

## **George Merrick of "Merrick Estate"**

George Merrick was the eldest son of Solomon and Athea Merrick of Duxbury, Massachusetts. Harsh cold winters in Massachusetts brought the family to Miami with the promise of perpetual sunshine after the loss of Ruth, one of their four-year-old twin daughters in 1899. Solomon learned of a homestead for sale which was located in the "back country" west of the small Coconut Grove settlement for \$1,100.00. Solomon Merrick withdrew his life's savings and on July 11, 1899 purchased the homestead, sight unseen.

When Solomon and George arrived in South Florida leaving the remaining family members behind to prepare their new homestead Miami was quarantined because of a yellow fever epidemic. When they were finally able to get to the homestead, Solomon Merrick was disheartened when he discovered he had purchased a rocky, partially cleared tract with only scattered guava trees and a crude wooden cabin. With only \$300.00 left to begin anew, this Yale educated minister had no choice but to go to work and make the best of the situation.

Young George and his father worked tirelessly to prepare for the arrival of Athea and the other four children who came in January 1900. The early years were very difficult for the Merrick family as George and his father, aided by Bahamian workers who lived in Coconut Grove, grubbed out the pine and palmetto and planted grapefruit trees. Until the groves began to bear, the family planted okra, beans, eggplant and other winter vegetables that George peddled by mule-cart in the growing City of Miami.

After nine years of hard work on the farm, Solomon and Athea sent George off to Rollins College in preparation for a law degree. After one year, he entered New York Law School. In 1911 Solomon suddenly died and George was called home to head the family and plantation. Under George's direction, the plantation expanded. In 1916 George married Eunice Peacock of Coconut Grove. After marrying, George dreamt of developing a city on the family land and entered into real estate. The first home built was his own, "Merrick Estate".

George gathered many talented individuals to assist in planning this new city which would be based on centuries-old prototypes from the Mediterranean. Before the first lots were sold in November 1921, Coral Gables had wide boulevards, lush landscaping and impressive plazas under construction.

Coral Gables flourished and expanded, as George Merrick's dreams became reality. But it would not last. By mid-1926 the red-hot Florida Boom was cooling. In September, a deadly hurricane killed any momentum that was left. Never protecting his own assets, George Merrick put his personal fortune back into the Gables trying to keep it alive. Unfortunately his efforts were fruitless and the family lost everything, with the exception of George and Eunice's estate.

## **“Merrick Estate” Coral Gables**

Located in the heart of Coral Gables is a mansion of distinction known as “The Merrick Estate”. Nestled behind the walls of this stunning estate is an ideal entertaining setting. Privileged guests of the estate are welcomed through an arch in the perimeter walls onto a beautifully appointed terrace that leads into the Ballroom.

The Ballroom with its estimated 35 foot ceiling and Baccarat Crystal Chandeliers make for an ideal cocktail reception area of the estate. Beautiful original oil paintings capture guests and help invoke conversation relating to the various pieces on display. Guests can move freely from the Ballroom out to the terrace through stunning palladium style doors trimmed in coral stone.

After cocktails guests are invited to the rear of the estate onto the main grounds. A Royal Palm lined mosaic pool complete with an elevated area make for the ideal setting for dining under the stars while entertainment sits atop the raised level with a back drop of columns. The architectural elements of the mansion make it a work of art in itself.

If hosting a formal affair on the grounds of a fully secluded estate are your desires then Merrick Estate awaits your arrival.