

Arva Parks McCabe / background

CORAL GABLES MAGAZINE, MAY 14, 2020 *EXCERPT*

. . . Gables Loses a Champion of Historic Preservation and an Icon of the City

Arva Moore Parks, author, historian and fierce proponent for historic preservation in Coral Gables and beyond (passed away at the age of) 81.

Parks was a driving force in the preservation of the Biltmore Hotel, the Venetian Pool and the home of Gables' founding father George Merrick. Parks helped create Coral Gables' historic preservation program in the 1970s and served as the first chair of the city's historic preservation board. She was the author of *Miami: The Magic City* (1991), as well as the more recent *George Merrick: Son of the South Wind* (2015). And was instrumental in the commissioning of Merrick's statue in front of Coral Gables City Hall and led Coral Gables Museum during its inception.

Though she passed away at her last home in Coconut Grove, Parks was a long-time Gables resident. She moved to the city in 1970 and bought a fixer-upper on Granada Boulevard. "Everybody thought I was crazy, because everything north of Coral Way was thought to be declining." As she restored the 1923 home, Parks was asked to chair the first historic preservation board in South Florida. "The first thing we did was get the city to buy Merrick House, which was about to be torn down. And we saved it. Then we started looking around for other homes that could be preserved. Eventually, property values started to go up."

Parks was inducted into Florida's Women's Hall of Fame in 1986 and received the George E. Merrick Spirit of Excellence Award in 2008.

NEWS @THEU, MAY 12, 2020 *EXCERPT*

Arva Moore Parks, trustee and noted historian, remembered

Preservationist served on the University of Miami Board of Trustees for 26 years and wrote several books on Greater Miami, Coral Gables, and University history.

Arva Moore Parks picked up her sense of history and passion for Miami from her father, Jack Moore. The young lawyer, who moved to the still-fledgling city in 1930 at the height of the

Great Depression, “always had his nose in a history book,” Parks said of her father. He was often telling the young Parks to “remember this” as he taught her about Miami’s storied past.

Those early lessons undoubtedly made a lasting impression on Parks, because years later she would go on to become an acclaimed historian and preservationist well known for documenting the city’s early years.

Parks, a University of Miami trustee who, through her books, introduced readers to Greater Miami pioneers like George Merrick, the planner and builder of Coral Gables, and was often the first source to whom people turned when they needed information on the Magic City’s rich history, passed away on Sunday, May 10. She was 81.

“Our institution will forever be enriched by Arva’s remarkable leadership,” said University of Miami President Julio Frenk. “The unique insight she often displayed as a member of our Board of Trustees, her deep understanding of historical events, and her tireless work in preserving the past as a teaching tool for future generations were all part of her valuable legacy at the University.

“Indeed,” Frenk continued, “she had a profound impact on my own understanding of the University’s history, and I will miss her voice.”

Elected to the University’s Board of Trustees in 1994, Parks served on various standing committees and as vice chair of the Academic Affairs Committee. She became a senior trustee in 2009.

Hilarie Bass, chair of the University of Miami Board of Trustees, remembered Parks as a “highly recognized historian” who brought “a unique perspective to her many community pursuits.”

“Sitting next to her at University board meetings, I always thought that she saw every issue through the historical lens of the many great community leaders that had sat in those chairs since the University’s founding some 95 years ago,” Bass said. “Arva had a better understanding of the University’s history than anyone else in the room, and so she understood its challenges and success from a perspective that few others understood. We will very much miss her extraordinary commitment to making our University a world-class institution.”

A champion of historic preservation, Parks created Coral Gables’ well-known preservation program and helped to spearhead an initiative to renovate the abandoned Biltmore Hotel. She also led the Coral Gables Museum during its establishment.

During a prolific career as an author and historian, she wrote many of the region's most beloved nonfiction works, including "The Forgotten Frontier: Florida through the Lens of Ralph Middleton Munroe"; "Miami, The Magic City"; and "George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables." She is also the author of the University's 75th anniversary tribute "Pathway to Greatness, Building the University of Miami: 1926-2001."

In early January of 2016, as the University kicked off its 90th-anniversary celebrations, Parks presented one of her works, "George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables", during a special event held at the Richter Library. During the occasion, she explained that the book on the visionary founder of Coral Gables was the culmination of more than 20 years' work, jump-started by a phone call from the late Mildred Merrick, a University librarian and widow of art professor Richard L. Merrick—the youngest brother of George Merrick, who had ended up with many of the family records in 1989.

"Had they not fallen into the hands of a librarian, this book would likely not exist," Parks said at the event.

Parks once penned of Miami, "When I write about Miami, I always include everyone in the story. Each day, I realize more and more that there is no better place to live if you want a jump-start on America's future and always have a great story to tell."