

A Short History of the Sunrise Intracoastal Neighborhood

by

William G. Crawford, Jr.

Introduction

As vibrant as Sunrise Intracoastal's real estate market has been recently, there has never been anything like the activity experienced here almost fifty years ago when Antioch College, a small Ohio liberal arts school, began the development of the Sunrise Shopping Center (now the Galleria) and a residential subdivision to the south known today as Sunrise Intracoastal. Within just the first twelve hours of the subdivision's opening on March 6, 1952, real estate brokers sold twenty lots for a total of \$169,750--an average of \$8,437 a lot. Thirty-three lots--nearly a fifth of the lots available for sale--sold within the first month. By June 24, fifty-one lots had sold, bringing in \$410,250 for the college. Waterfront lots garnered the best prices, with the top-priced lot selling in early June 1952 for \$16,000.¹

Mr. and Mrs. Philip A. Pardoe, formerly of Detroit, Michigan, broke ground on the subdivision's first house in May of 1952 at 521 Intracoastal Drive while the College was still laying out streets and installing utility service in the area. A native of England, Mr. Pardoe was employed by the Prudential Life Insurance Company. Fort Lauderdale residents only since March of the year before, the Pardoes hired contractor T. M. Zink to build their three-bedroom, two-bath residence, comprising nearly 1,900 square feet, on a 100- by 120-foot lot.²

¹. The Sunriser, July 1952. Fort Lauderdale Historical Society collection; "Sunrise Now Available," adv., Fort Lauderdale Daily News, March 5, 1952; "Now For Sale...Sunrise," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, adv., March 7, 1952; "Residential Tracts Offered in Sunrise Development," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, March 8, 1952; "20 Lots Sold at Sunrise in First 12 Days," adv., Fort Lauderdale Daily News, March 10, 1952.

². The Sunriser, *op. cit.*

Hugh Taylor Birch

Antioch College acquired the 112-acre parcel when Chicago lawyer and philanthropist Hugh Taylor Birch died on January 7, 1943, at the age of ninety-four, leaving an expansive peninsula-shaped Fort Lauderdale tract between the Intracoastal Waterway and the Middle River and a beach-front property between Las Olas Boulevard and Sunrise Boulevard to his alma mater, Antioch College, located in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Birch also bequeathed \$1 million to the college as an endowment and another \$500,000 for the maintenance of a 980-acre tract of Ohio land the nonagenarian had given the college some thirteen years before his death.³

Birch attended Antioch College until 1869, attempting to finish a four-year curriculum in just three years. Lacking only one course to graduate, Birch withdrew to study law at a Chicago law firm. Sixty years later, after Birch had enjoyed a highly lucrative legal career, including service as general counsel to the Standard Oil Company, the Yellow Springs school awarded the Illinois-born lawyer an honorary Bachelor of Science degree as a member of the Class of 1869.⁴

Arriving in Fort Lauderdale for the first time in 1893, Birch immediately fell in love with the natural beauty of the area. The Chicago lawyer soon began to buy up hundreds of acres of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Middle River. Birch later gave his daughter Helen and son-in-law Frederic Clay Bartlett thirty-five acres of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway south of present-day Sunrise Boulevard as a present for their wedding in 1919. Construction began a few

³. Exemplified copy of Last Will and Testament and first and second codicils thereto, Estate of Hugh Taylor Birch, filed on February 28, 1944 in Wills Book 16, page 488 et seq., County Judge's Court, Broward County, Florida; "\$1,500,000 Left to Antioch," The Gazette, Xenia, Ohio, January 18, 1943.

