

Welcome to Coconut Grove!

As difficult as it is to imagine, the Greater Miami area a little more than one century ago was a vast wilderness with small clusters of hardy settlers living along the shores of Biscayne Bay. One such community was Coconut Grove, whose name derived from the successful efforts of Dr. Horace Porter, a onetime Union surgeon in the Civil War, to establish, in 1873, a post office in the middle of nowhere. As the story goes, Dr. Porter looked around, saw two Coconut Palm trees and decided to call the proposed post office Coconut Grove!

From its modern incarnation in 1882, following the opening of the Bay View Inn near Biscayne Bay, Coconut Grove has represented one of Greater Miami's most attractive, exciting, and compelling communities. Add equal dollops of beauty, creativity, eccentricity, and profound institutional development and you have the Coconut Grove that has appealed so strongly to residents and visitors alike for the past 130 years.

America was immersed in the Gilded Age, a time of industrial growth and national expansion at home and abroad, when Coconut Grove began its rise as a community. Among Coconut Grove's residents and visitors were many influential Americans of that era and later, people such as William Jennings Bryan, a leading statesman and politician; his daughter, Ruth Bryan Owens, Florida's first Congresswoman and an ambassador; Robert Frost, the nation's poet laureate; Alexander Graham Bell, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, legendary environmentalist, protector of the Everglades, and writer; William Deering of Deering farm equipment and International Harvester fame; John Bindley, president of Pittsburgh Steel; eminent American playwright Tennessee Williams; Dr. Leo Bakeland, who invented and marketed Bakelite, the predecessor of plastic; the family of Augustus Saint Gaudens, the premier Gilded Age sculptor; and Juan Trippe, the founder and president of Pan American Airways. Trippe's Pan American Airways' famed seaplane base stood at picturesque Dinner Key in Coconut Grove.

Fortunately, much of the early Grove remains, and this historical narrative will provide you with a pleasant walk down memory lane, past many of those structures, sites, and institutions that have set this Village community apart from other neighborhoods comprising mainland southeast Florida.

Within a decade of the opening of the Bay View Inn, later known as the Peacock Inn, for the British family that owned and operated it, Coconut Grove exhibited many of the trappings of emerging communities with a school, church, men and women clubs, post office, and a small business area.

2 Peacock Park 2820 McFarlane Road

Across McFarlane Road from the Woman's Club stands Peacock Park named for the family and inn located there until it was carried away by the mighty hurricane of 1926. Earlier, the Peacocks expanded the original wood frame hostelry, which became known as the Peacock Inn, as more visitors poured into the Grove each winter. Most came by boat through the warm waters of Biscayne Bay, which abutted the grounds upon which the Inn stood.



Peacock Park, circa 1890



Peacock Park, actual site of the Peacock Inn looking out toward Biscayne Bay

Many who came were struck by the natural beauty of the area with its subtropical hammock, ascending ridge, and the nearby clear waters of Biscayne Bay, and decided to make it their home. The Inn hosted Henry M. Flagler and Julia Tuttle for lunch, the founders of modern Miami, at a pivotal meeting in 1895, which paved the way for the entry of Flagler's railroad to Miami in the following year. The cook that day and every other day was the saintly Isabella Peacock, the Inn's matriarch, who usually included on the menu Green Turtle soup, as the nearby waters of the bay contained many of these turtles. The Inn closed in the early 1900s, after which the building was used as a school until its destruction two decades later.

By the middle decades of the 20th century, Peacock Park, which replaced the Peacock Inn as a popular venue on the same site, was home to a growing Beatnik colony replaced in the late 1960s by the Hippies. So exercised was the business community by the presence of the colorful Hippies that it prevailed upon the Miami City Commission, in the late 1960s, to close the park by 6 p.m.

