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Hampton Dunn
ASSASSIN AIMED AT PRESIDENT-ELECT IN MIAMI

By HAMPTON DUNN

MIAMI --- At the entrance to the bandshell in Bayfront Park here is an area dedicated to the memory of Anton J. Cermak.

This is the spot where history was made at 9:35 P.M. on the night of Feb. 15, 1933, when a crazed Italian gunman attempted to assassinate President-Elect Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Cermak was the Mayor of Chicago who had been elected the year before on a reform ticket, pledging to destroy gangster Al Capone. (Some historians claim the shots fired by Giuseppe Zangara hit their true target, that he had been hired by Capone’s gang to assassinate Cermak).

Roosevelt had stopped by Bayfront Park to greet his Florida friends after finishing a fishing vacation aboard Vincent Astor’s yacht. The polio-crippled Chief Executive-elect spoke from the rear seat of an open limousine. When he was through, his car began moving from the area, FDR saw his pal Cermak and invited him over to shake hands. Suddenly Zangara stood up on a vacated chair and started shooting his $8 mail-order .32 calibre pistol. A Miami doctor’s wife seated near Zangara saw what was going on, hit the assassin’s arm and diverted the bullets. Cermak fell, mortally wounded. Another victim of the blazing gun was William Sinnott, a vacationing New York policeman who had guarded Roosevelt’s city home and who was pressed into service at the last minute at Miami. He caught a bullet in the head. FDR ordered Cermak’s body into the car and the party sped to the hospital. Cermak died in less than a month. Zangara was electrocuted at Florida State Prison.

The plaque to Cermak was dedicated in March, 1939.