⁴. "Hugh T. Birch Awarded Science Degree 60 Years After Leaving College," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, December 7, 1929.

years later on what was to become Bonnet House, across the Intracoastal Waterway from today's Sunrise Intracoastal subdivision.⁵

In 1939, Birch donated a fifty-foot strip of land running through the northern part of the Sunrise property for road purposes. The strip of land, originally known as the Tenth Street Causeway, is today's Sunrise Boulevard. The next year, Birch and his son-in-law gave an easement over their beach-front properties, allowing the public to use the beach, except for a four-hundred-foot strip. In 1942, Birch donated his 283-acre estate and grounds to the state of Florida for use as a public park; today, this coastal-strand-hammock preserve is known as the Birch State Recreation Area.⁶

The St. Augustine Canal Company

For years Birch had invested heavily in substantial tracts of land on both sides of the Intracoastal Waterway, acquiring beach-front property from Las Olas Boulevard to the north end of the Birch State Recreation Area at prices ranging from one to four dollars an acre. One such tract--three large lots forming what is now the Sunrise Intracoastal subdivision and the present-day Galleria shopping center area--originally derived from immense state land grants awarded to a privately-owned St. Augustine canal company in 1890 for dredging the Intracoastal Waterway from the west end of Brevard County's Haulover Cut to Jupiter in Palm Beach County.⁷

In 1893, the St. Augustine canal company deeded almost 7,000 acres of the land grant, including Lot 3 (the northwestern portion of the present-day Sunrise tract), to

⁵. Jayne Rice, Reflections of a Legacy: the Bonnet House story (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.: Bonnet House, 1989), p. 27.

⁶. Philip Weidling and August Burghard, Checkered Sunshine: the Story of Fort Lauderdale, 1793-1955 (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1966), pp. 171, 191-193, 201-202.

⁷. Deed executed by Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund of the State of Florida in favor of the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company on September 24, 1890, and filed on December 2, 1890, in Deed Book "D," at page 362, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida; William G. Crawford, Jr., "A History of Florida's East Coast Canal: The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Jacksonville to Miami," Broward Legacy XX, 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1997), p. 9.

Miami pioneer Julia Tuttle and Horace Cummings, a prominent Washington, D. C., lawyer, for their role as bond investors in the canal firm's dredging operations. Three years later, the canal company transferred two large government lots--Lot 2 (the northeastern part) and Lot 6 (the southern portion) of today's Sunrise tract--to Henry Flagler, to repay loans the railroad magnate had made to sustain the firm's waterway dredging activities.⁸

Birches Acquire Sunrise Tracts

In 1910, Birch's daughter, Helen, purchased the two Flagler lots, comprising almost seventy-one acres of mangrove swamp land, for only \$153.54. At the same time, Birch purchased the third (northwestern or Tuttle/Cummings) parcel, encompassing about forty-one acres, for the small sum of \$100 from Captain Dennis O'Neill, Fort Lauderdale's first keeper of the House of Refuge for stranded sailors (1888 to 1894) at today's Bahia Mar yacht basin. In 1930, Birch received Helen's two lots five years after Helen's death in 1925, and retained all three parcels until his passing in 1943. In total, the Birches paid a mere \$253.54 for the combined 112-acre tract between the Middle River and the Intracoastal Waterway south of present-day Sunrise Boulevard. By the time of Hugh Taylor Birch's death, however, the tract had increased in value to \$100,000, according to Birch estate appraisers.⁹

⁸. Warranty Deed executed by the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company in favor of Julia Tuttle on June 16, 1893, and filed on April 20, 1895, in Deed Book "N," at page 180, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida. Litigation brought by Cummings against Tuttle's estate in 1902 established Cummings right to a half interest in the Canal Company land deeded solely to Tuttle. Decree, Horace S. Cummings v. Henry E. Tuttle, et al., recorded in Circuit Court Minute Book 2, at page 296, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida. Warranty Deed executed by the Florida Coast Line Canal and Transportation Company in favor of the Model Land Company on February 28, 1896, and filed on June 16, 1896, in Deed Book "O," at page 300, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

