

# Travel Outlook

## Florida's legacy of three giants

If a visitor to Florida should ever tire of sun, sand and Disney magic, the state offers some intriguing opportunities to savor a not so distant Golden Age.

Hard as it may be for today's visitor to believe, Florida was a virtually unknown appendage of the United States a century or so ago.

The origins of its subsequent development tend to support the Great Man theory of history. Among the most prominent of the great men in Florida's history are Thomas Alva Edison, Henry Morrison Flagler and Addison Mizner.

All of them have left striking legacies of their genius and foresight. To visit their former homes is to recall an era of magnificence and a spirit of greatness - and, let's add, to experience a certain relief from the tackiness that exists wherever tourists gather in large numbers.

### TOM EDISON

The Edison home is at 2350 McGregor Blvd., near the centre of Fort Myers, seat of Lee County in the sunny southwest of Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico. The 38-year-old Edison, deaf and ailing, travelled to Florida for his health in 1885, and staked out a 14-acre plot of the tropics in Fort Myers.

He chose the site because of the bamboo that grew along the banks of the Caloosahatchee River. Edison was considering bamboo as a filament for the incandescent lamp he was developing.

By the following year, the inventor had a rambling frame house built in Maine and shipped in sections to Fort Myers. It was remarkable not only as North America's first prefabricated house, but also for Edison's typically diligent planning - from its large doors for cross-ventilation ("air conditioning", Edison called it) down, to such details as waterproof and vaper-proof light switches.

An outstanding botanist and horticulturalist, Edison planted hundreds of trees and shrubs from all parts of the world. Centrepiece is a banyan tree that rubber magnate Harvey Firestone gave Edison in 1925 when it was a four-foot seedling. It is now more than 400 feet around the trunk.

A museum, added in 1966, memorializes thousands of Edison's inventions, and his office and laboratory can be visited in an adjoining structure.

The inventor died in 1931 at 84. His widow willed the Edison home to the city in 1947. It is open daily (although not Sunday mornings); adult admission is \$5.

### ROBBER BARON

The other side of Florida - its Atlantic coast - was developed almost single-handedly in the 1890s by Henry M. Flagler, the son of an impoverished preacher in New York State. Flagler became wealthy as a partner of John D. Rockefeller in Standard Oil (and therefore came to be called a Robber Baron).

Flagler spent tens of millions of dollars pushing his Florida East Coast Railroad from St. Augustine, in the north of the state, down to Palm Beach, then on to Miami - both of them little more than crossroads in the late 19th century - and finally to Key West, far out to sea.

The railway's construction brought about the first of what would be several Florida land booms, and Palm Beach quickly became one of the world's most fashionable resorts - as it has remained.

There, in 1902, at the age of 72, Flagler commissioned the pre-eminent U.S. architectural firm of the day to "build me the finest home you can think of," on a six-acre waterfront site. Within 18 months, the firm designed and constructed Whitehall, a spectacular mansion that was likened to the Taj Mahal because it, too, was built for a bride - Flagler's third.

### LOSING COUNT

Almost unimaginably huge, Whitehall has 52 or 55 or 73 rooms, depending upon your source of information and upon that source's definition of "room".

Behind its bronze front doors, visitors come upon a 110-foot-long entrance hall with seven varieties of marble, and with painted canvas

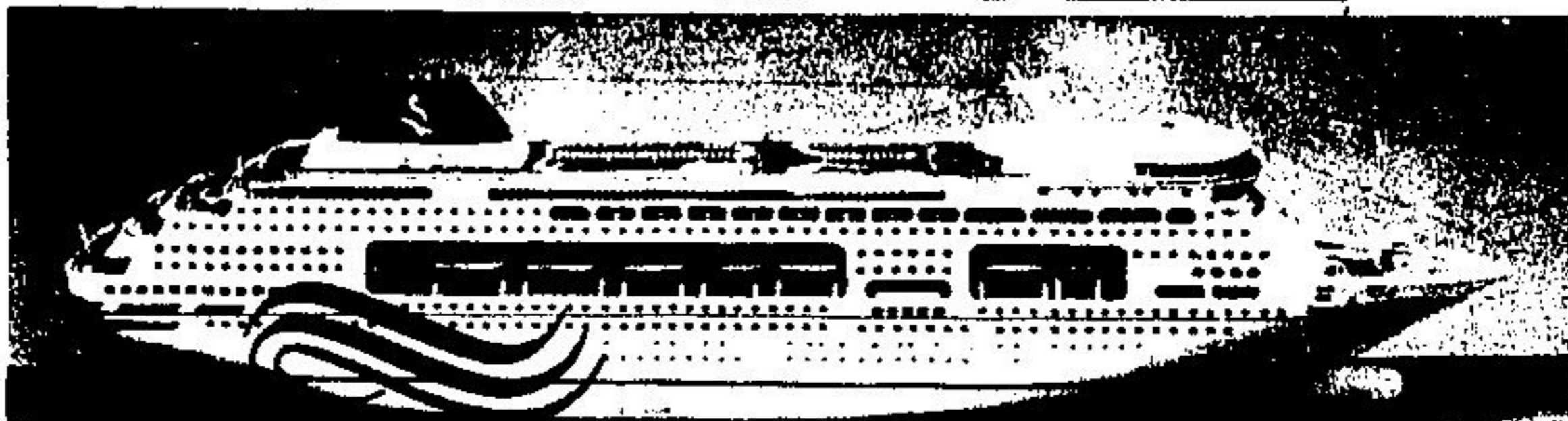
ceiling panels. From there, guests can climb an elaborate staircase that's reminiscent of an old MGM movie, or progress to the left through the Louis XIV music room with its (restored) great pipe organ, Louis XV ballroom, Louis XVI salon, Francis I dining room, Swiss billiard room and Italian Renaissance library.