3 Coconut Grove Library 2875 McFarlane Road

As we walk up McFarlane Road, which was, in the early 1900s, just a dirt road running up the ridge from Biscayne Bay, we see, on the same side of the street as the Woman's Club, the Coconut Grove Library. Designed in the early 1960s by T. Trip Russell, the building, with its wide windows and its



The Coconut Grove Library

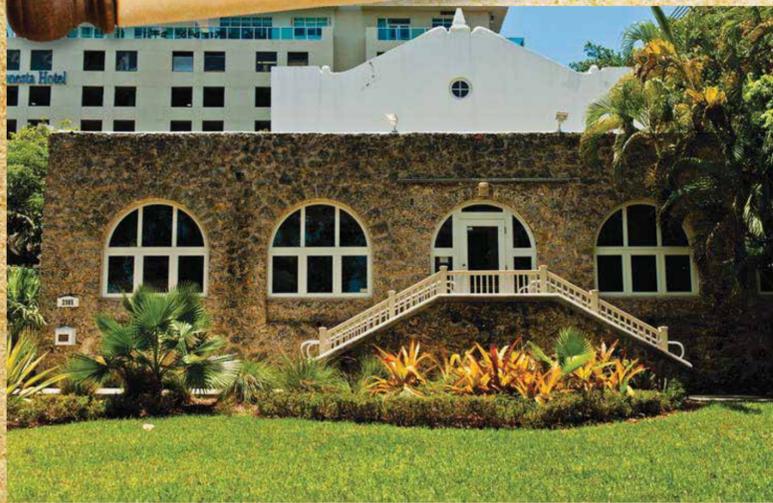
airy veranda looking out toward the pristine waters of Biscayne Bay, fits in nicely with the ambience of Coconut Grove. Founded in 1895 by Mary Barr Munroe and members of the Pine Needles Club, an organization of young women, the library was housed earlier in a wood frame building, a masonry mockup of which is affixed to the west wing of the present building. What gave the fledgling library its jumpstart was the donation of several boxes of books by the family of steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie, after his sister-in-law visited the library, then housed in the Peacock general store and came away impressed with it.



COCONUT GROVE WALKING TOUR MAP



20 Seaplane Terminal for Pan American Airways / Miami City Hall
To City Hall, proceed along South Bayshore. Turn right on Pan American Drive.



The Coconut Grove Woman's Club

1 The Coconut Grove Woman's Club - 2985 S. Bayshore Drive

We begin our look at those institutions constituting the early Grove in front of the coral rock and limestone home of the Coconut Grove Woman's Club, founded in 1891 by Flora McFarlane, Mary Barr Munroe, a creative, eccentric lady who often turned her back to the camera, and other women of the settlement. Known initially as the Coconut Grove Housekeeper's Club, the institution immersed itself in community uplift activities, sponsoring a rich array of fundraisers for these activities. Renamed the Coconut Grove Woman's Club in 1957, the organization's work brought early recognition for it at the turn of last century from Harper's Magazine, which suggested that its members represented a touch of civility in the subtropical wilderness that was Coconut Grove. The club's home for more than ninety

years, this sturdy rock building was designed by Walter DeGarmo, who lived just a mile away at the confluence of today's Main Highway and Douglas Road. It replaced an earlier wood frame building near that site. The building sits majestically on the ridge overlooking the quarter's waterfront and includes an Aframe ceiling. It has been the venue for many gatherings and events, ranging from parties to fundraisers to plays. Perhaps its most challenging moment came in the early 1900s, when Richard Carney, a prankster who lived nearby, switched the babies in their bassinets while the women were gathered for an event and their spouses were supposed to be watching the children! Carney's actions led Owen Winter to write of a similar happening in his novel, *The Virginian*.

