

# FLAGLER MUSEUM MEDIA KIT



© Flagler Museum 2025

HENRY MORRISON  
**FLAGLER MUSEUM**  
— PALM BEACH, FLORIDA — ®

G. F. ROBERT HANKE  
Vice President

WILLIAM M. MATTHEWS  
Treasurer

THOMAS S. KENAN, III  
Secretary

TED A. GARDNER  
Trustee

KELLY M. HOPKINS  
President



BARRY G. HOYT  
Trustee

GEORGE G. MATTHEWS  
Trustee

AMANDA H. SKIER  
Executive Director & CEO

JOHN M. BLADES  
Executive Director Emeritus

*History is much more than a study of the past, it is an explanation of the present, and a guide to the future.<sup>SM</sup>*

Dear Member of the Media:

Thank you for your interest in the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the media to enhance public awareness and appreciation of the Flagler Museum and of the contributions Henry Flagler made to American culture and the development of the state of Florida. Enclosed is a press kit for the Flagler Museum, which includes important information about Henry Flagler, Whitehall - his magnificent Gilded Age home, and our various programs and services. We hope that you find this material complete. Should you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

David Carson  
Public Affairs Director

*A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK*

*ACCREDITED BY THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS*

*RECIPIENT OF THE 2013 ROSS MERRILL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING COMMITMENT TO THE PRESERVATION AND CARE OF COLLECTIONS*

ONE WHITEHALL WAY, PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33480

PHONE: (561) 655-2833

FAX: (561) 655-2826

EMAIL: MAIL@FLAGLERMUSEUM.US

WEBSITE: WWW.FLAGLERMUSEUM.US



# DESCRIPTION & TOUR INFORMATION

## Museum Description

After a career as a founding partner with John D. Rockefeller in Standard Oil, Henry Morrison Flagler's interests turned to developing Florida. Eventually, Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway and the luxury hotels he built along the way, linked the entire east coast of Florida, establishing agriculture and tourism as Florida's leading industries and Palm Beach as one of the great winter resorts.

When it was completed in 1902, Whitehall, Flagler's Gilded Age estate in Palm Beach, was hailed by the *New York Herald* as "more wonderful than any palace in Europe, grander and more magnificent than any other private dwelling in the world." Today, Whitehall is open to the public as the Flagler Museum. Flagler's private railcar is displayed in the Flagler Kenan Pavilion.

Throughout the year, the Flagler Museum produces exhibitions related to America's Gilded Age, the life of Henry Flagler and the history of Florida.

## Hours and Admission Prices

The Flagler Museum is open year round, Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The Museum is closed Mondays, and on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission is \$28 for adults, \$14 for children ages 6 - 12 and children under 6 are free. Handicapped parking is located near the Museum entrance.

## Group Tours

Groups of 20 or more individuals with a confirmed reservation may tour the Flagler Museum at the rate of \$24 for adults. Two complimentary admissions are allowed per group tour. These admissions may only be extended to the Tour Escort. Reservations for group tours must be made at least one week in advance in order to receive the group rate. To schedule a group tour, contact the Visitor Services Coordinator at (561) 655-2833 ext. 38 or via e-mail at [VisitorServicesCoordinator@FlaglerMuseum.us](mailto:VisitorServicesCoordinator@FlaglerMuseum.us).



The Beaux Arts styled Whitehall in 1902.  
Image © Flagler Museum



Today Whitehall is a National Historic Landmark open to the public  
Image © Flagler Museum



Guided tours of Whitehall are held daily.  
Image © Flagler Museum

# PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDELINES

The Flagler Museum Trustees encourage visitors to take photographs for their personal use while they are at Whitehall. However, flash photography and the use of tripods are not allowed. Commercial photography or filming (i.e. fashion, television, commercials and stock photography) is not normally permitted. However, editorial photography or filming may be permitted with the express written permission of the Executive Director.

Photography for publication requires a permit. Due to staff limitations, permits will only be issued with advance written notice and all such activities will be scheduled during normal working hours (10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Tuesday thru Friday, except holidays.) To request stock photographs or permission to photograph for publication, please contact:

Public Affairs Director  
The Henry Morrison Flagler Museum  
One Whitehall Way  
Palm Beach, Florida 33480

or via e-mail at:  
[PublicAffairsDirector@FlaglerMuseum.us](mailto:PublicAffairsDirector@FlaglerMuseum.us)



A photographer captures the Music Room ceiling  
©Flagler Museum



A cable television show host interviews former Museum Executive Director, John Blades. ©Flagler Museum



Whitehall's French Renaissance Dining Room.  
©Flagler Museum



Visitors may climb aboard Henry Flagler's private Railcar No. 91<sup>®</sup> in the Flagler Kenan Pavilion. ©Flagler Museum



# PROGRAMS

The Museum has been granted nonprofit status as an educational institution. The Museum's programming consists of public tours and events that are developed primarily as educational experiences intended to interpret the life of and materials related to the life of Henry Flagler within the context of America's Gilded Age.

The Flagler Museum offers school tours to groups of elementary through secondary students at no cost. Admission fees for teachers, students, and chaperones are generously underwritten by Museum Members and contributors.

The Education Department oversees several programs including the annual Whitehall Lecture Series, Intergenerational Mentor Program for Art, Culture, and Technology (IMPACT), Founder's Day, a Kids Summer Program, Holiday Evening Tours, and the Newspapers in Education Tabloid, *Flagler's Florida*.