⁹. Special Warranty Deed executed by the Model Land Company in favor of Helen Louise Birch on August 26, 1910, and filed on September 19, 1910, in Deed Book 51, at page 74, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida; Last Will and Testament, Estate of Helen Birch Bartlett, File No. 795, filed April 1, 1926, and recorded in Book 4, at page 90, Office of the County Judge, Broward County, Florida; Warranty Deed executed by Frederic Clay Bartlett and Frederic Clay Bartlett, Jr. in favor of Hugh Taylor Birch on August 30, 1930, and filed on September 4, 1930, in Deed Book 218, at page 119, of the Public Records of Broward County, Florida. Quitclaim Deed executed by Dennis O'Neill in favor of Hugh Taylor Birch on July 23, [1910?], and filed in Deed Book 53, at page 418, of the Public Records of Dade County, Florida.

Almost immediately after Birch's death, Antioch College began to develop another Birch property--the Birch Ocean Front subdivision--on the beach-side of the Intracoastal Waterway, out of a stretch of land running from Granada Street north to the Bonnet House. In 1945, the college filed a plat for the development of the property, dedicating a street named Bayshore Drive running along the Intracoastal Waterway. The plan also laid out avenues called Antioch, Orton, Birch, and Breakers and intersecting streets named Terramar, Windamar, Viramar, and Riomar. The Ohio school deeded the beach in front of the subdivision to the city for public use. A year later, the college began to sell hotel and apartment sites in the new subdivision. Within three years, the college sold out the entire subdivision, generating an additional \$1.5 million for the school's foundation and other projects.¹⁰

Antioch College Begins Development

Encouraged by the success of the beach properties, Antioch officials announced plans in January 1951 to develop a deluxe shopping center on the north forty acres of Birch's swampy, mosquito-infested property between the Intracoastal Waterway and the Middle River, south of Sunrise Boulevard. The college also planned to develop the remaining triangularly-shaped property to the south, surrounded by the Intracoastal Waterway and the Middle River, for residences and apartment buildings. The next month, the college filed a plat in Broward County's public records called "Sunrise Center," carving out three major tracts intended for commercial development south of Sunrise Boulevard. The plan also dedicated for public use a U-shaped road system

Report of Appraisers, Estate of Hugh Taylor Birch, File No. 3790, County Judge's Court, Broward County, Florida.

¹⁰. Weidling and Burghard, Checkered Sunshine, *op. cit.*, p. 234; Plat of "Birch Ocean Front Subdivision," recorded in Plat Book 19, at page 26 of the Public Records of Broward County, Florida. "College Makes Land Gift Profitable," [1953?], [n.p.] Fort Lauderdale Historical Society collection.

comprised of Northeast 24th Avenue, Northeast 9th Street, and Northeast 26th Avenue.¹¹

A year later, apparently unsatisfied with its original plan, Antioch filed a revised two-page plat called "Sunrise," revoking the prior plat and dedicating to public use a new street named Middle River Drive, a widened Northeast 9th Street with a generous median strip, and a new semi-circular Intracoastal Drive to the north of the present-day Sunrise Intracoastal subdivision. Instead of three large commercial parcels fronting on Sunrise Boulevard, the revised scheme created five tracts for business use: Tract "A" (present-day Galleria Cinema and Guest Quarters Hotel); Tracts "B" and "C" (today's Galleria shopping center); and Tract "D" (now Borders Books store and Galleria Professional Building). The new plat also called for a grand-piano-shaped residential subdivision to the south comprised of 168 single-family lots surrounded by the Intracoastal Waterway and the Middle River.¹²

To prepare the large site for building, Antioch used bulldozers to remove vegetation and scrape muck from the swampy, low-lying acreage. After constructing dikes around the perimeter, dredges worked continuously for months to pump coral rock from the beds of the surrounding waters, depositing the rubble in the middle of the development until--reportedly--more than a million cubic yards of material had covered the area.¹³

The Antioch Wall

The college also built on pilings a five-foot-tall, 3,700-foot-long decorative wall,

¹¹. "Officials of Antioch College Announce Will Go Ahead With Development," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, January 13, 1951. Plat of "Sunrise Center," recorded in Plat Book 27, at page 18, of the Public Records of Broward County, Florida.