4 Eva Munroe Gravesite 2875 McFarlane Road

Just beyond the library stands the oldest marked burial site in Miami-Dade County in an area enclosed by a small steel fence. Therein reposes the remains of Eva Munroe, the first wife of Ralph Munroe, who was a leading light of Coconut Grove for more than a half century. Just twenty-two years of age at the time of her death, Eva was a victim of tuberculosis. Initially, Ralph buried Eva on the north bank of the Miami River near its mouth, but, several years later, when he adopted Coconut Grove as his home, he disinterred her body and moved it to this site. There is plenty of room for another body in the burial site, and Ralph Munroe might have expected to be placed next to the body of his wife at the time of his death, but he later remarried and is, instead, buried far away in Sleepy Hollow, New York. Could his second wife, Jesse, have had anything to do with this?



Historic Eva Munroe Gravesite



Eva Munroe Gravesite, 2012

5 The site of the Union Congregational Church 2889 McFarlane Road

As we continue our westward walk upward along McFarlane Road, you will see on your right the beautifully landscaped outdoor dining area of the picturesque Peacock Garden Cafe and, just beyond it, the entrance to the Sonesta Bayfront Hotel Coconut Grove. On that site 115 years ago rested a simple wood frame structure that served as the Grove's first house of worship. Called the Union Congregational Church, it was open to all faiths and races. Two prominent congregations, the Plymouth Congregational Church and Macedonia AME Baptist Church, arose from it. Located elsewhere in the Grove, the former serving white congregants and the latter African-American, both continue to thrive.

6 St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Across the street from there is St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Built in the mid-1950s, it serves as an excellent example of mid-twentieth century architecture. Linked closely to the nearby parish school, this edifice replaced an earlier church looking out over Main Highway. The beautiful church of today contains a valuable pipe organ donated by members of the Burdine family, who owned Miami's premier department store of yesteryear. The church has long played a key role in the community. In the 1960s, it provided assistance for the large hippie community who resided in Volkswagen vans across from its entrance and oftentimes sat on rugs on the sidewalk located in front of the church. St. Stephens even offered employment assistance to these young members of the counterculture!



Peacock Garden Cafe



Ralph Munroe, photographer, author, designer of sailboats and builder of the Barnacle.

7 The Community's Historic Center at the Bustling Intersection of Three Roads: Grand, McFarlane, and Main Highway

Just up ahead of us is the bustling intersection created by the confluence of three thoroughfares: McFarlane Road, Main Highway, and Grand Avenue. While Johnny Rocket's on our right is a relatively recent addition to the neighborhood, yesteryear brought with it, at a location a few doors north of the restaurant, the Gaslight South, a '60s-era "coffee house" with performers that included among many folk legends Joni Mitchell, Donovan, José Feliciano, Jimmy Buffett, Fred Neil, Stephen Stills, David Crosby, Ry Cooder, Neil Young, Levon Helm, Richie Havens, and Coconut Grove favorite and longtime performer Bobby Ingram. Even years earlier, Beatniks had enjoyed jazz and read poetry aloud in that same venue. In more recent years, of course, Madonna called the Grove home.



Main Highway

Main Highway, the most picturesque of the three aforementioned streets, has, for decades, hosted parades, such as the colorful King Mango Strut, which annually spoofs the year's personalities, events, and issues. From an earlier time to the present, Main Highway has been given over on Halloween night to thousands of costumed revelers who wind their way along the thoroughfare as part of an Uber street party.

8 Along Main Highway The Engle Building 3000 McFarlane Rd./3401 Main Highway



The Engle Building

Crossing McFarlane to the south side of the intersection, we are now standing in front of the Engle Building, a 1954 commercial structure, built by George Engle a wealthy Texas oilman, with its signature rounded entrance. At one time the ground floor was filled with a pharmacy and the large sign on the wraparound segment of the building above the entranceway stated simply, but loudly, "DRUGS."

9 The Original St. Stephen's Episcopal Church 3439 Main Highway

Proceeding south along Main Highway, you will pass the site of the original St. Stephens Episcopal Church, a small, ornate Mission style building completed in 1912. It fell in recent years to the wrecking ball sparking great controversy within and outside of the community since there was no historical protection for the building and it was widely believed that the congregation had quietly secured a demolition permit for it. The church's replacement, the tall mixed use building on the same site has incorporated the mission bell from the original structure.