Since its creation in 1985, the Whitehall Lecture Series has added a unique dimension to the Museum's educational mission by hosting renowned authors, historians, and lecturers to speak on topics that help to place the Flagler Museum and Whitehall within the context of America's Gilded Age and among other great estates of the time period. Visitors can log on to the Museums website to listen to the lectures live and ask questions, as well as, download past lectures.

The Intergenerational Mentor Program for Art, Culture, and Technology (IMPACT) is an annual cooperative program between the Flagler Museum and the School District of Palm Beach County. Each year, the Museum partners with a local school to match students and Mentors for the five-week program. Together, students and Mentors explore topics related to Henry Flagler, Florida history, and the Gilded Age. The Mentor Program for Creative Writing aims to foster the creative spirit and promotes inter-generational communication and learning.

Each year on June 5<sup>th</sup>, the Flagler Museum opens its doors for free to the public in honor of founder and granddaughter of Henry Flagler, Jean Flagler Matthews.

The Flagler Museum Education Department's Newspapers in Education Tabloid, *Flagler's Florida*, has received the Cultural Council for Palm Beach County's Muse Award for Cultural Program of the Year, an award given to the most "creative, innovative, original, and exemplary" cultural program in the county. *Flagler's Florida* is provided free to students and is accompanied by a Teacher's Guide with five pre-visit lessons and a post-visit activity. Targeted to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, the



The Whitehall Lecture Series in the Grand Ballroom.  
© Flagler Museum



Students during the Mentor Program.  
© Flagler Museum



The annual Bluegrass in the Pavilion Concert. All proceeds benefit the Museum's educational programs for children. © Flagler Museum

Tabloid tells of Henry Flagler's phenomenal impact on Florida, within the context of America's Gilded Age (1865-1929).

Throughout the year the, Flagler Museum hosts a variety of special programs dedicated to enhancing understanding of America's Gilded Age. During the special fall and winter exhibits free programs like Gallery Talks and Children's Exhibit Activities increase the value of a Museum visit.

Each afternoon, from Thanksgiving through Easter, the Flagler Museum presents a Gilded Age Style Tea in the Railcar No. 91 Tea Room. The Tea features an array of delicacies and refreshments reminiscent of the elegance of entertaining during the Gilded Age. A selection of gourmet tea sandwiches, traditional scones, and sweets are complemented by the Flagler Museum's own Whitehall Special Blend® tea.

During the holiday season Whitehall's first floor is decorated in traditional Gilded Age splendor. The 16-foot tall Grand Hall Christmas tree, with its historically accurate trimmings, is the center of Whitehall's holiday celebrations. On the first Sunday of December each year, the Tree Lighting festivities include holiday music played on Whitehall's original 1,249 pipe J.H. & C.S. Odell & Co. organ, choir performance in the Courtyard, and holiday refreshments in the West Room. The event culminates with Henry Flagler's youngest descendants lighting the Grand Hall Christmas tree. The Museum also offers Holiday Evening Tours where visitors discover the origins of American Christmas traditions, and have a rare opportunity to see Whitehall by the glow of the original 1902 light fixtures.

The Flagler Museum Music Series continues to bring acclaimed musicians to the finest chamber music venue in South Florida. Visitors are invited to experience chamber music, as it was intended, in a gracious and intimate setting typical of Gilded Age performances. Reviewers hailed the Music Series performances as "positively spellbinding," "high-spirited," and "musically adventurous." After each concert audience members have the rare opportunity to meet the musicians during a champagne and dessert reception.

Throughout the year Members of the Museum's Whitehall Society host events to cultivate the support and patronage of a new generation of Palm Beach area residents who have an interest in art and culture, history, architecture, and the preservation of Whitehall. The funds raised through the Whitehall Society's events will help to underwrite the Museum's educational programming,



Visitors attend a Gallery Talk during a special exhibition.  
© Flagler Museum



The Grand Hall Christmas Tree with Gilded Age decorations.  
Image © Flagler Museum



Patrons enjoy a performance during the  
Flagler Museum Music Series. ©Flagler Museum



particularly the Newspapers in Education Tabloid, *Flagler's Florida*. Popular Whitehall Society events include *Dancing After Dark* and *Dinner on the Dock*. The Whitehall Society also hosts the annual Easter Egg Hunt on the Museum's Lawn and in the Coconut Grove. Children of all ages hunt for eggs and enjoy Easter themed activities.

Other events include the annual "Bluegrass in the Pavilion Concert," where proceeds benefit the Museum's educational programming.

The variety and magnitude of special programs ensure the entire family can enjoy a Museum visit, as well as provide engaging and unique experiences during every subsequent visit.



The Whitehall Society Easter Egg Hunt is a family tradition not to be missed. ©Flagler Museum



*Flagler's Florida* Newspapers in Education Tabloid reaches 500,000 statewide. The 32-page full color newspaper covers Florida history, Henry Flagler's monumental impact in the state, and America's Gilded Age. ©Flagler Museum



Proceeds from the Whitehall Society's *Dinner on the Dock* benefit the Museum's education programs. © Flagler Museum



Visitors tour the Florida History room during Founder's Day.  
© Flagler Museum



## COLLECTIONS & CONSERVATION

Henry Flagler built the 75+ room Gilded Age estate, Whitehall, as a gift for his third wife, Mary Lily Kenan Flagler. When Flagler commissioned architects John Carrère and Thomas Hastings to design Whitehall, Flagler envisioned a grand home with elaborate interiors suitable of his stature in Gilded Age society. Carrère and Hastings, both trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, were very much practitioners of the Beaux-Arts style of architecture made popular at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Carrère and Hastings also collaborated on the design for other Gilded Age landmarks such as the New York Public Library, the U.S. House and Senate Office Buildings, and the Fifth Avenue New York mansion of Henry Clay Frick.