¹². Plat of "Sunrise," recorded in Plat Book 28, at page 42, of the Public Records of Broward County, Florida.

¹³. "How 'World's Most Beautiful' Shopping Center Was Built," Fort Lauderdale News, January 30, 1955.

known then as "the Antioch Wall," along the northern boundary of the subdivision, separating the burgeoning residential development from the planned shopping center and apartments to the north. To insure a uniform quality development, the college imposed deed restrictions on building residences within the subdivision, establishing minimum house sizes ranging from 1,250 to 1,650 square feet. The college also reserved the right to approve home designs and to deny permission to build "on purely aesthetic grounds." Unlike some other Fort Lauderdale developments, Antioch's scheme did not restrict against ownership on the basis of race or religion. Jack Bennett, of Biscayne Engineering Company of Miami, performed the engineering services for the filling of the marsh lands and the construction of sea walls, public utilities, and drainage systems. Another Miami company, George E. Bunnell, Inc., along with the H. L. Carter Construction Company of Fort Lauderdale, constructed the seawalls around the entire subdivision. Porter G. Reynolds, later elected Fort Lauderdale's mayor in April 1955, provided landscape architecture services for the residential area of the large project, specifying royal palm, rubber, and other ornamental trees throughout the development.¹⁴

Emboldened by the success of the residential subdivision's early sales, the small Ohio college decided to build a shopping center to the north of the Sunrise Intracoastal subdivision on February 6, 1953, and the first construction began on May 31. Prominent local architect Clinton Gamble, of the firm of Gamble, Gilroy and Pownall, designed the new Sunrise Shopping Center, after visiting the most successful major shopping centers throughout the country. Discarding the traditional U-shaped design,

¹⁴. The Sunriser, *op. cit.*; "Mr. Corry's Address Made at the Formal Opening of Sunrise Shopping Center, 1/27/54," copy of typewritten manuscript, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society collection. Warranty Deed (containing deed restrictions) executed by Antioch College, Homer C. Curry, as executor of the estate of Hugh Taylor Birch, and Curtis Byrd, as ancillary administrator c.t.a. of the estate of Hugh Taylor Birch, deceased, in favor of Raymond C. Olson and H. Louise Olson, his wife, on January 21, 1953, and recorded on March 10, 1953, in Deed Book 813, at page 641, of the Public Records of Broward County, Florida, e.g. Weidling and Burghard, Checkered Sunshine, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

with parking in the middle, Gamble's concept was to arrange tenant locations compatible with shoppers' buying habits, such as locating hardware, shoe repair, and watch repair businesses near a supermarket.¹⁵

Gamble began preparing working drawings in January 1953; less than six months later, actual construction began. A local contractor, Richardson Construction Company, in association with Barnes Construction Company, of Ohio, served as general contractor. In less than eight months, builders completed construction, with doors open to the public on January 27, 1954.¹⁶

Sunrise Shopping Center Opening

An enormous crowd of 42,000 gathered for the opening of the new two-level regional center, comprising 172,000 square feet on a forty-acre site, with parking facilities for over 2,500 cars. By comparison, Fort Lauderdale's population totaled just over 50,000 at the time, with only another 35,000 residing throughout the rest of Broward County.¹⁷

At the time of the opening, fifty tenants occupied the sixty available air-conditioned stores, including Saks Fifth Avenue, Anita Kott, Martin-Burns, and F. W. Woolworth. Food Fair grocery store took up a building of its own. A completely-equipped children's play area, with a matron in attendance, allowed shoppers to drop-off their children in a supervised setting while visiting stores in the new center.¹⁸

¹⁵. "Mr. Corry's Address," *op. cit.*; "Birch Endowment to Antioch Pays Rich Dividends," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, January 24, 1954; "Center a Tribute to Hugh Taylor Birch," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, January 26, 1954; "How 'World's Most Beautiful' Shopping Center Was Built," *op. cit.*; "Sunrise May Change Shopping Patterns," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, January 30, 1955.

