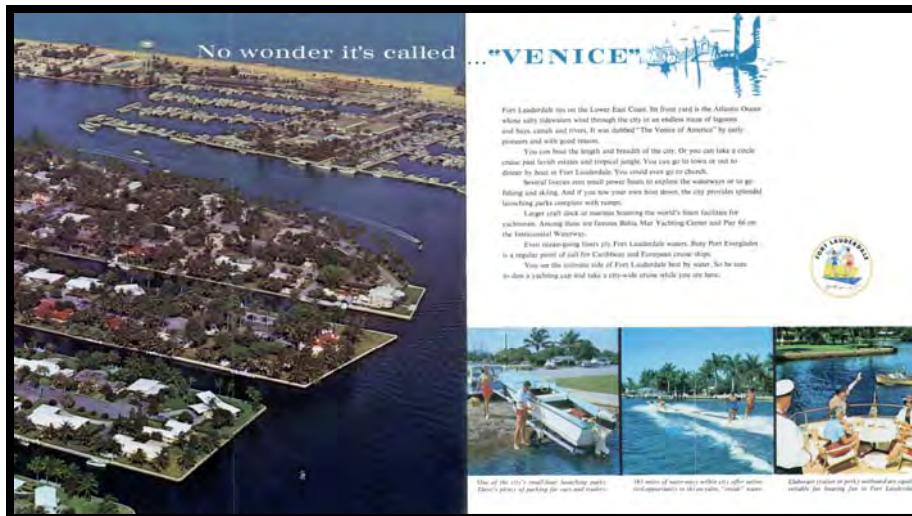


Venice of America

As early as 1922, boomtime investor J.C. Turner suggested Fort Lauderdale should be called the “Venice of America” in an article in the *Fort Lauderdale Herald*. Nowhere else that I know of,” said Mr. Turner, “can so many beautiful waterways and bodies of water be found as right here in and about this city.” The “finger islands” off Las Olas and later, off south fork of New River, helped make boating and water sports a draw for tourists and new residents. The opening of Bahia Mar, Pier 66, and other marinas enhanced the city’s reputation as a recreational boating mecca for people from around the world.



Sailboat on New River east of Andrews bridge 1924. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



This 1963 brochure features Bahia Mar and mentions the “165 miles of navigable waterways” which are still Fort Lauderdale’s claim to fame. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



Powerboats line New River in downtown Fort Lauderdale at about Southeast Third Avenue in 1955. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



In the early 1950s, Gill Construction made the dream of “ocean access” much more affordable with the construction of the Lauderdale Isles subdivision well inland along the south fork of New River. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

Bahia Mar



After World War II, the government decommissioned Coast Guard Base 6 located on south Fort Lauderdale beach. The city acquired the property for development as a major marine and resort complex. It opened as Bahia Mar in 1949, sealing the city's reputation as the Venice of America. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



This aerial view looking north on the beach shows Coast Guard Base 6, the future site of Bahia Mar, 1934. The Las Olas Causeway is at upper left and the Casino Pool is visible north of the Coast Guard base. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



This 1954 view looking north shows Bahia Mar in the place of the former Coast Guard base. The Harbor Beach area is under development in the foreground. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



In the 1950s, Bahia Mar boaters organized the "Festival of Venice," an annual event which included a boat parade. In this photo, socialites and beauty queens greet the crowds aboard the New River Queen. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

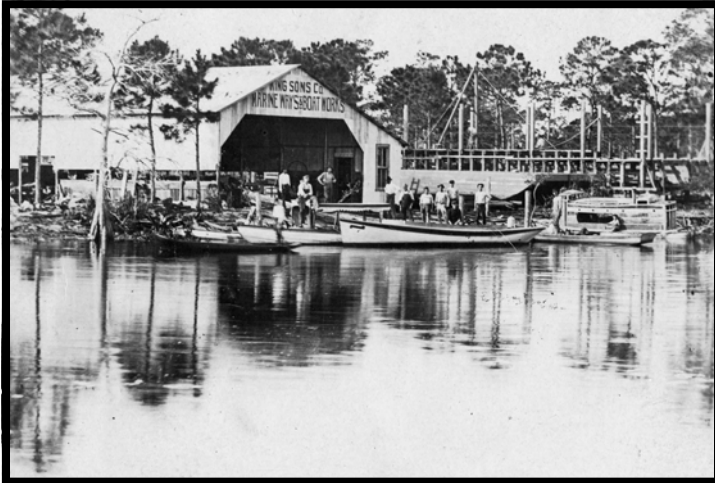


A staff member checks in with successful fisherman at Bahia Mar docks ca. 1950s. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



Workers at Bahia Mar practice a hurricane drill 1956. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

Marine Industries



Boatyards and marinas have been vital to the Venice of America since its pioneer era. High rise condominiums and other developments have slowly replaced the working marinas along New River and its forks.

