

*The
New
Jerusalem*

Dedicated to the memory of my great-grandfather

JOAQUIN (KING) ALVAREZ TORRES

Born in Spain, August 17, 1875

Naturalized in USA, November 15, 1928

Died in Estero, Florida, June 3, 1944

Researched and written by Jeff McCullers
Photographs and sketches from the collection of Mrs. Alma Trebell
Sketch retouching by Jeff McCullers

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"You are building for future generations," Koresh impressed his followers, "Let the work be so well accomplished as to preclude the possibility of any future regret for any unfaithfulness in its construction."

As these inspiring words proved their weight in the Estero community, let us be guided by the spirit of our forefathers and to continue to build for the benefit of future generations, with the 4-H youth in the lead.

Hedwig Michel

Koreshan Unity Settlement Historical District

In the summer of 1976, I wrote a book "ESTERO: THE LIFE AND TIMES," a history of Estero, Florida as told through the memoirs of some of its surviving pioneers.

It was a short work, designed not as a final word, but as a start for others to research their own heritage.

It was "ROOTS" on a much smaller scale.

This year, I have written "THE NEW JERUSALEM." It also is a history of Estero, Florida. It's also a short work, not designed as the final word, but a starting point for those who crave to know more about their past.

"THE NEW JERUSALEM" concerns the biographical life of Dr. Cyrus R. Teed, founder of the Koreshan Unity, and some of his complex philosophies.

This book is important to me, as I am a fourth-generation native of Estero, my ancestors being the original settlers. I know my past.

How about you?

Jeff McCullers

Nestled in the Florida scrub between Bonita Springs and Fort Myers, Florida, is the Koreshan Unity Settlement Historical District, once the chosen location for "The New Jerusalem," to be a city that would accommodate six million. The New Jerusalem was started in 1894 by a small group of Chicago Koreshans, who derived the name Koreshan from the assumed name of their leader, Dr. Cyrus Read Teed used as his name Koresh, the ancient biblical translation of Cyrus. All that remains now of this Jerusalem is a few old wooden buildings, a crude gravesite, and a lush tropical garden.

Just what was the New Jerusalem? And who were the Koreshans?

On October 18, 1839, Cyrus Read Teed was born in Teedsville, New York, the son of a country doctor. Teed married Miss Fedilia Rowe of Meridith, New York, to whom was born one son, Douglas Arthur Teed. Cyrus Teed moved to New York City in 1862 to complete his medical education. At this time the Civil War was raging at full fury, and Teed joined the Union Army as a private. His medical knowledge gained him the position of assistant physician and surgeon to a General Woodford. Teed graduated from New York Eclectic College in 1868, and opened a practice in Utica, New York. It was at this time that Teed claimed to have experienced a spiritual awakening, which he called his "Illumination." Koreshans later described this illumination and Teed's philosophies resulting from it "the revelation of the mysteries of life and death, of the form and character of the universe, of the relation of Man to God, and Man's ultimate destiny in God. It was the revelation of universal knowledge." Teed's beliefs, which he developed over a period of many years, were invariably detrimental to his medical practice wherever he went.

Teed began publicizing his revolutionary beliefs through the "Guiding Star," a monthly newspaper that ran from December 1886 to May 1889. In November 1889, Teed began publishing "The Flaming Sword," which was similar in content to the "Guiding Star." This ran until the Guiding Star Publishing House in the Estero Koreshan Unity burned down in February 1949.

Finally, Teed had attracted enough followers who believed in his teachings and in his illumination to found his Koreshan Unity in Chicago in September 1888. This unity was to operate on a communal system, which Teed said he based on the life of the early Christians. This unity included 'The World College Of Life', an educational institution through which Teed could expound on his religious beliefs and his method of achieving Utopia through communal living.