10 The Barnacle 3485 Main Highway



The Barnacle, circa 1895

Less than one block south of St. Stephen's stands Ralph Munroe's Barnacle, Miami's oldest home, which sits atop the ridge facing Biscayne Bay in the eastern portions of a five acre state park by the same name. To reach the two-story house, designed and built by Munroe, who also designed shallow draft sailboats, among many endeavors and skill sets, you will walk through the refreshing hammock or thickly forested portion of the estate off of Main Highway.

Before building his home, known as the Barnacle for the small marine creature that affixes itself to boats and dock spaces, Munroe, who had purchased 40 acres of bayfront land in 1886, built a two story wood frame boat house on the shoreline of Biscayne Bay. The first floor served as his workplace while the second story served as Munroe's living quarters. (Today, a replica of that structure, destroyed by the mighty hurricane of 1926, stands on the site of the original building.)



Ralph Munroe's Study

In 1891, Munroe built the Barnacle with its distinctive hipped roof. Three years later, Munroe married Jesse Wirth, and they soon had two children, prompting Ralph to build a second story to the original single floor structure. To accomplish this task, Munroe built a new first floor under the original house, which was raised on beams to make way for the addition. Another addition, which served as Munroe's library and study, was completed in 1913. The home is cooled most of the year by the bay breezes that waft through its broad open windows as hot air rises up and out of the structure by way of a pyramidal roof vented at the top.

Even though Munroe was busy with his family and businesses, he always found time to host members of the community whose ranks included Kirk Munroe, a renowned writer of boys stories, but no relation to Ralph, next door neighbor, Count Jean De Hedouville, a Belgian count who fought in the Franco-Prussian War and drove about town in a large roadster con-



The Barnacle, 2012



The Barnacle Boathouse built in 1886



The Boathouse today

vertible, and the inimitable Count James Nugent, an Irish-French settler who showed up at a wedding in formal attire but with bare feet because, as he explained to an astonished onlooker, he did not want to appear pretentious!

Members of the Munroe family occupied the Barnacle for more than eighty years, until 1973, when they sold it to the state of Florida for \$535,000, rather than see it fall into the hands of a developer with grandiose plans for a tall condominium on the site. Soon after it became a state historic site. The Barnacle is unique for many reasons, including the fact that, with its mix of historical architecture and a nonpareil hardwood hammock, it offers, at the center of one of southeast Florida's most fetching communities, an astonishing respite, one surrounded by the best that nature offers in the subtropics.

Upon leaving the Barnacle, walk to the left and southward along Main Highway to the first intersection, which marks the confluence of Main and Charles Avenue.

11 Charles Avenue

You are now directly across the street from the historic Coconut Grove Playhouse and at the eastern entrance to Charles Avenue, the historic thoroughfare, known earlier as Evangelist Street owing to a significant number of churches and parsonages located there. Charles Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood have hosted for 120 years a robust black Bahamian community. Many of the residents of this neighborhood worked at maritime-related jobs or farm, and exhibited a mastery of these tasks, as well as traditional building skills using coral rock. The avenue's name derives from Charles Frow, a white Bahamian homesteader whose family possessed the land encompassing Charles Avenue. The Frows sold land to many black settlers who came to the neighborhood, referred to today as the West Grove, but earlier as Kebo, a reference by its early residents to one of the tallest peaks in east Africa's Mt. Kilimanjaro.