¹⁶. "Mr. Corry's Address," *op. cit.* "How 'World's Most Beautiful' Shopping Center Was Built," *op. cit.*

¹⁷. "42,000 at Sunrise Center Opening," Fort Lauderdale Daily News, January 28, 1954.

¹⁸. Copy of "Location Plan of Sunrise Shopping Center," [1954?], Fort Lauderdale Historical Society collection; Copy of advertisement, "Sunrise Shopping Center Tells Its Story: Here's How Sunrise Will Look in January," n.d., Fort Lauderdale Historical Society collection.

On hand to cut the ribbon on the first day of the three-day opening of the spectacular \$2.5 million retail center (then the largest shopping center in south Florida) was Ivy Stranahan, Broward County's first school teacher and widow of Fort Lauderdale's first merchant. Homer Curry, chairman of Antioch College's trustees, lauded the great feat accomplished by both the architect and contractor in erecting the center in thirteen months from the start of working drawings to completion, with fifty-seven "rain" days in between. Commenting on Ivy Stranahan's presence at the celebration, Curry noted that Antioch was the first college in the nation to employ women as teachers and the first to accept women as students on equal terms with men. Curry also announced the college's intentions to expand the shopping center to 400,000 square feet. Queen of the three-day opening was glamorous Hungarian actress Magda Gabor, one of the famous Gabor sisters, who exclaimed to the opening-day crowd: "You are lucky to be in Ft. Lauderdale; in California it is freezing." The Marine band from Opa-Locka joined the Fort Lauderdale high school band in providing the music for the opening celebration.¹⁹

"Sunrise" Renamed "Sunrise Intracoastal"

Twenty years later, in 1974, a forty-six-year-old New Jersey builder, Jordan S. Cohen, bought the Sunrise Shopping Center for \$12.5 million. Cohen planned to spend \$30 million to expand the shopping center by 260,000 square feet to a total of 790,000 square feet, "fairly confident" at the time that the expansion would persuade Neiman-Marcus to locate a store there. In November 1973, residents of the Sunrise subdivision to the south of the shopping center renamed the neighborhood "Sunrise Intracoastal" to distinguish the subdivision from the city of Sunrise developing in the western part of the county. The next year, residents officially incorporated the Sunrise Intracoastal

¹⁹. "42,000 At Sunrise Center Opening," op. cit.; "Mr. Corry's Address," op. cit.

Homeowners Association; Florence Pipes, who still lives on Middle River Drive, served as president at the time. In 1977, Leonard Farber, developer of the Pompano Fashion Square and numerous shopping malls throughout the country, purchased the twenty-three-year-old Sunrise Shopping Center, with plans to build a \$100 million retail complex called The Galleria.²⁰

Farber envisioned a shopping center encompassing more than 1.3 million square feet and hosting as many as 150 different retail businesses. In November 1980, the first phase of the development opened with a newly-designed Saks Fifth Avenue store, a new 210,000-square-foot Burdine's store, along with a renovated Jordan Marsh store. Farber expected the second phase, planned to house Neiman-Marcus and Lord & Taylor stores, to be completed one year later in the fall of 1981. The Galleria was touted then as the only shopping center in the country to include Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman-Marcus, and Lord & Taylor stores in one location.²¹

Dramatic increases in rents for existing tenants at the old Sunrise Shopping Center provoked long-time smaller retailers like Anita Kott to exit the Galleria for Las Olas Boulevard and other retail shopping areas sprouting up around the city. The opening of the giant retail complex also spawned a dramatic increase in crime, adversely impacting the Sunrise Intracoastal and Coral Ridge areas. During the last six weeks of 1980, Sunrise Intracoastal residents experienced six burglaries, numerous larcenies, and even a daylight armed robbery. The Sunrise Intracoastal Homeowners