When Whitehall opened only 18 months after construction began, it was hailed as the “more wonderful than any palace in Europe, grander and more magnificent than any other private dwelling in the world.” The New York firm of Pottier & Stymus designed the rooms to resemble historic styles such as Louis XIV, Louis XV and the Italian Renaissance. The choice of these styles was typical of Gilded Age design, reflecting the belief that America was the ultimate realization of the great cultural traditions that began in Ancient Greece and Rome and later manifested themselves in Europe.

While the objective of the Flagler Museum is to preserve Whitehall as it appeared during Flagler's lifetime, the Museum is hardly a static organization. The Museum's staff is dedicated to preserving this important historical site through a program of ongoing conservation and restoration. Conservation in a historic house setting involves caring for a variety of materials including marble, stone, iron, wood, glass, paintings, ceramics and textiles. Ongoing conservation projects will ensure that Whitehall, as well as the objects housed within the building and on the grounds, will be maintained for future generations.



Conservation of the Music Room ceiling. © Flagler Museum



Conservation of the lunette paintings in the Grand Ballroom.  
© Flagler Museum



The “Great Florida Marsh” by Flagler artist Martin Johnson Head hangs in the Library. © Flagler Museum



A bust of Augustus Caesar is original to Henry Flagler and part of the Museum's permanent collection. © Flagler Museum



# BIOGRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

- 1830** Born January 2 in Hopewell, New York, to Reverend Isaac and Elizabeth Caldwell Harkness Flagler.
- 1844** After completing eighth grade, moved to Bellevue, Ohio, and worked in the grain store of L.G. Harkness and Company at a salary of \$5 per month plus room and board.
- 1849** Promoted to sales staff of L.G. Harkness and Company at a salary of \$400 per year.
- 1852** With half-brother, Dan Harkness, became a partner in the newly organized D. M. Harkness and Company.
- 1853** Married Mary Harkness, November 9.
- 1855** First child, Jennie Louise, born March 18.
- 1858** Second child, Carrie, born June 18.
- 1850s** (late) Became acquainted with John. D. Rockefeller, a commission agent with Hewitt and Tuttle for the Harkness grain company.
- 1861** Daughter Carrie died at age three.
- 1862** With brother-in-law Barney York, founded Flagler and York Salt Company, a salt mining and production business, in Saginaw, Michigan.
- 1865** The end of the Civil War caused a drop in the demand for salt. Flagler and York Salt Company collapsed, leaving Flagler in heavy debt.  
Flagler returned to Bellevue. Cleveland had become the center of the oil refining industry in America.
- 1866** Moved to Cleveland, Ohio and reentered the grain business as a commission merchant.
- 1867** Needing capital for his nascent oil business, J. D. Rockefeller approached Flagler who obtained \$100,000 from Steven Harkness, half-brother of Dan Harkness. Rockefeller, Andrews and Flagler partnership formed with Flagler in control of Harkness' interest.
- 1870** On January 10, Rockefeller, Andrews and Flagler emerged as a joint-stock corporation named Standard Oil.  
Son, Harry Harkness, born December 2.
- 1872** Standard Oil led the American oil refining industry, producing 10,000 barrels per day.



Flagler with his wife Mary (standing) and sister-in-law Isabella circa 1850.  
© Flagler Museum



Mary Harkness Flagler and son Henry.  
© Flagler Museum

## BIOGRAPHICAL ABSTRACT continued

**1877** Standard Oil moved its headquarters to New York City. Flaglers moved from Cleveland to new home at 509 Fifth Avenue in New York City.

**1878** Upon advice from Mary's physician, Flagler and his wife visited Florida for the winter; they stayed in Jacksonville.

**1881** May 18, Mary Harkness Flagler died at age 47.

**1883** Flagler married Ida Alice Shourds.

They traveled to St. Augustine, Florida. Flagler found hotel facilities and transportation systems inadequate.

**1885** Returned to St. Augustine; began construction on the 540-room Hotel Ponce de Leon. Purchased the Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Halifax Railroad.

**1888** Hotel Ponce de Leon opened January 10 and was an instant success.

**1889** Daughter, Jennie Louise died, following complications of childbirth.

**1890** Built railroad bridge across the St. Johns River to gain access to southern half of state. Purchased the Ormond Beach Hotel in Ormond Beach, Florida.

**1892** Began construction of Kirkside, a private home in St. Augustine.

**1894** Flagler's 1150-room Hotel Royal Poinciana in Palm Beach was completed. Train service was extended to West Palm Beach.

Harry Harkness Flagler married Annie Lamont, daughter of Charles A. Lamont, partner in the J.P. Morgan banking firm.

**1895** Devastating freeze hit Florida. In June, Flagler accepted a land proposition from Miami businesswoman Julia Tuttle to extend the railway to Biscayne Bay.

Ida Alice Shourds Flagler institutionalized for mental illness.

Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Indian River Railway renamed the Florida East Coast Railway.

**1896** The Palm Beach Inn opened in Palm Beach.

Railway reached Biscayne Bay. Locals wanted to name the town that sprung up around train station, "Flagler," but Flagler persuaded them to keep its old Indian name, "Miami."

