

XI. Shaping the Land

THE BUILDING of Miami Beach started a new era in our own lives and in the American way of living. Even in the very turmoil of these years I was made to realize how much the lives of millions of Carl's fellow beings had been influenced by his life, and I liked to think that they were happier and freer because of it.

In his first surge of energetic living, Carl had demonstrated the automobile to be as utilitarian as the sewing machine. He had pioneered the good roads movement into a great network of splendid new highways that brought the states together.

Now, six miles of sand had whitened beneath the Florida sun, and on it Carl planned the city that would be known as Miami Beach, the only tropical playground in the United States, a city for those who, like Carl, would always be young.

The project seemed overwhelming when it first began back in 1913. The dredging and the filling-in of the swamp had been heartbreaking and costly work, for the saga of carving a great city from a swamp had many a heartbreak pumped in with the sand from the bay. But compared to the clearing of the land that started six months later, the dredging was child's play. Then the long wait for the broad sand expanse to sweeten. In those days the wind would blow the loose sand until the entire place resembled a Kansas sandstorm. Finally Para grass was planted to hold the sand.

Still no one wanted to buy this imperfect land, imbedded with dead trees, on a forsaken peninsula that could not even provide decent drinking water.

In the face of growing anxiety in 1913 we built and moved into our home, the Beach Shadows, at the very time when Miami