²⁰. "Expansion of Sunrise Center Planned," Miami Herald, March 18, 1974; "Galleria," Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), November 5, 1980; "The Galleria Mall Sold to Cleveland Developer," Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.), December 24, 1986; Stuart McIver, "Galleria: The Mall that Grew Up in the Center of Town," Sunshine Magazine [Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel], November 27, 1983. "No Confusion Now," [photo and caption], Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, November 17, 1973; Records of Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations: Sunrise Intracoastal Homeowners Association, Inc.

²¹. "Dust Not Settled, But Galleria Mall Has Grand Opening," Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, November 7, 1980; "Deadline Nears for Burdines and Its Store of the Decade," Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, October 14, 1980.

Association responded by hiring police to patrol the area at a cost of \$60,000 a year--about \$400 a year for each of the 150 participating homeowners. The tactic reduced crime to "practically zilch," according to Fort Lauderdale Police Sergeant Frank Scarpino, coordinator of the off-duty police patrol in August 1981.²²

In February 1988, taking advantage of a newly-passed state law, the neighborhood's homeowners association asked Fort Lauderdale city commissioners for permission to form a special neighborhood district to tax homeowners for the security patrol. Although city officials initially rebuffed the idea, commissioners finally agreed to authorize the district four months later. In late October 1991, county officials mailed out ballots to neighborhood residents for a vote on the taxation issue. When the ballots were counted after the December 23 deadline, out of the neighborhood's 277 registered voters, only 137 favored the measure--two votes short of the majority vote required for adoption.²³

Twenty-five years after incorporation, the Sunrise Intracoastal Homeowners Association is still going strong. One hundred and forty-eight homeowners voluntarily contribute to the off-duty police patrol, and crime is still lower in the neighborhood than anywhere else in the city.

As a result of Association efforts, new improvements continue to be made in the neighborhood, including an expanded Green Field Park, antique 'Main Street'-style street signs and, of course, the beautification of the triangle-shaped 'Pickle Park' at the

²². "Little Guy' Odd Man Out," Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, October 18, 1980; "The Galleria Spawns Ill Feelings," Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, August 9, 1981.

²³. Safe Neighborhoods Act, chapter 87-243, Laws of Florida; "Community News," Miami Herald, February 3, 1988; "Tax Remains Untapped Crime-Fighting Fund," Miami Herald, April 25, 1988; "Colee Hammock Area To Get More Stop Signs," Miami Herald, June 18, 1992; "What They Did," Miami Herald, July 20, 1988; "In the Public Interest," Miami Herald, July 23, 1988; "Security Issue Divides Neighbors," Miami Herald, January 12, 1992.

intersection of Middle River Drive, Northeast 26th Avenue, and 6th Court. The Sunrise Intracoastal neighborhood also boasts what many have described as the most beautiful gatehouse in the city.

Within the last few years, the Association has fought for lowered speed limits for boaters using stretches of the Middle River and the Intracoastal Waterway surrounding the subdivision. The real estate market is still strong, almost as vigorous as it was in 1952 when the subdivision first opened. Sunrise Intracoastal continues to attract families--especially families with young children. New homeowners now include the children of long-time Fort Lauderdale residents--a testament to a still vital neighborhood community that began more than half a century ago as Hugh Taylor Birch's legacy to his old alma mater, Antioch College.

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NOTES

AUTHOR'S NOTE

An attorney and Fort Lauderdale native, the author is past Chairman of the Broward County Historical Commission, a trustee of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, and Historian of the Lauderdale Yacht Club. He resides with his wife, Claire, at 2409 Northeast 7th Place, in a home designed by the author's father, William G. Crawford, Sr., as a parsonage for the Park Temple Methodist Church in 1962.

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