In 1894, the Estero branch of the Koreshan Unity was established in Estero, settled by Gusrave Damkohler in 1882. Much of his original 200 acres was transferred to the Koreshan Unity. Eventually, Teed moved the entire Koreshan Unity to Estero from Chicago, and the Koreshans set about building boats, bridges, docks, roads, homes, meeting places, printing shops, the Koreshan Unity Store, the hotel, and little by little, an extensive, elaborate settlement was created, the start for what Teed predicted would be a center of religion, accommodating six million Koreshans.

In the spring of 1897, Teed devised an experiment by which he hoped to prove the true nature of the earth: concave, convex, or flat. On the beaches in Naples, Florida, Teed erected a line of "rectillineators" six miles long. A survey was made, which consisted of projecting an absolutely straight line along the waters edge by means of an apparatus called the rectillineator, a device constructed specifically for this experiment. The apparatus consisted of three flat sections of seasoned mahogany, each twelve feet long. At the end of each section was a crossarm, with a double T-square, one at the top and one at the bottom, made of brass and tooled as accurately as the most skilled mechanic could make them. These sections were advanced by means of adjustable standards which permitted the projection of an absolutely straight line. Each operation was checked and rechecked, and to rectify for any possible error that might occur due to faulty tooling of the double T-square, each section was reversed as it was brought up from the rear and placed in front. As the rectillineator was advanced, it gradually neared the waters surface, until finally, it could no longer be advanced owing to the crossarms of the device touching the ground. At this point, a telescope was placed along the axis of the instrument, which showed the line meeting the waters surface at a distance of about four miles from the start.

To Teed, this proved definitely that the earth curves upward, and is therefore concave. Had the survey shown that the straight line became higher above the surface as it progressed, it would have told Teed that the earth was convex. This experiment reinforced Teed's conviction that we live on the inner surface of a concave sphere, with all of space contained in the center. Teed's calculations led him to believe that the earth was concave with a curvature of eight inches to a mile, a diameter of 8000 miles and a circumference of 25,000 miles.

On December 22, 1908, Teed died. Some Koreshans believed that he would rise again, so his body was not buried for several days. Eventually, his remains were placed in a concrete tomb on Fort Myers Beach. The Hurricane of 1921 destroyed the tomb, and some Koreshans believed that the storm was sent to cover Teed's entrance into heaven. The plaque which was on the tomb was recovered, and placed in the gardens at the Koreshan Unity in Estero. The plaque bears the inscription:

**"CYRUS, SHEPERD.
STONE OF ISRAEL."**

After Teed's death, Unity membership began to wane. Several individuals left the unity, receiving a grant from the unity for their new life. The lack of Teed's magnetic influence was evident from the instant he died. The last original Koreshan, Miss Vesta Newcombe, died in 1974 at the age of 96.

Teed did leave quite a complex philosophy behind him. Through the years dating from his illumination, he was building up his beliefs, finding explanations for psychic and physical phenomenon. Teed and his followers believed that Koreshanity must replace Christianity in the manner that Christianity replaced Judaism.

According to Koreshanity, the earth is a hollow sphere, with the land surface as the inside of the sphere, and the stars and planets within. "The universe is eternal, a great battery, and perpetually renews itself through inherent functions, by virtue of which it evolves itself."

Teed also taught that "the Science of Alchemy is the Philosopher's Stone, the key to the mystery of life. Chemistry is false, alchemy is true! Matter and energy are interconvertible and interdependent; they are correlates; matter is destructible, the result of its transmutation is energy. Alchemy is the key to the analysis of the universe."

"God is personal and biune, with a triunity of specific attributes. God in his perfection and power is the God-Man or the Man-God, the seed of universal perpetuity. Jesus the Christ was God Almighty; the Holy Spirit was the product of his transmutation, or the burning of his body.

The coming of the Messiah is an inevitable as the reproduction of the seed. The divine Seed was sown nineteen hundred years ago, the first fruit is another Messianic personality. The Messiah is now in the world, declaring the scientific gospel."

"Reincarnation is the central law of life — the law of the resurrection; reincarnation and resurrection are identical. Resurrection is reached through a succession of re-embodiments. One generation passes into another; the millions of humanity march down the stream of time together."