**1897** Flagler's Hotel Royal Palm opened in Miami.

**1901** The Florida Legislature passed a bill that made incurable insanity grounds for divorce. Flagler divorced Ida Alice.



Oil refinery number one.  
© Flagler Museum



Ida Alice Shourds.  
© Flagler Museum



Flagler opened the Hotel Ponce de Leon in 1888.  
© Flagler Museum



## BIOGRAPHICAL ABSTRACT continued

- 1901** August 24, Flagler married Mary Lily Kenan of North Carolina. The Palm Beach Inn renamed The Breakers.
- 1902** The Flaglers moved into Whitehall, the Palm Beach winter retreat designed by the architectural firm, Carrère and Hastings, as a wedding present to Mary Lily.
- 1903** The Breakers was destroyed by fire. Rebuilt and opened in 1906.
- 1905** Expansion of the Florida East Coast Railway to Key West began.
- 1910** Jean Louise Flagler, daughter of Harry and Annie Lamont Flagler, born April 18.
- 1911** Flagler ceased being an active director at Standard Oil.
- 1912** Flagler rode the first train into Key West on January 21. Over 10,000 spectators and dignitaries welcomed his arrival.
- 1913** Flagler died May 20, in Palm Beach and was buried in St. Augustine alongside his daughter, Jennie Louise and first wife, Mary Harkness.
- 1917** Mary Lily Flagler Bingham died July 27, leaving Whitehall to her niece, Louise Clisby Wise.
- 1925** With a 12-story addition, Whitehall opened as the Whitehall Hotel.
- 1959** Whitehall Hotel operations ceased. Jean Flagler Matthews, granddaughter of Henry M. Flagler, purchased building and founded the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum.
- 1960** The "Restoration Ball" marked the opening of Whitehall as a Museum.
- 1963** Hotel tower removed, returning the historic structure to its original appearance.
- 1979** Jean Flagler Matthews, founder of the Flagler Museum, died, March 22 in Hawaii.



Henry and Mary Lily Flagler.  
© Flagler Museum



An FEC train crosses the Over-Sea Railway to Key West Image © Flagler Museum



Museum founder, Jean Flagler Matthews (right) escorts the first object to return to Whitehall. © Flagler Museum

# QUOTES

## About Whitehall, Flagler's Palm Beach Estate

"I too wonder how you have accomplished so much in such a short space of time. Surely you have given most of your time to this matter, but I trust that when you are finished, you will have the satisfaction of contemplating it as the greatest job of your life."

Henry Morrison Flagler

Letter to interior designer Stymus, Dec. 10, 1901

## Flagler's Ideas on Charity

"The hardest problem a man has is how to help people. This desire to help others comes when a man has more than enough for his own needs. I have come to the conclusion that the best way to help others is to help them help themselves."

Henry Morrison Flagler

Interview, *Everybody's Magazine*, Feb. 1910

## Flagler's Thoughts on Success

"I have studied the price men pay for success- the loss of health or of character or, reputation. And I find all men who win success, no matter how they win it, are always met with envy . . ."

Henry Morrison Flagler

*Everybody's Magazine*, Feb. 1910

"I have succeeded thus far, tolerably well in escaping newspaper notoriety, something for which I have a great dislike."

Henry Morrison Flagler

Letter to Admiral George Dewey, Nov. 23, 1899

## Construction of the Over-Sea Railroad to Key West

"It is perfectly simple. All you have to do is build one concrete arch and then another, and pretty soon you find yourself in Key West."

Henry Morrison Flagler to Dr. Andrew Anderson

"With him it is never a case of 'How much will it cost?' Nor of 'Will it pay'. . . Permanence appeals to him more strongly than to any other man I ever met. He has often told me that he does not wish to keep on spending money for maintenance of way, but to build for all time."

Edwin Lefevre

*Everybody's Magazine*, Feb. 1910

## Quote from a Flagler Employee

"It is natural that I, having worked under him for years, should think that Mr. Flagler is not only a very good man but a great man. He has the faculty of clear, logical reasoning and a perception so keen and quick that he unerringly detects the flaw anywhere at a glance."

Former employee

*Everybody's Magazine*, Feb. 1910



The Grand Hall of the Flagler Museum.  
© Flagler Museum



Crowds welcome the Flaglers during the opening of the Over-Sea Railway in Key West. © Flagler Museum



Guest arrive at the Hotel Royal Poinciana in Palm Beach.  
© Flagler Museum



## QUOTES continued

### Flagler's Thoughts On Death

"Anything so universal as death must be a blessing."

Inscription placed by Flagler on the entrance of  
The Woodlawn Cemetery (Palm Beach) 1905

### Flagler's Thoughts On Living

"When I was young I was too poor to indulge in bad habits. By the time I was able to afford them, it had become a fixed habit to live simply."

Henry Morrison Flagler  
*Everybody's Magazine*, Feb. 1910

"In a general way, I suppose such Institutions interest many persons, but all my life, the 'future' has had more in store for me than the past."

Henry Morrison Flagler  
Letter to George W. Wilson, Esq., Nov. 11, 1902

### Flagler's Business Beliefs

"I am a firm believer in doing business on Christian principles, but I am equally a believer in the doctrine of doing the Lord's work on business principles."

