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Expensive boomtime lands survives assault

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



EXPENSIVE BOOMTIME LANDS SURVIVES ASSAULT

By HAMPTON DUNN

CORAL GABLES -- Of all the communities that sprung up almost overnight during the whirling Florida boom, none was more remarkable or talked about than the lovely planned town of Coral Gables.

The elegance of its Mediterranean architecture, the big dreams of its founder George E. Merrick, the quick success of its real estate on the inflated market, all made Coral Gables, "Miami's Master Suburb," stand out a giant among many mighty boomtime developments.

Such an eyesight deserved a spectacular entranceway, and so magnificent Coral Gables was entered then -- and still today -- through La Puerta de Sol (the Sun Portal), the million dollar Douglas Entrance.

This unusual welcome structure was designed to create the feeling of a Mediterranean town square, with a 90 foot water tower, town clock, belfry, a palatial hall, street-level shops, and upper level living quarters. A ball room housed the community's first public library. Had it been completed as originally planned, the Entrance would have encircled a plaza covering 10 acres. Recently the famed landmark was threatened with destruction to make way for a supermarket. But a group of business men have saved it from the bulldozers' jaws.

Coral Gables, the City Beautiful, was roaring the loudest of all places in the Roaring 20s when disaster struck. The terrible hurricane of '26 smashed through the new subdivision and soon the Florida boom collapsed. Coral Gables' place in history was to be postponed a number of years.