Teed told his followers that "Heaven and hell are in humanity, and constitute the spiritual world; the spiritual domain is mental, and in the natural humanity- not in the sky."

Teed's beliefs concerning human destiny were that "origin and destiny are one and the same. The origin of Man is God, and God is Man's destiny. God is the higher product of the universe, the apex of humanity. Absorption into Nirvana is entrance into eternal life — in the interior spheres of humanity, not in sky or atmosphere."

"Koreshanity declares and defines the laws of Immortality, and its attainment in the natural world. The first step is recognition of the Messiah and the application of His truth. The saving of human life consists in the conservation and appropriation of life in humanity. To become immortal, one must cease to propagate life on the plane of mortality. The standard of Koreshan purity is the virgin life of Jesus the Messiah. The Central Order of the Koreshan Unity is Celibate and Communitistic. Celibacy obtains in the central nucleus, never in the world at large."

Teed was a tremendous orator, known for holding audiences almost hypnotized with his powerful speaking style. It was this speaking ability and his magnetism that attracted many Koreshans to the Unity.

To give the reader an idea of what the public Dr. Teed was like, the following is an abstract of a lecture given by Teed to his "World College of Life", titled "The Kosmos".

"The subject for this morning's lecture is The Kosmos. Kosmos is a Greek word, and is usually translated as "world", but in this connection, by world we mean the universe of being, the created universe. For convenience of study we separate the meaning of this word into two divisions; namely, the physical macrocosm, embracing the physical universe, the universal objective world, all there is of physical creation and which is to a certain extent visible, and the anthropological universe, that is, the great universe of humanity. Then again, as the miniature expression of the universal or grand anthropological universe, we have the microcosmic universe; that is the little universe, the subjective world, which is as absolute and integral a structure as the macrocosm of physical existence, the great universe, is a whole or integral structure. In scientific exactness, the manifest microcosmic universe is the perfected man; the regenerated God-man, containing within Himself the potencies of the universe. He is the center into whom is aggregated all the essences of existence, and is the co-ordinate of the entire unregenerate humanity in the domain of animal life. In Koreshan Science we have its correspondence in the sun; the center of influx for all the physical forces — the product of transmitted material substance — and the shell, the material outward structure which is the posited extremity of all forces outflowing from the sun to be transmuted to matter at their point of deposition.

"The present condition of that which would otherwise be the microcosm or integral man, is in a divided state, or in brief, a state of development. That is, it is not wholly complete or matured. It is not in its integral state; the development finally to be reached in the progress of the human being towards God.

"The microcosm is now in two distinct forms, the male entity and the female entity. Or, to formulate it more fully, there are really four distinct states or qualities; two differing material forms, and two differing spiritual entities in-resident. This is the present state of the microcosm. It is not yet whole. It is waiting for conjunction, making that which is now in two forms, one, the manifest divine form, which is the final form, the integral being.

"We see the race now in two separate forms, male and female, that is disintegrated. It is the result of the fall: the segregation of the divine man, the Adam; the made in the image and likeness of God; not like Him in one principle merely, nor in a thousand principles, but like Him in every principle, spiritual and material. The present status of the race is a declination or fall from that primitive state. The two forms, male and female, do not constitute the integral structure, therefore they do not constitute the microcosm. Viduality is not the microcosm; the individuality is. The divided personality is widowed, whether it be male or female. The individual is undivided; unwidowed is married; married in God; united to God in such a manner as to compromise the male and female element in one form: entire; no longer male and female in two distinctive separate forms, but male and female united in the one form which is neither male nor female. This is the microcosm; the subjective universe; and is as complete in its fullness as the objective universe. This regenerated divine man; this man created in the image and likeness of God; this microcosm, is not an epitome. He is not an abridgement of the universe, but is everywhere in Himself a universe; a universe in the least form, as the seed of a man is the man in the least form.