Henry Morrison Flagler  
Sept. 10, 1903

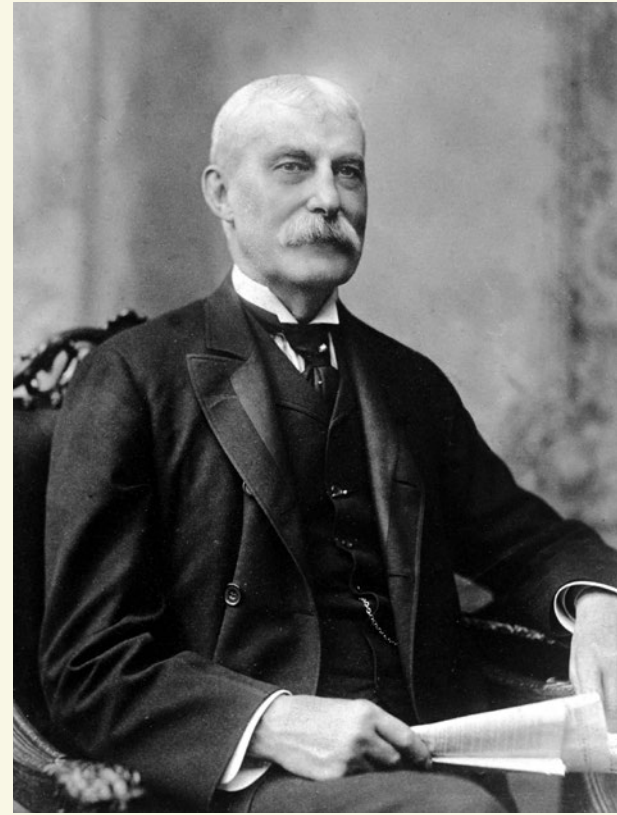
### On Flagler's Role in History

"Henry M. Flagler first built Standard Oil and then built the state of Florida. He may have been America's most modest industrial titan-and its most under appreciated. . . Henry Flagler not only was present at the creation of the modern economic world but was one of its prime creators."

John Steele Gordon  
*Audacity Magazine*, Winter 1996

"I can understand how, for instance, James J. Hill built his railroad into the uninhabited prairies, for he knew what the soil was capable of, and it was a country similar to what men elsewhere were used to. But that any man could have the genius to see of what this wilderness of waterless sand and underbrush was capable and then have the nerve to build a railroad here, is more marvelous than similar development anywhere else in the world."

George W. Perkins, J.P. Morgan and Co.  
*Everybody's Magazine*, Feb. 1910



Henry Flagler. © Flagler Museum



A visitor tours the one of the Museum's changing exhibitions.  
Image © Flagler Museum

## QUOTES continued

### Flagler's Importance in Miami

"Enthusiastic townsfolk wanted to call the new city Flagler, but the tycoon resisted. Thus he spared the world the specter of crooners singing 'Moon over Flagler' and gumshoes hustling about in "Flagler Vice."

*Miami Today*, July 25, 1996

### Role in Incorporation of Standard Oil

"I wish I'd had the brains to think of it, It was Henry M. Flagler."

John D. Rockefeller  
*Titan*, p.132

### Philosophy on Business

"A friendship founded on business is superior to a business founded on friendship."

Henry Morrison Flagler  
*Titan*, p. 109

"I have always been contented, but I have never been satisfied."

Henry Morrison Flagler  
*New York Daily Tribune*, Dec. 23, 1906

### Flagler's Relationship with John D. Rockefeller

"The part played by one of our earliest partners, Mr. H.M. Flagler, was always an inspiration to me. . . He invariably wanted to go ahead and accomplish great projects of all kinds. He was always on the active side of every question and to his wonderful energy is due much of the rapid progress of the company in the early days."

John D. Rockefeller  
*Reminiscences*, 1909



A visitor tours the one of the Museum's changing exhibitions.  
© Flagler Museum



Visitors tour the one of the Museum's changing exhibitions.  
© Flagler Museum



# AMERICA'S GILDED AGE

In the span of a single lifetime, from the end of the Civil War to the crash of the stock market in 1929, American culture as we know it sprang into being. Dubbed the Gilded Age by Mark Twain in 1873, it was a time of unparalleled growth in technology. Virtually everything we take for granted in our daily lives was an invention and/or convention of this fascinating time in America's history. The captains of industry and commerce of The Gilded Age became wealthy beyond what most can imagine today. Considering the magnitude of change they effected and witnessed around them, their belief that anything was possible and even probable, given American ingenuity and hard work, is understandable.

Not surprisingly, this group of newly wealthy citizens of a relatively young country found context and meaning for their lives and good fortune by

thinking of themselves as heirs of a great Western Tradition. They traced their cultural lineage from the Greeks, through the Roman Empire, to the European Renaissance, particularly the Venetian Renaissance. The example of Venice's democratic society of well-to-do merchants and traders who collected the world's wealth, loved architecture and enjoyed a strong sense of public responsibility, appealed to them on the basis that it was both what they were becoming and what they aspired to.

By 1893, a blending of the Western Tradition and America's spectacular technological growth found expression in The World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago. There America's most prominent architects and artists, backed by the wealth of America's technological revolution, built a literal representation of America's Gilded Age with its unique blend of technology and western tradition. Perhaps the best illustration of this blending can be found in one of the grand facades of the exposition which inside displayed the very latest in technology and was appropriately named the Palace of Electricity. The White City, as the Exposition came to be known, was a temporary stage set of monumental proportions where Americans meant to show themselves and the world that America was the rightful heir to, and the



Above, a scene from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition shows the Court of Honor looking west past Daniel Chester French's sculpture "Republic".

