

Drainage of the marshes south of Lake Okeechobee uncovers rich muck soils, attracting farmers intrigued by year-round harvests. The Everglades Agricultural Area, a 16,000-acre area of land developed by William Conners, provides extraordinary crop yields. By 1920, this vast area is cultivated with tomatoes, beans, peas, peppers, potatoes and small amounts of sugarcane. Drainage canals also provide navigational access. Post World War I finds Florida in full swing with its



A model of Marvel Farms, a developer's dream for the Tamiami Trail. In 1923, Barron Collier begins building the highway across 76 miles of the Everglades frontier to connect Miami with Tampa. The state road department comes to his aid three years later in 1926 and the final cost is \$8 million or about \$25,000 a mile

first land boom; speculators and tourists travel to South Florida on the Flagler Railroad. Seminoles start alligator wrestling to attract tourist dollars. The state's population reaches 970,000 in 1920. The median age is 21, with men outnumbering women. The commonplace attitude of viewing wildlife as a nuisance or an unlimited resource begins to shift. Recognizing the value and necessity of conservation, Florida creates the Department of Game and Fresh Water Fish in 1925.

## 1913

**An intensive Everglades Report is accepted by the state legislature.** The Randolph Report suggests the Everglades could be drained at a cost equal to the value of the drained land. Everglades Drainage District funding changes from the levying of an acreage tax to the use of bonds based on future tax. Major construction begins. Between 1913 and 1927, six large drainage canals and numerous smaller canals, totaling 440 miles — including 47 miles of levees and 16 locks and dams — are constructed.



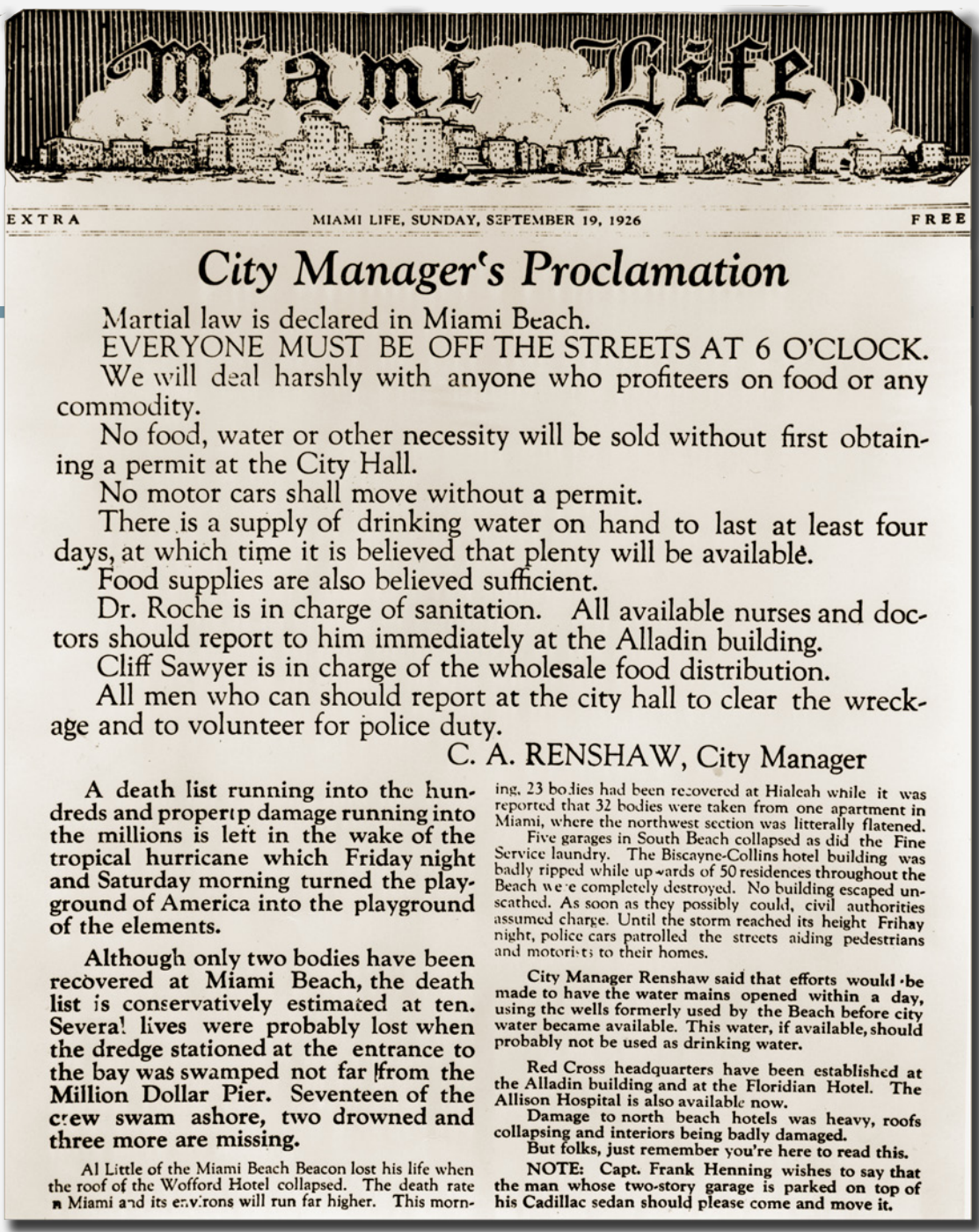
3,000-year-old cypress tree harvested from South Florida's swamps early in the 20th century

## 1925

**The St. Lucie Canal is completed.** Recommended by the Randolph Report and begun in 1916, the St. Lucie Canal now extends from Lake Okeechobee eastward to the tidewater. Unlike other canals constructed at least partially along the alignment of natural creeks or rivers, the St. Lucie Canal winds through uplands with no natural drainage patterns. Its sole purpose is to channel excess water from the lake to the Atlantic Ocean.

## 1926

**The Great Miami Hurricane strikes a blow.** It sends floodwater over Lake Okeechobee's earthen embankments (built by local farmers in 1915 from muck and sand) into Moore Haven (the region's largest town). The storm kills more than 400 people.



Destruction caused by the 1926 Great Miami Hurricane prompts city officials to declare martial law in Miami Beach

## 1917

**Four major canals are completed.** The Everglades Drainage District completes the construction of the Miami, North New River, Hillsboro and West Palm Beach canals — from Lake Okeechobee through the Everglades to the coastal tidewater.

## 1919

**A hurricane makes landfall over the Florida Keys.** A category 4, it is the sixth most intense hurricane to hit the U.S. in history. It kills more than 600 people.



A boat trip along the South Florida portion of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway

## 1927

**The Florida Inland Navigation District is created.** Completion of the Intracoastal Waterway in 1912 does not solve the problem of inland water transportation from Jacksonville to Miami due to the difficult task of maintaining the minimum depth. To comply with conditions imposed by Congress for improvements, the state legislature creates the navigation district to take over what was formerly in private ownership, eliminating tolls and ensuring a maintenance schedule.