

Plateresque for the Publisher

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



That the Miami News/Freedom Tower is one of Greater Miami's most iconic buildings is a given. A National Landmark property, a status accorded to only a few other buildings in Greater Miami, this stately structure, sheathed in a Spanish Plateresque style, hovers over a portion of an earlier Florida East Coast Railway station.

In the early 1920s, James Cox, a prominent newspaper publisher and an unsuccessful candidate for president, purchased the *Miami Metropolis*, the city's first newspaper. Cox wanted a new plant for his newspaper, one that would be a singular building in a superb location. Subsequently, he purchased a tract of land overlooking the future Biscayne Boulevard, and he hired the New York architectural firm of Schultze & Weaver to design a building whose soaring tower would resemble the famed Giralda bell tower atop the great cathedral in Seville, Spain.

The *Miami Metropolis*, later to become the *Miami Daily News*, moved into its new quarters in 1925. At 279 feet, it was the tallest building, at least for a while, in the southern United States. The internal layout included a broad mezzanine-level floor housing the advertising and circulation departments, and some journalists. Adorning the east wall of this floor was Henry Trumbull's striking mural depicting a meeting of the Old World and the New World. At the rear of the mezzanine level and rising three stories above the ground floor were the towering printing presses. One floor above the mezzanine level were the offices of the publisher, editors, and news departments. By the mid-1930s, WIOD radio, also a part of the Cox holdings, operated on

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the fourth floor. The floors that made up the tower portion of the building hosted a wide variety of tenants.

Looking to operate from a more modern facility, the *News*, an afternoon daily, moved to new headquarters along the Miami River in 1957. In our next installment, we will examine the building's fortunes in subsequent years.

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