

**History of Simpson Park Hammock  
and the  
Charles Torrey Simpson Memorial Garden Center**

By Pat Quintana

- 1913** – Group of concerned citizens and environmentalists appears before the City Commission and request that the 5.5 acres of native hardwood hammock, located at 15<sup>th</sup> Road (Broadway) and South Miami Avenue, be acquired from Mary Brickell and that it be preserved as a natural area for future generations to learn from and enjoy.
- 1914** – The City of Miami acquires the 5.5 acres of what was then a portion of the Brickell Hammock. The property is named Jungle Park.
- 1919** – Beautificationists begin removing native species and introducing “more showy exotics.” Additionally, “curly cue mounds” of “oolitic limestone” are constructed in an effort to beautify the park. These curly cue mounds were used by garden clubs as a gathering place for their meetings and still exist in the park.
- 1920** – A man made two tiered fresh water pond is constructed as a special feature in the park.
- 1926** – The Hurricane of 1926 all but destroys the hammock as more exotics are introduced.
- 1927** – Dr. Carl Dahlburg, Chief Horticulturalist for the Department of Public Welfare is assigned to the restoration of the hammock and the removal of the exotic vegetation—without his dedication the park probably would not exist today.
- 1930’s** – Jungle Park is renamed in memory of Dr. Charles Torrey Simpson.
- 1931** – The perimeter wall of oolitic limestone was constructed without the use of mortar by the Civil Conservation Corps.
- 1932** – Dr. Charles Torrey Simpson, a man devoted to the education of horticulture to members of the garden clubs and to anyone who requested his guidance, passes away at “The Sentinels”, his Lemon City estate. The Council of Garden Club Presidents, in memory of Dr. Simpson, appoints a committee named the Charles Torrey Simpson Memorial Association to raise money for the sole purpose of constructing a garden center in his name.
- 1940** – The City acquires 3 acres of unspoiled property adjacent to Simpson Park at the request of the Council of Garden Club Presidents. The City is presented with \$3,000.00 by the Council, which is to be used for the construction materials for the new garden center. The garden center is completed in December. The Council and the City of Miami enters into an agreement that the Council will have perpetual right to use the building as their meeting place.
- 1941** – In April, the garden center is officially named the Charles Torrey Simpson Memorial Garden Center. Gertrude Peterson, a garden club member, becomes the first on-site person to manage the operations of the park and garden center.
- 1959** – The garden center receives an addition of a larger kitchen and an L-shaped porch and the Miami Pioneers Club want to construct a museum on park property at SW 15 Road and South Miami Avenue and meets with very strong opposition from the community.
- 1960’s** – The lower tier of the man made pond springs a leak and can not hold water and the park is threatened with the construction of I-95. The community, once again, saves the park from being destroyed.
- 1970’s** – The L-shaped porch is enclosed and an acoustic ceiling with luminous light fixtures and an air-conditioner is installed in the garden center. The future of the park is threatened by the construction of the Metrorail and, again, is saved as a result of community opposition.
- 1991** – After many years of illicit and illegal activity in the park, the Miami Roads Neighborhood Civic Association requests the City to install a fence as a deterrent to those who are using the park for the wrong purpose. A new chain linked fence is installed at the perimeter of the park.
- 1995** – Pat Quintana is temporarily assigned to manage the park due to the retirement of the park’s naturalist and finds that the park continued to be used for illicit and illegal activity. Pat meets with the Miami Roads Neighborhood Civic Association and the Council of Garden Club Presidents and presents her concerns. Pat presented a plan that would rid the park of the illegal and illicit activity. Since then, with their assistance, the park has been used in the manner for which it was set aside...to educate the community of the park’s unique environment and to promote stewardship to students of all ages and the community at large.
- 1996** – The Garden Center receives new ceramic tile floor and the restoration of the hammock begins. Juan Fernandez, the City’s Naturalist heads the exotic removal project.

- 1999** – The Metropolitan Miami Flower Show requests the City to accept a donation of the covered wrap-around screen enclosure and pavilion. The estimated cost of the project is nearly \$55,000. When the project was completed, its total cost amounted to nearly \$150,000.00. The Garden Center becomes the new home of the annual Metropolitan Miami Flower Show.
- 2001**—The Miami-Dade County archeologist, Gary Breiter, performs sample digs to determine if the park has any archeological significance. He determined that the solution hole was, when it was a working spring, a stop over point during early aborigine outings.
- 2003** – The garden center undergoes renovations. The acoustic ceiling is removed and the old tongue and groove open beam ceiling is replaced with new pine material and a new insulated roof is installed. The garden center is made accessible and is up-graded to meet the existing fire code. New chandeliers and brass trimmed lighting fixtures are added, as well. Originally, there was one brass single tiered chandelier fixture, and it was replaced by the luminous lights because the fixture did not illuminate enough lighting. As mentioned earlier, the lowered acoustic ceiling and luminous lights are replaced with 1 large three tiered chandelier and four smaller three tiered chandeliers that, all together, illuminate 3000 watts of lighting.
- 2003-4** –The two-tierd pond is restored, and filled with fresh water from a well, with a state of the art pump and filtration system.
- 2004** –A proposed elevated boardwalk is not approved by DERM. DERM stating that the seven foot footers would have a tremendous impact to the hammock.