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***History of Fort Myers Beach, Florida* by Rolfe F. Schell**

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A bibliography of Kirk Monroe's books and articles is to be found in the volume's final pages. The number of his writings is impressive indeed - over forty books and innumerable articles. Most are forgotten today, and it is not likely that the present day young people will be reading many of these. Still, Monroe's writings will make a contribution to those who care to know Florida in its earlier days.

Chester Handleman

History of Fort Myers Beach, Florida. By Rolfe F. Schell. (Fort Myers Beach: Island Press, 1980, 96 pp. \$3.95.)

A more apt title for this paperback, written by long-time Florida resident, Rolfe F. Schell, would have been "A Chronology of Fort Myers Beach" for that's what it amounts to - not a history. In concise, chronological order, he traces the development of the popular beach (located on historic Estero Island about 15 miles southwest of Fort Myers) from prehistoric times to its present-day hustle.

The most interesting part of the 96-page book involves the Spanish explorations of the area surrounding Estero Island in the 1500s when the extinct Caloosas were the dominant Indians in Southwest Florida. This theme is dear to Schell's heart, whose book, *De Soto Didn't Land at Tampa* claims the conquistador landed at the nearby mouth of the Caloosahatchee River (in Lee County) instead of at Tampa Bay.

For readers inquiring about names, dates and places, this book can be a handy reference. It describes the original homesteads and their present occupants. Although Southwest Florida was settled much later than other sections of the state, it's hard to believe that Estero Island was still being homesteaded as late as 1914. In reviewing the settlement of the beach from the giddy days of the Florida boom to today, Schell tells where and when many of the now-landmark structures were built and how they changed hands through the years.

Schell writes of the background of events, businesses and civic groups from scanning area newspaper microfilms, interviews with old-timers and his own remembrances. But, while he writes from his years of intimate knowledge of Fort Myers Beach, he deliberately leaves out such doings as murders, bootleg and all-night beach parties and wild goings-on once part of the island's colorful history.

Schell's reportorial style lacks the dash of the late Florence Fritz whose out-of-print book, *Unknown Florida*, describes in some detail the early beginnings of Fort Myers Beach. The book also shows signs of publishing in haste, as exemplified by sloppy writing and careless editing.

It contains irksome, if minor, misspellings, such as Charleston for Carlstrom Field in Arcadia, typographical errors, especially in the names of persons, and misstatements of

historical facts. It is disappointing to find the author trotting out the same old tired story about the alleged pirate José Gaspar who never lived except in myth.

Included in the book are 28 nostalgic photographs, an index and a short bibliography.

Marian B. Godown