Below, Henry Flagler and guest enjoy tea in the Coconut Grove in Palm Beach.

© Flagler Museum



## AMERICA'S GILDED AGE *continued*

highest expression of, the Western traditions and virtues presaged by earlier societies. Never mind that virtually all of these architects and artists had studied abroad, at places like the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. They studied abroad not to mimic Europe, but to pick up the threads of the arts and culture from earlier Western societies in order to more efficiently bring Western Culture to its full glory, which was America's obvious destiny. It seemed to these artisans that what they were doing was not only an obvious extension of what Europe had previously done, but also something uniquely different and better, in no small part because of American technology and ingenuity.



Hearst Castle, San Simeon, California, ©John Blades

While many great homes were built in America prior to the Civil War, the homes built by the captains of industry and commerce during America's Gilded Age are something clearly different. Though relatively few in number and geographically dispersed, these homes have much in common and represent a distinct genre. By the 1960's most had become historic house museums, but the visiting public has generally viewed them as local anomalies built by unusual individuals of great wealth, missing altogether the significance of these homes in American history and what they can tell us about the shaping of American culture.



Biltmore Estate, Asheville, North Carolina. Courtesy of Biltmore Estate

While others might be considered part of this genre of Gilded Age homes, Hearst Castle, Wynton, Rosecliff, Breakers, Marble House, The Elms, Fenway Court, Biltmore, Whitehall, Villa Vizcaya, and Ca' d'Zan all clearly belong. All were begun during a thirty-five-year period from about 1890 through 1925. Some, like Hearst Castle, Biltmore, and Villa Vizcaya, were true estates in the sense that they were designed to be self-sufficient, with gardens, orchards, dairy and poultry operations. A few, like Fenway Court and Hearst Castle, were envisioned as museums at the time they were constructed. Many, like Hearst Castle, Villa Vizcaya, Ca' d'Zan, Wynton, and Fenway Court, reflect the strong personal involvement of the owner in their design and collections, while others tended to more strictly express the owner's stature in Gilded Age Society, like Biltmore, Breakers, and Whitehall. In some homes, especially those built more strictly as an expression

of social standing, like Whitehall, the antiques were used to create "Period Rooms." In others, like Hearst Castle and Fenway Court, the antiques were blended in ways that suited the tastes of the owner and the time, often very much influenced by architect Stanford White's interesting and unusual sense of style. Essentially all were products of architects trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and were furnished with many antiques coming into America from France, Spain, and Italy through dealers and auction houses in New York. Without exception, these great homes from America's Gilded Age are wonderful and unique windows into a time of unprecedented change and creativity in American culture. A time when the explosive growth in technology made some wealthy and promised a utopia where individuals could develop to their highest and best purpose. A time when, for many Americans, all of human history seemed to point to America and its destiny to bring Western culture to its ultimate expression.

Fortunately for us and future generations, most of these homes have been preserved as museums and are now part of our common cultural heritage. Without them our appreciation and understanding of this fascinating period in American history would be severely diminished.



# FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY

In 1912, a proud Henry Flagler rode the first train into Key West, marking the completion of the Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway's overseas railroad connection to Key West and the linkage by railway of the entire east coast of Florida. The FEC was the product of Flagler's resources and imagination. Flagler's construction of hotels at points along the railroad and his development of the agricultural industry through the Model Land Company established tourism and agriculture as Florida's major industries. Amazingly, Flagler accomplished these feats after retiring from his first career. Flagler had already had founded the vast empire of Standard Oil with partners John D. Rockefeller and Samuel Andrews, before becoming interested in Florida.



The first train to Key West using Flagler's Over-Sea Railway was welcomed by thousands of people in 1912. ©Flagler Museum

When Flagler first visited Florida in 1878, he recognized the state's potential for growth but noticed a lack of hotel facilities. Flagler returned to Florida and in 1885 began building a grand St. Augustine hotel, the Hotel Ponce de Leon. Flagler realized that the key to developing Florida was a solid transportation system and consequently purchased the Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Halifax Railroad.



FEC railway construction ©Flagler Museum

He also noticed that one of the major problems facing the existing Florida railway systems was that each operated on different gauge systems, making interconnection impossible. Shortly after purchasing the Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Halifax Railroad, he converted the line to a standard gauge. The Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Halifax River Railway served the north eastern portion of the state and was the first railroad in what would eventually become the Florida East Coast Railway Company.

Before Flagler bought the organization, the railroad stretched only between South Jacksonville and St. Augustine and lacked a depot sufficient to accommodate travelers to his St. Augustine resorts. Flagler built a modern depot facility as well as schools, hospitals and churches, systematically revitalizing the largely abandoned historic city.

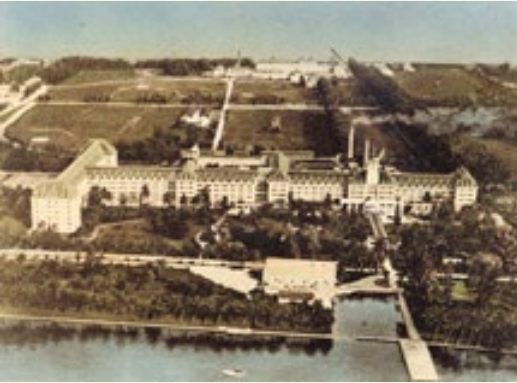
Flagler next purchased three additional existing railroads: the St. John's Railway, the St. Augustine and Palatka Railway, and the St. Johns and Halifax River Railway so that he could provide extended rail service on standard gauge tracks. Through the operation of these three railroads, by spring 1889 Flagler's system offered service from Jacksonville to Daytona. Continuing to develop hotel facilities to entice northern tourists to visit Florida, Flagler bought and expanded the Hotel Ormond, located along the railroad's route north of Daytona.

