

A view of our past from the archives of HistoryMiami



ften overlooked in the rich population mix of Greater Miami and the State of Florida are Canadians, who began migrating to the region in the late nineteenth century. That era marked the birth of modern Miami, which resulted from the entry of Henry M. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway into the tiny community on the shores of Biscayne Bay in 1896.

Flagler's top lieutenant in southeast Florida was Joseph A. McDonald, a native of Nova Scotia who was responsible for the construction of many of the industrialist's great hotels along the state's east coast. McDonald presided over Miami's incorporation as a city. At the same time, E. A. Waddell, who hailed from Perth, Ontario, represented another influential Canadian in early Miami.

The 1920s was a pivotal decade for the Canadian presence in both the state and in Greater Miami. In 1925, the peak year of the great real estate boom, 6585 Canadian-born individuals lived in Florida, constituting the second-largest foreign-born group in the Sunshine State. Canadians were the largest foreign-born group in Dade County, with 1234 residents, or 19 percent of its foreign-born inhabitants. Most were English-speaking and came primarily from the Province of Ontario.

They were drawn to Greater Miami and other parts of Florida by business opportunities, especially investment in a red-hot real estate market. Many built homes, apartment buildings, and stores. As more Canadians entered Dade, they created Canadian Societies in several

Canadian Migrations

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municipalities. These societies gathered frequently, holding business sessions followed by socials, bridge tournaments, or the appearance of a speaker.

Even with a subsequent economic downturn and World War II, Canadians continued to migrate to Miami and other parts of Florida. In recent decades, their numbers have grown significantly, with large colonies of both French- and English-speaking Canadians carving out a strong presence in Hollywood, Greater Miami, and elsewhere in the state.

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