

and churches. In all, he promised to finance and build a beach—it was still being called Alton Beach at that time—that would be the play center of the world.

His plans made sensational news and were reprinted everywhere. Newspapers found good feature material in the fact that the “fabulous Carl Fisher” had discovered the true Fountain of Youth in Florida and was building a playtime paradise in a jungle. The publicity kept ahead of the actual building because everything Carl did made news.

A typical news item ran: “Mr. Fisher is having placed upon his island a magnificent eighteen-hole golf course, and the grass planted only six months ago is now well up. He has planted forty thousand coconut and Australian pine trees and expects to set out ten thousand more.”

Within a few months the new flowering forest did indeed shade a mushrooming metropolis—golf courses, houses, roads of glittering white coral, even hotels. So rapid was its building, outsiders doubted its durability as a building project. Its fantastic loveliness made Miami Beach seem more like a stage set than a city.

Carl had named the first great American highway for Lincoln. Now Lincoln Road formed the center of the new city, and its first building was Carl’s office. He built the first hotel in Miami Beach and named it the Lincoln Hotel. He would have named the city itself for Lincoln, but the name Miami Beach grew upon it and became a part of the daily speech of its builders. Carl never tired of names he liked, and much that he built was named for Lincoln. Just as Carl’s boats—every yacht, dorey and dinghy, with one exception—had been named *Eph* for a dog he had loved, until I named our first Florida home The Shadows. From then on that name was carried by a long succession of yachts, the *Shadow F* for Fisher, the *Shadow J* for Jane, and many other *Shadows*.

Carl and John Levi had argued over the building of Lincoln Road. Carl demanded extra width for this street that was to be the main thoroughfare cut through the mangroves from the ocean to the bay. John protested.

Carl raged: “Then make it twice as wide—make the goddamn street a hundred feet wide. I tell you that Lincoln Road is going to be the American Rue de la Paix.”

He would risk everything he owned to prove he was right. The millions spent in building these streets, homes, public buildings and hotels largely represented Carl’s personal fortune, and the greater portion of that fortune was being poured into Miami Beach. Millions had been sunk in creating the land itself. Millions more went into its clearing. He was still literally pouring money into the sand. Even for Carl’s fabulous financial resources, the inroads were staggering.

His incessant demand was for the best in materials and workmanship.

I believe he personally inspected every foot of pipe line and every inch of scaffolding. I would see the familiar slouched hat bobbing through a newly dug drainage ditch in a torn-up street, or silhouetted from a skeleton structure against the blue, blue sky. Then I would remember the first time I had seen Carl in his white car suspended in the clouds. The crowds staring up at him then had called him “that crazy fellow, Carl Fisher.” People were saying that still of Carl, but in lower tones.

Curious visitors drove over the rattling wooden boards of Colins Bridge to inspect our man-made paradise. They wandered through the city-in-the-making and were dumfounded by the lovely little new houses and the extravagant flowering of this newly created land. There was a widely quoted quip among them: “The Florida climate here is balmy, and Carl Fisher is as balmy as the climate.”

Many who asked to have pointed out to them the famous Carl Fisher were amazed to see a medium-sized, stockily built man, dripping in the heat, climbing out of a sewerage ditch or down from a scaffolding. Friendly, interested, vividly cursing and lashed with fatigue, Carl was one with the workmen in this great area of sprawling confusion and activity.

But Miami Beach rose like a city from the sea, fabulously beautiful, magically towered. Carl’s imagination had always been captured by towers, and all his office buildings were crowned with them.