Beginning in 1892, when landowners south of Daytona petitioned him to extend the railroad 80 miles south, Flagler began laying new railroad tracks; no longer did he follow his traditional practice of purchase existing railroads and merging them into his growing rail system. Flagler obtained a charter from the state of Florida authorizing him to build a railroad along the Indian River to Miami and as the railroad progressed southward, cities such as New Smyrna and Titusville began to develop along the tracks.



Map of FEC Railway and Flagler Hotels  
©Flagler Museum

## FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY *continued*



The Hotel Royal Poinciana in Palm Beach.  
©Flagler Museum

By 1894, Flagler's railroad system reached what is today known as West Palm Beach. Flagler constructed the Royal Poinciana Hotel in Palm Beach overlooking Lake Worth. He also built The Breakers (originally named the Palm Beach Inn) on the ocean side of Palm Beach, and Whitehall, his private 75-room, 100,000 square foot winter home. The development of these three structures, coupled with railroad access to them, established Palm Beach as a winter resort for the wealthy members of America's Gilded Age.

Palm Beach was to be the terminus of the Flagler railroad, but during 1894 and 1895, severe freezes hit the area, causing Flagler to rethink his original decision not to move the railroad south. To further convince Flagler to continue the railroad to Miami, he was offered land from private landowners, the Florida East

Coast Canal and Transportation Company, and the Boston and Florida Atlantic Coast Land Company in exchange for laying rail tracks.

In September 1895, Flagler's system was incorporated as the Florida East Coast Railway Company and by 1896, it reached Biscayne Bay, the largest and most accessible harbor on Florida's east coast. To further develop the area surrounding the Miami railroad station, Flagler dredged a channel, built streets, instituted the first water and power systems, and financed the town's first newspaper, The Metropolis. When the town incorporated in 1896, its citizens wanted to honor the man responsible for the city's development by naming it, "Flagler." He declined the honor, persuading them to keep the city's old Indian name, "Miami."

Never one to rest on his laurels, Flagler next sought perhaps his greatest challenge: the extension of the Florida East Coast Railway to Key West, a city of almost 20,000 inhabitants located 128 miles beyond the end of the Florida peninsula. Flagler became particularly interested in linking Key West to the mainland after the United States announced in 1905 the construction of the Panama Canal. Key West, the United States's closest deep-water port to the Canal, could not only take advantage of Cuban and Latin America trade, but the opening of the Canal would allow significant trade possibilities with the west.



Seal of the FEC ©Flagler Museum



Henry Flagler at Knights Key. ©Flagler Museum

The construction of the overseas railway required many engineering innovations as well as vast amounts of labor and monetary resources. At one time during construction, four thousand men were employed. During the seven year construction, five hurricanes threatened to halt the project. Despite the hardships, the final link of the Florida East

Cost Railway was completed in 1912, the year before Flagler's death. Linking the entire east coast of Florida, a state that at the time was largely an uninhabited frontier, demanded a great deal of foresight and perseverance. Nearly a century later, the effects of Henry Flagler's incredible accomplishments can still be seen clearly throughout Florida.

