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Hampton Dunn
DADE COURT HOUSE HAS ‘ESCAPE PROOF’ JAIL

By HAMPTON DUNN

MIAMI --- The Dade County Court House, at the northeast corner of West Flagler Street and N.W. 1st Avenue, is a 28-story neo-classic structure. It rests upon a high base, the lower floors adorned with fluted columns of the Corinthian order. The building is topped with a temple-like octagonal upper story with a pyramidal roof.

The 16th to the 19th floors are occupied by the so-called "escape proof" county jail (although there have been a few escapes since the skyscraper went up in 1927). The structure cost $4,000,000. It is illuminated at night and can be seen for miles.

The towering court house was built when Miami went through a fantastic cycle of prosperity and a population explosion that was hard to believe. It was erected to accommodate the legal aspects of a new South Florida world which developed at breakneck speed.

Dade County was created in 1836, during the Indian Wars, and was named for Maj. Francis L. Dade, who was ambushed and killed with his company of 100 men near Bushnell on the Withlacoochee River that year. The county originally took in most of the swampy southeastern part of South Florida. Subsequently several other counties were created from the massive space it occupied.

Dade’s first county seat was at Indian Key. In 1844 the county seat was moved to Miami, and in 1889 was shifted up the coast to Juno. But in 1899 the county seat was moved back to Miami.

The U.S. Census of 1870 revealed Dade County had 85 persons living in it. Thirty years later the census of 1900 showed it had grown to a population of 4,955. The population boom came during the real estate boom of the mid-1920s. The new court house was the pride of the community when it was built, and since then.