"Europe," Flagler nevertheless said on one occasion, "is a place where people come from. Nobody should actually go there."

A pleasing contrast to the grandeur of those rooms is Flagler's modest office, furnished and equipped in the style of the period when he and his wife occupied Whitehall - that is, from 1902 until his death in 1913.

Railway memorabilia on the wall recall his greatest business interest, as does his restored 102-year-old private railway car, Rambler, open for inspection on a stretch of track at the side of Whitehall. Painted "Flagler yellow", Rambler was the vanguard of the first train ever to reach Key West, on Jan. 22, 1912, when the \$20 million railway was completed.

Whitehall is open Tuesday to Saturday, and Sunday afternoons. It is just off Coconut Row in the heart of Palm Beach. Adult admission is \$3.50.



## 3 ships with classic design

Sitmar Cruises' three new ships, slated for delivery starting in 1989, will emphasize classic design reminiscent of the early transatlantic ocean liners, while also incorporating innovative state-of-the-art features that travelers usually associate with first-class resorts.

"There has been somewhat of a void in cruise ship design between the grand and elegant style of the transatlantic era of cruising and the 'Winnebago-style' ships plying the waters today," according to Tim Clement, vice president and director of interior design at Los Angeles-based Welton Becket Associates, the architectural engineering firm commissioned to design Sitmar's new ships.

"With Sitmar's new ships, we will be filling that gap by creating a design similar to the elegance that was available years ago, yet not as stuffy. In addition, based on input from Sitmar's past passengers and

travel agents, we have incorporated a number of shoreside resort-style features and exciting outdoor facilities."

The "classic" style of the new ships will feature the use of rich-looking and feeling materials, many of them natural, including teak

decking on the main public decks, granite counter tops and pedestals, laminated woods, mahogany cabin furnishings, leather and wool upholstery, polished bronze fittings, etched glass and quality tile work in the outdoor pool areas. Custom-woven carpets will feature whimsical patterns in contemporary colors such as teal, jade and coral.

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*Home Post Scripts*

**By Glenda Hughes, Sales Rep. 873-0300**

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Easter weekend always marks a special time for me. It means that winter is really over, heavy coats can usually be put to the back of the closet, and family and friends are all together for at least one of the days. As my family grows older, it seems that we need more space to accommodate larger bodies, so I am thankful for our home that provides that much needed room. Every so often I start thinking of moving into smaller quarters, but then a family weekend comes up, and I wonder if I had a temporary insanity attack at that thought - for where would I put everyone? Having family around me is very important, and I suspect it is to most people. Planning a room for this purpose when purchasing a home, should be taken carefully into consideration.

With the main floor family room, most families can accommodate a fairly nice area to gather in, but if you don't have the advantage of this room, the living room can usually be adjusted to hold a good size gathering. It might mean moving a little furniture temporarily to hold some extra people, but look at it with this in mind, when shopping for a new home. If the basement is finished nicely, the rec room is the obvious choice for entertaining and quite often it is larger than a family room or a living room. I often point out to my clients, who are purchasing a smaller home, that there is always a need, several times a year, for "spreading out" room. Families have a way of making a reasonable size home, seem claustrophobic at times.

If you are out viewing homes this long weekend, don't forget to take family gatherings into consideration. The Easter Bunny can always find places to hide goodies, but you can't hide a family.

May you have a wonderful happy Easter, full of good friends, family, food and joy. Spring is really here!

*Homes Sold Creatively*  
**THIS WEEK'S MORTGAGE RATES**  
 As of March 30/88

	1 YEAR	5 YEAR	10 YEAR	1 YEAR	2	3	4	5	7	10
	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	CLOSED						
Bank of Nova Scotia	9%	9%	10%	9%	10%	10%	10%	11		
Bank of Montreal	9%	9%	10%	9%	10%	10%	10%	11	11%	
Canada Trust		9%		9%	10%	10%	10%	11		11%
C.I.B.C.	9%	9%	9%	9%	10%	10%	10%	11		
T.D. Bank	9%		9%	10%	9%	10%	10%	11		
Royal Bank	9%	9%	10%	9%	10%	10%	10%	11		

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