

Origins of the Cushman School

Written by Paul S. George, Special to the BT
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A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami

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fter a lengthy period of decline, Biscayne Boulevard is enjoying a renaissance, with new developments offering a plethora of accommodations, activities, and experiences.

The Cushman School, an institution that has been a part of Biscayne Boulevard since the 1920s, is also flourishing. The school looks out over the broad roadway from its perch on NE 60th Street, but its initial contact with the Boulevard predates its current home by a couple of years.

The school was founded by Laura Cushman, a young educator, in 1924, and has introduced innovative approaches to education, including an advanced curriculum and an educational psychology calling for broad student input in the learning process. Laura Cushman was behind every step of the school's development until her death in 1986. She believed that every child was special, that every pupil should be nurtured throughout the learning process, and that every student was capable of helping to chart his or her educational path.

Laura implemented this philosophy in 1924, after purchasing, with money borrowed from her father, three wood-frame buildings at 333 NE 38th Terr. in Magnolia Park, a subdivision near Biscayne Bay that was part of a larger neighborhood known since the late 19th century as

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Buena Vista, and today called Buena Vista/Design District.

With just under 100 students, the school quickly prospered as parents brought children from many parts of the county to the new institution, primarily because of its teaching philosophy further refined by Cushman to provide pupils with “as much freedom in the conduct of their work as is possible with proper discipline.”

In 1925, Cushman learned that Biscayne Boulevard, envisioned as a grand thoroughfare for motorists from the splendid suburb of Miami Shores to downtown Miami, was being extended south from NE 54th Street. Her property was slated for condemnation through eminent domain to make way for the road’s extension.

Cushman sold the property and invested the money in a new school to be built on two lots on NE 60th Street on the western edge of today’s sparkling Morningside neighborhood.

In recent years, the school’s physical plant has expanded dramatically to encompass many nearby properties, and the student body has grown to 550, while a new high school overlooks the Boulevard one mile south of the main campus.

Paul George is historian at HistoryMiami Museum. To order a copy of this photo, please contact HistoryMiami archives manager Ashley Trujillo at 305-375-1623, atrujillo@historymiami.org.

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