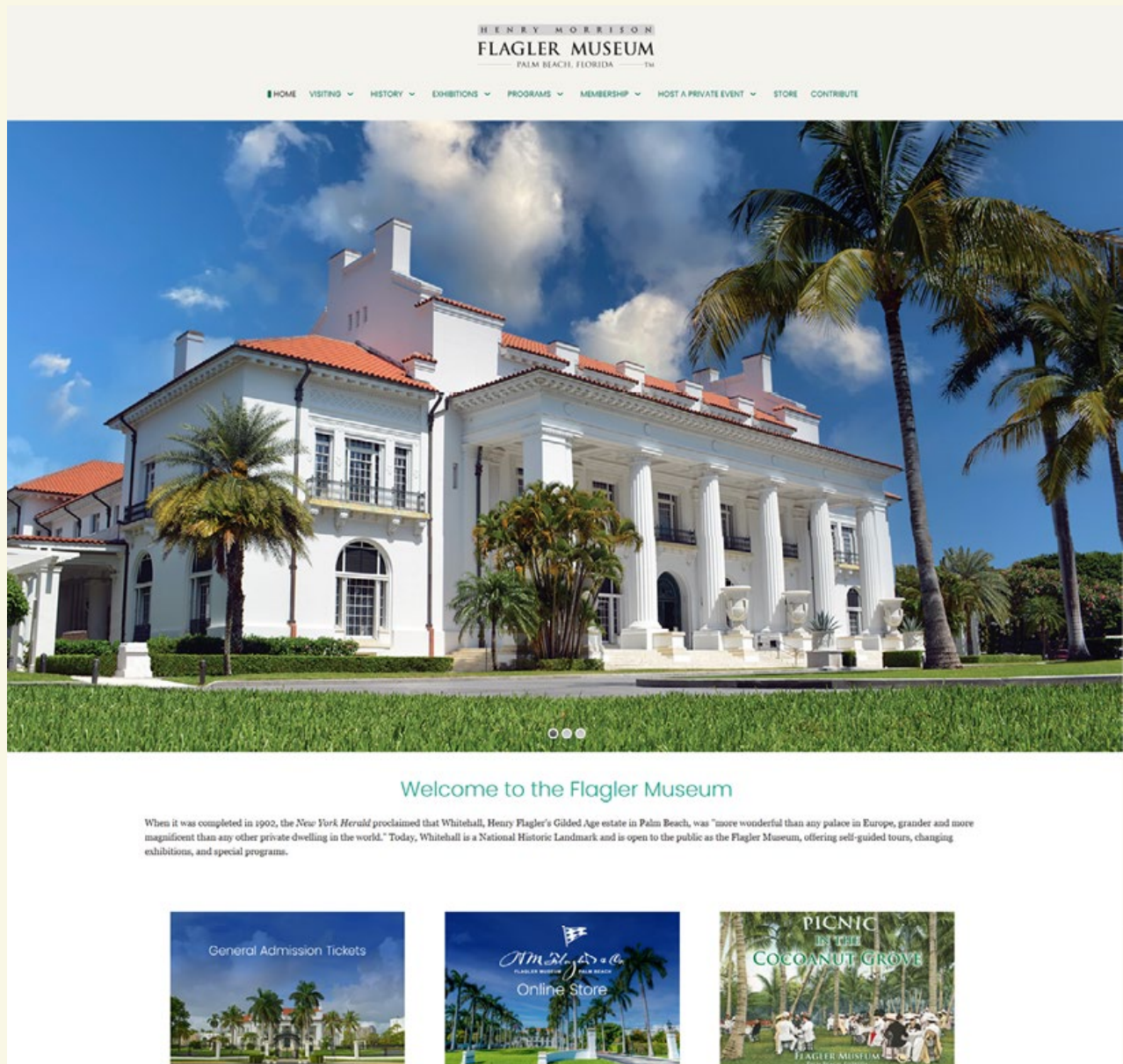


# WEBSITE

The Flagler Museum's Web Site is an indispensable resource for information and images on:

- The current Museum exhibitions and events
- Biographical information on Henry Morrison Flagler
- Whitehall Lecture Series
- Flagler Museum Music Series
- The history and a photo tour of Whitehall
- Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway
- America's Gilded Age
- Group and School Tours of the Flagler Museum
- Information on the Railcar No. 91 Tea Room and Gilded Age Tea
- A link to the Flagler Museum Store
- Suggested Reading List

Flagler Museum website address: [www.FlaglerMuseum.us](http://www.FlaglerMuseum.us)



# SUGGESTED READING LIST

“Flagler Museum: An Illustrated Guide,” Palm Beach, Florida, Flagler Museum, 2017.

## Henry M. Flagler

- Akin, Edward N. *Flagler: Rockefeller Partner & Florida Baron*, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1988.
- Gordon, John Steel. “The Master Builder,” *Audacity Magazine* (Winter 1996): 40-53.
- Lefevre, Edwin. “Flagler and Florida,” *Everybody’s Magazine* 22 (1910): 168-186.
- Martin, Sidney Walter. *Henry Flagler: Visionary of the Gilded Age*, Tailored Tours Publications, 1999
- Sammons, Sandra Wallus. *Henry Flagler Builder of Florida*, Florida: Tailored Tours Publications, Inc., 1993.
- Wiggins, Larry. “The Birth of the City of Miami,” *Tequesta: The Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida* (1995): 5-38.

## America’s Gilded Age

- Blades, John M. and Loring, John. *Tiffany at the World’s Columbian Exposition*, Ellison Graphics 2006.
- Braden, Susan R. *The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Platt*, University Press of Florida, 2002.
- Cashman, Sean Dennis. *America in the Gilded Age*, New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Dorsey, Hebe. *The Age of Opulence*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986.
- Dwight, Eleanor. *The Gilded Age: Edith Warton and Her Contemporaries*, New York: Universe Publishing, 1995.
- Folsom, Merrill. *Great American Mansions and Their Stories*, Mamaroneck, New York: Hastings House, 1963.
- Gregory, Alexis. *Families of Fortune: Life in the Gilded Age*, New York: Rizzoli, 1993.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Capital 1848-1875*, New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995.
- Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City*, Crown Publishers, 2003.
- McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *Great American Houses*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1994.
- Rydell, Robert and Carol Kinder Carr. *Revisiting the White City: American Art and the 1893 World’s Fair*, Hanover: University Press, 1993.
- Sandler, Martin. *Inventors*, New York: Harper Collins, 1996.

## FEC Railroad

- Bramson, Seth. *Speedway to Sunshine: The Story of the Florida East Coast Railway*, Boston Mills Press, 2003
- Gallagher, Dan. *Florida’s Great Ocean Railway: Building the Key West Extension*, Pineapple Press, 2003.
- Gallagher, Dan. *Pigeon Key and the Seven-Mile Bridge 1908-1912*, Marathon, Florida: Pigeon Key Foundation, 1995.
- Meltzer, Milton. *Hear that Train Whistle Blow: how the railroad changed the world*, Random House, 2004.
- Parks, Pat. *The Railroad that Died at Sea*, Florida: Langley Press, Inc., 1968.
- Standiford, Lee. *Last Train to Paradise*, Crown Publishers, 2002.