

Matheson, and later his three sons, Finlay B., Henry and Michael, operated the motel and restaurant under a lease from Howard Johnson. Palmetto Motel, Inc. exercised their option to buy the five acres in January 1967. The Mathesons assigned the Howard Johnson lease in 1978 to Palmetto Management, Inc., a corporation controlled by the Prahls, which operated the motel until it was sold. In 1990, the last of the Matheson's property interests in the old Rare Bird Farm acreage were sold to the Palmetto Holding Corporation, controlled by the Prah brothers.

After the northern edge of the eyewall of Hurricane Andrew creased Flagler Grove on August 24, 1992, the sturdy motel quickly reopened in September and found itself the southernmost motel operating in Miami-Dade County. The Howard Johnson motel became a barracks of sort, serving as housing for BellSouth and FP&L personnel for nearly two years of South Dade reconstruction. The motel served the community for over 38 years, becoming the independently run Palmetto Motel for the last few months of its operation, after the Howard Johnson franchise expired in late 1999.

Palmetto Holding Corporation sold the three acres of motel property on July 7, 2000, for \$3 million, which was then developed by the Richard Brandon Company into The Reserve of Pinecrest, a \$23 million gated community of 68 luxury condominiums, which opened in December 2003.

The historic Hinson Home property on the corner of Dixie Highway and Flagler Boulevard became home to the aforementioned Howard Johnson's restaurant in 1962, serving 28 flavors of ice cream for as many years. A Denny's replaced the Howard Johnson's, opening in October 1990 and operating until April 2007. The Prah brothers' Palmetto Holding Corporation sold the two acres of restaurant land to the Dixie/102 Trust in May 2001 and that land was subsequently sold to Thirteen Pinecrest, LLC in August 2004. In 2007, the pioneer acreage was developed into the Dixie 102 Plaza shopping center, anchored by the popular South Florida franchise restaurant, Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza. Anthony's opened in May 2009, once again providing Flagler Grove with a focal point for its small commercial district.

The Birth of Kendall

Just as Henry Flagler was ever vigilant about the careful development of his Kendal Grove, so are the residents of Flagler Grove fiercely protective of their unique and historic neighborhood. Periodically doing battle with zoning boards and commercial developers, community activists such as 42-year resident, Patricia Kyle, strive to ensure a fair and esthetic mix of both commercial and residential properties. Kyle successfully led the fight against the proposed construction of the Pinecrest Village Hall in 2000 on Grove acreage at 7551 SW 104th Street. That property is now the home of Flagler Grove Park, a three-acre facility that opened in May 2008, which includes lighted youth soccer fields, a playground, parking, and restrooms.

Echoes of the working grove remain in the backyards of residents. Pat Kyle, herself a grower and owner of nearby Galloway Farm Nursery, has an organic garden in her backyard and, like many of the homeowners, tends to the several mango and avocado trees which grace the property. Her allegiance to the neighborhood is evident. "I love the privacy," says Kyle. "It's just like the country, even though I'm so close to US1. I think the location is fabulous, it was just a wonderful place to raise the kids."

If Henry Flagler's mission at Kendal Groves was to impress investors with the value of his showcase property, then surely the subsequent 105 years have proven him successful. As yet, there is no historic marker denoting the pioneer property on the southeast corner of Dixie Highway and Flagler Boulevard. But one can still raise a glass to Alton Freeman, Dick Rice, John Hinson and Henry Flagler at Anthony's.

Dr. Kenward is a lifelong resident of the Village of Pinecrest. He may be contacted through his website: www.kenwardmedia.com

The Birth of Kendall

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The Birth of Kendall



A view of the entrance to the Rare Bird Farm, looking southeast at the corner of Dixie Highway and SW 102nd Street, in what is now the Village of Pinecrest



A 1952 aerial view of the Rare Bird Farm property in Flagler Grove

The Birth of Kendall



Alton Freeman poses with parrots at the entrance to the Rare Bird farm in 1946.

The Birth of Kendall



According to an early 1940s brochure, "One may relax and enjoy the study of rare plant life while some of the most beautiful birds in the world stroll in review, free to roam in this enchanted setting. Truly, beauty irresistible."