12 The Stirrup House 3242 Charles Avenue



The Stirrup House

The most important family in the evolution of the black Bahamian Grove was the family of the Reverend Ebenezer Stirrup, a native of Harbour Island, Bahamas, who migrated in the late nineteenth century to southeast Florida. Stirrup worked as a field hand in the Florida Keys before moving to Cutler in south Dade County and then to Coconut Grove. All the while, he was saving money and investing it in land until, by the twentieth century, he was a millionaire. Stirrup's home, built in 1897, is one of more than 100 buildings he built in the area. The home is comprised of hardy Dade County pine and has remained in the family since then. The large Stirrup family, which occupied the home for many decades, includes several Miami Dade County school teachers and a school principal. There is an elementary school in west Miami-Dade County named for one of Stirrup's children.

13 The Coconut Grove Playhouse 3500 Main Highway



The Coconut Grove Theater, circa 1933

We return to Main Highway and the Coconut Grove Playhouse, built in the mid-1920s as a Paramount movie theater. Designed by Kiehnel and Elliott, whose singular buildings are found throughout Miami-Dade County, the Coconut Grove Theater was the county's largest cinema. The building was one of several designed according to the Bright Plan, named for its author, a Philadelphia architect and planner, John Bright, hired by the newly incorporated Town of Coconut Grove in 1921 to create a town plan. Bright created a plan for a beautiful Mediterranean style community that was only partially adopted.

The theater was converted into a playhouse in the mid-1950s, after its purchase by George Engle. Alfred Browning Parker, a noted architect and Coconut Grove resident, oversaw the theater's conversion. The first production in the theater was the American premiere of *Waiting for Godot*. As a playhouse, it rose to become one of the most important cultural institutions in south Florida and one of the most accomplished live theaters in the South.

14 The Origins of the Coconut Grove Art Festival

In 1963, in an attempt to promote "Irmã La Douce," a Broadway play appearing at the Coconut Grove Playhouse, the institution's promoters organized an art festival with a Left Bank ambiance. Because the Grove had been home to many artists and galleries, the artistic community responded to the invitation to exhibit its wares in the vicinity of the playhouse. A surprisingly large turnout of visitors prompted the festival's promoters to schedule a similar event in the following year. Forty-nine years after the first festival, the Coconut Grove Art Festival, a direct outgrowth of the 1963 event, represents the largest art festival in the South. It is held every Presidents' Day weekend.

15 The Intersection of Main Highway and Commodore Plaza

Cross this intersection and look to your left down Commodore Plaza past the popular Greenstreet Outdoor Lounge and Restaurant to the picturesque elements of this thoroughfare highlighted by its shade trees and a wide array of architectural styles. For many decades, Commodore Plaza has hosted trendy bars, restaurants, and clubs.

16 The Peacock Plaza and Anthony's Arcade 3436/3438 Main Highway

Continue along Main Highway to the next block. One of the early venues for the Coconut Grove Art Festival was the Peacock Plaza and Anthony's Arcade, a beautiful Mission style complex across Main Highway from the original St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

The building most representative of the popular Mission style of that era, the Peacock Plaza is another example of the Bright Plan. With its arched windows, barrel tile roof, textured stucco, mock towers, and bell cove, the building exhibits many of the elements of the Mission style found in Spain's former Latin American colonies. Observe the surrounding open courtyard and the bell cove with the mission bell above the roof level.

17 The Coconut Grove Bank Building



Original Coconut Grove Bank Building



H & H Jewels

Across the intersection at the corner of quaint Fuller Street and Main Highway stands the former home of the Coconut Grove Bank. A beautiful Mission Style building highlighted by its bell cove, the structure was designed by Walter DeGarmo, and represents another example of a building that arose according to the Bright Plan. Following the bank's departure from the building in the 1960s, Dr. John Lilly, an associate of LSD guru, Dr. Timothy Leary, used it as an experimental laboratory with porpoises in large tanks. When the federal grants supporting the laboratory dried up, so too did that facility.

For further information please go to coconutgrove.com, email Carl@grovebid.com or phone 305-461-5506.



Coconut Grove is considered the Sailing Capital of the World. The U.S. Olympic Sailing Team trains here.