Pioneer Ed King came to town in 1895—before the railway. As the town's only builder he constructed many early homes, businesses—and boats. His boatyard stood on the south side of New River just west of the Andrews Avenue bridge in the 1910s. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society.*

The first of the Jungle Queen excursion boats began plying the waters of New River in 1935. Here Captain Al Starts oversees repair of Jungle Queen (I), docked at the south end of Brickell Avenue on today's Riverwalk, ca. 1946. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



Smith's Dry Dock, shown here in 1952, replaced the earlier Dillevig's New River Boat and Engine Works at Tropical Point (Southwest Eleventh Avenue on New River). Smith's boasted a marine railway and constructed steel harbor tugs for the U.S. Army in this era. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

Fishing Capital

People have enjoyed the rich bounty of Fort Lauderdale's rivers and oceans since prehistoric times. The city's first tourists were sportsmen enjoying the amazing fishing and hunting here. By the 1930s, Fort Lauderdale was a well known big game fishing center and fishing boats were a common site on the downtown docks. By the 1960s, charter fishing was in decline. Population growth and other factors seriously impacted the industry and the odorous vessels were encouraged to move away from downtown.



An unidentified woman poses with an impressive tarpon in front of Flippen's Hardware on North New River Drive (today's Riverwalk) ca. mid 1920s. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



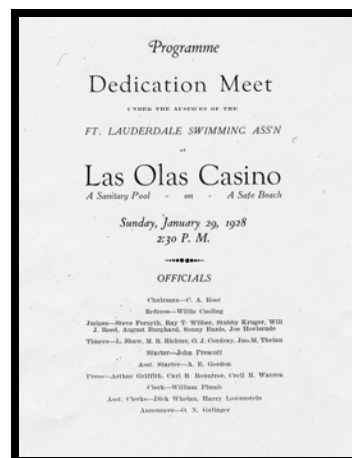
Guests aboard the charter Lively Lady pose with their catch on the docks on the north-east corner of the Andrews Avenue bridge in 1945. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



Left: Fannie and Amos Woods on New River ca. 1930s. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society* Right: Tourists pull in a sailfish off the coast aboard the Escape, 1950s. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



Swimming & Diving Center



Fort Lauderdale's reputation as a natatorial center began with the completion of the Las Olas Casino Pool in 1928. The handsome Mediterranean Revival style building was designed by Francis Abreu and sat on the ocean just north of today's Bahia Mar. In 1935, it hosted the first annual College Swim Forum, bringing students and coaches from all over the country—and beyond. Above, crowds view a race during the 1936 forum. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*. To the right, a postcard view and dedication program from the pool. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



The Sunland Park Pool opened in June of 1954 to serve the city's African American population. Here youngsters take turns at the diving board under the eye of park director Joseph C. Carter, for whom the park was later named. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

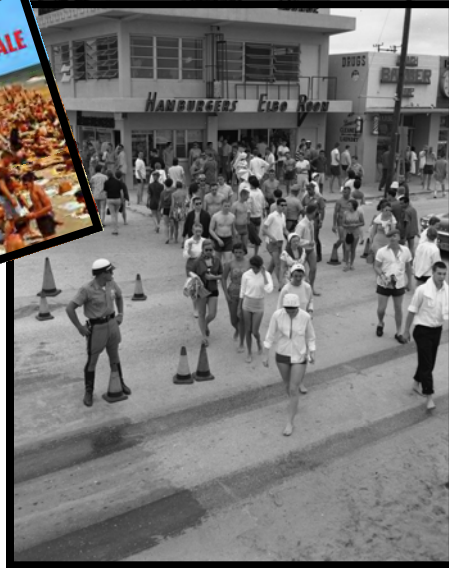


The Casino Pool was replaced by the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 1965, and became a world center for training and competition. Numerous Olympic swimmers have called ISHOF home. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

Spring Break



Fort Lauderdale
Historical Society



The annual College Swim Forum had earned Fort Lauderdale notoriety amongst the college crowd since the 1930s. By 1954, student springtime visitation was so great *Holiday Magazine* named Fort Lauderdale “The greatest college town in the country.” Spring Break central was the Elbo Room, located at A1A and Las Olas Boulevard, directly across the street from the beach.
Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society



In 1960, Hollywood came to Fort Lauderdale to film a beach movie about Fort Lauderdale’s annual college invasion based on the book *Where the Boys Are*. The movie, which starred Connie Francis, Paula Prentiss, Dolores Hart, Jim Hutton, and George Hamilton premiered at the Gateway Theatre on December 21, 1960. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



A few months after the release of *Where the Boys Are*, 50,000 college students invaded Fort Lauderdale. The phenomenon grew to reportedly as many as 350,000 by the mid 1980s. Eventually the crowds moved on to new spots like Daytona Beach. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*

The Beach

Fort Lauderdale's early pioneers had to take a boat ride to enjoy the nearby ocean. The first Las Olas Causeway was completed in 1917, and it was not until the 1920s that the beach became one of its principal attractions. By the 1940s, hotels, motels, and retail establishments lined A1A. At right, this tinted postcard reveals the "new" Lauderdale Beach Hotel (built 1937), vintage cars, and the colorful umbrellas of happy visitors. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



This aerial view looking south and west shows "the strip" along Fort Lauderdale's beach from Granada Street south to Bahia Mar in 1952. Photo by Tom Neel. *Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



College students were warmly welcomed to town for "Easter vacation" in the early 1950s. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



Visitors enjoy a classic vista from the second floor patio of the Lauderdale Beach Hotel, 1950s. *Gene Hyde Collection, Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*