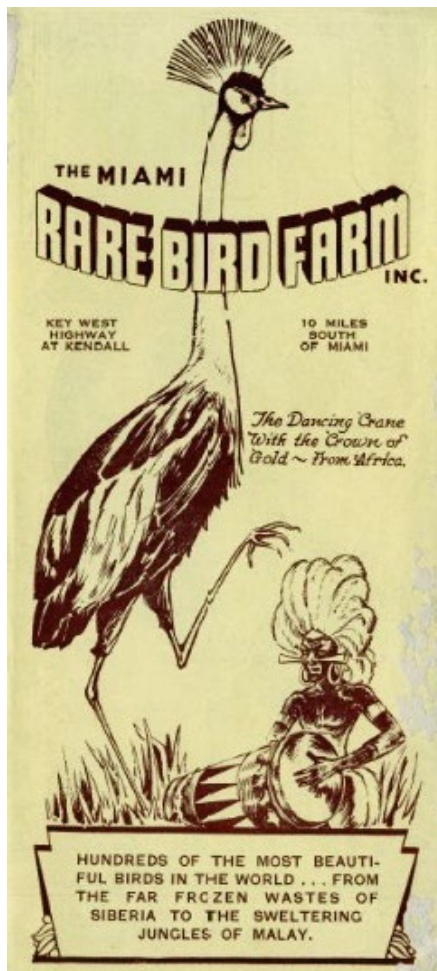
Huge Ostriches wander the Rare Bird Farm.

The Birth of Kendall



D. C. 3. One of the Wading Pools, Rare Bird Farm, Miami, Fla.

Flamingoes and swans cool off in the wading pool.



Early 1940s brochure

The Birth of Kendall

THERE IS ONLY ONE RARE BIRD FARM

Located in Kendall, 10 miles south of Miami, directly on U. S. Highway No. 1 (enroute to Key West).



For nineteen years one of America's most outstanding attractions. Over seven acres landscaped tropical foliage, where hundreds of the world's most rare colorful and exotic creatures roam free and uncaged. You will see White and Scarlet Ibis, Roseate Spoonbills, Peacocks galore, Toucans (its beak is longer than it is) a goose with the head and feet of a turkey, the bird with a crown of gold, tiny honey creepers no bigger than your finger to giant ostriches 9 feet tall, not to mention three of the four greater apes; Baboons, Monkeys, Ocelots, Tapirs, Llana, Deer and hundreds more too numerous to mention.



SEE THEM... HOLD THEM
PET THEM... FEED THEM



Bring your Camera too!
You will get pictures unbelievable.

MIAMI'S Rare Bird Farm

10 MILES
SOUTH OF MIAMI AT KENDALL, FLA.
HUNDREDS OF UNCAGED RARE
BIRDS AND ANIMALS ROOM FREE



AMERICA'S
MOST
UNUSUAL
ATTRACTION

Open Daily 9 A.M. to 6 P.M.

Our 19th Year

GUIDED TOURS EVERY HOUR

A 1959 brochure for America's Most Unusual Attraction, Miami's Rare Bird Farm

The Birth of Kendall



Frances Freeman feeds a pheasant on the grounds of the Rare Bird Farm.

The Birth of Kendall



Billy the cockatoo gives Frances Freeman a kiss.

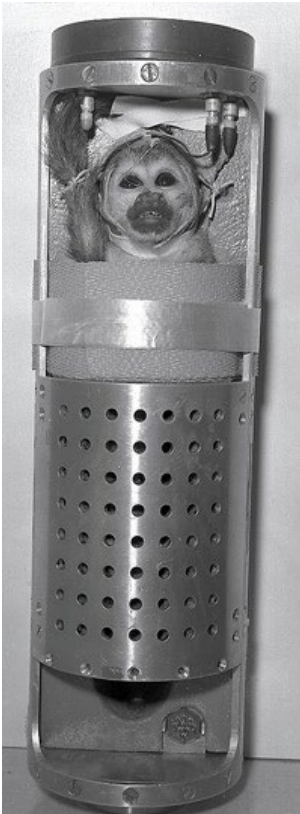


The Red-whiskered Bulbul

The Birth of Kendall



Able, a rhesus monkey and Rare Bird Farm resident, made his historic space flight in May 1959.



Miss Baker, Able's squirrel monkey crewmate, is secured in her thermos-sized capsule prior to her 1,700 mile, 16-minute mission.

The Birth of Kendall



Ham, the first chimpanzee in space, relaxes on board the recovery ship after his successful mission.



Jinx, the ice-skating chimp, celebrates Ham's accomplishments.

The Birth of Kendall



This 2005 satellite photograph shows the former Rare Bird Farm property 44 years after its closing. The property is now divided into four sections: A – Denny’s, which closed in 2007 and is now the Dixie 102 Plaza, B – The Reserve of Pinecrest, C – Private Residence, D – Washington Mutual (Chase) Bank.

The Birth of Kendall



Flagler Grove Park, a three-acre facility that opened in May 2008, includes lighted youth soccer fields, covered spectator seating, a playground, parking, and restrooms.

The Birth of Kendall



A 2009 view of the site of the Hinson Home & Rare Bird Farm, now the Dixie 102 Plaza, looking southeast at the corner of Dixie Highway and SW 102nd Street, in the Village of Pinecrest. The Reserve of Pinecrest stands in the background.