18 The Sunshine Fruit Company Building

Just north of the old bank building and stretching all the way to the intersection of Main, Grand, and McFarlane is the historic Sunshine Fruit Company building, designed by the stellar architectural firm of Kiehnel and Elliott and constructed in the early 1920s according to the Bright Plan. Many of the present stores found in the building represent the oldest businesses in Coconut Grove, including a bar entering its sixth decade, and a smokers' "paraphernalia" store almost as old.

19 CocoWalk

On the west side of the intersection where the three thoroughfares converge stands CocoWalk, a popular mall that opened in 1990, on the site of the I-Ching building, so named for an Oriental store by that name, which occupied one section of the building. Just north of the complex stood a mid-20th century, outdoor barbecue stand patronized by Robert Frost, America's poet laureate and a winter resident of nearby South Miami for many years.

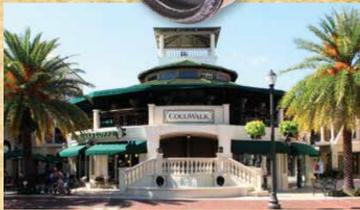
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20 A Side Trip

If time permits, you may wish to walk just four blocks south-east of the tour's beginnings at The Woman's Club and view the stunning Art Deco building set way back off of South Baysshore Drive at 3500 Pan American Drive. Located at Dinner Key, a parcel of land formerly an island, the building served as a seaplane terminal for Pan American Airways from 1934 until 1945. Since 1954, the building has served as Miami's City Hall. The restored mural that graces the ceiling in the commission chamber depicts flight in its many manifestations.

In World War I, Dinner Key, which acquired its name during the homestead era when sailing parties picnicked there, hosted one of the nation's first Naval air stations. The cavernous structure northwest of city hall was formerly known as the Dinner Key Expo Center. Built in the mid-1940s, the building was once the site of an infamous and controversial performance by The Doors and today hosts a television set for the filming of "Burn Notice," a popular cable show.

We have come to the end of our tour. As you have seen, Coconut Grove offers up ample amounts of beauty, ambiance, and history. The Grove is also one of the few communities on the southeast Florida mainland that hosts a lively pedestrian life, with plenty of parades and festivals, and offering wonderful hangouts for an idiosyncratic and opinionated crowd of locals and visitors who gravitate to this sun-drenched Village neighborhood of Miami every day of the year.



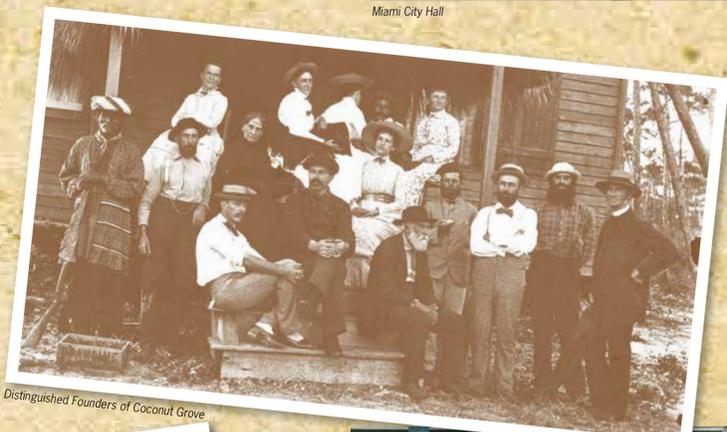
CocoWalk



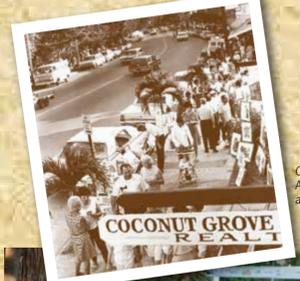
Pan American Airways Terminal circa 1936



Miami City Hall



Distinguished Founders of Coconut Grove



Coconut Grove Arts Festival, 1971 and now.



The Grove at its best



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Commodore Ralph Munroe's boat, Kingfish



The Coconut Grove Playhouse