"To a certain extent, by observing certain laws, we are enabled to study the microcosm from the present development of the vidual man so soon as we understand the correlation of the manifest forms of the male and female. By understanding the laws and principles of polarization, and by the application of these to the viduals, we may through the laws of analogy thoroughly understand the microcosmic structure and life.

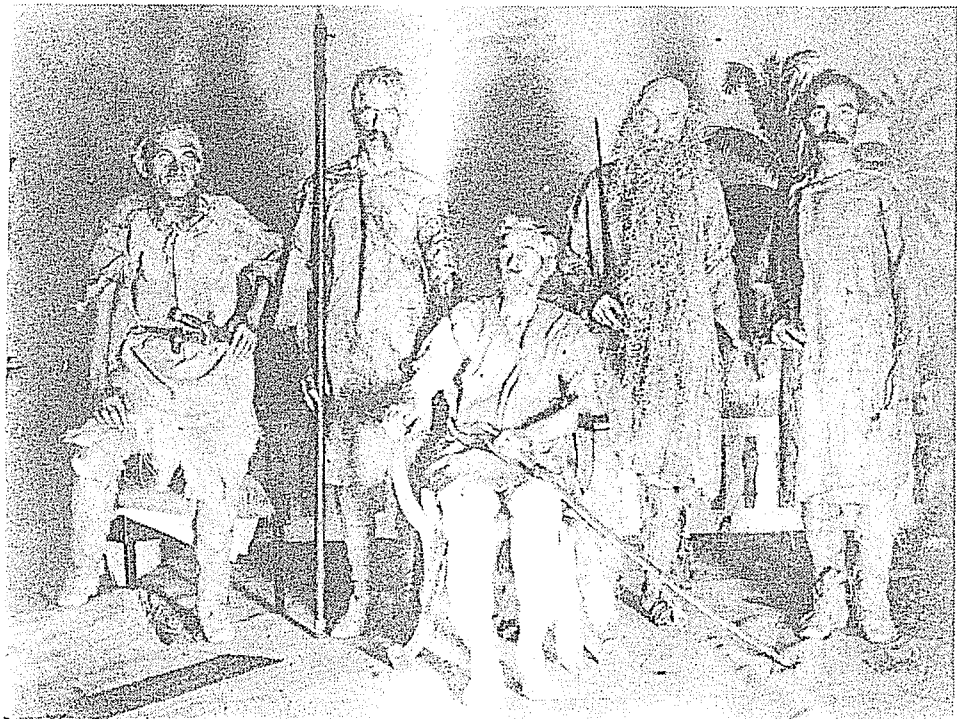
"In the microcosm so far developed, there are certain things that we reach by direct study. We learn of certain facts and phenomena by the direct application of the mind. There are certain other things that we cannot reach directly. They are not within the province of direct mental perception; but through the great law of analogy we may know of the things that are concealed, through the clear comprehension of things which are revealed. We cannot get at the law of life otherwise than by analogy. We cannot obtain a knowledge of psychology through post-mortem examination, or vivisection, however carefully conducted. There is no correct knowledge of psychology acquired, which is not derived through examination of the living subject; yet the conclusion of psychologists are mostly drawn from histological and anatomical studies of the dead structure, or from effete material cast off by the living. The operation of vital animal forces are little distinguished from that of the non-vital and purely chemical forces, and in the teachings of many psychologists there seem to be recognized no difference in the two qualities of force. We may illustrate the difference between the vital and non-vital by the two processes of hatching eggs: one by vital, the other by non-vital, or artificial heat. The chicks hatched by the hen may lay eggs, and these eggs produce chicks; but the chicks hatched by artificial means, though they may produce eggs, can not reproduce chicks in a continuous reproductive line. What does this fact teach us? That animal heat is a very

different substance from artificial heat, however great the chemical resemblance may be. They are two substances. In no degree of inorganic matter — so called — does its force or spirit furnish nutriment to vegetable or inorganic life of the same quality as that from the same matter which has been organized in vegetable or animal forms, though chemically they be the same. The one has been organized by virtue of organic activity; the other has been succeeded by what we call inorganic action.

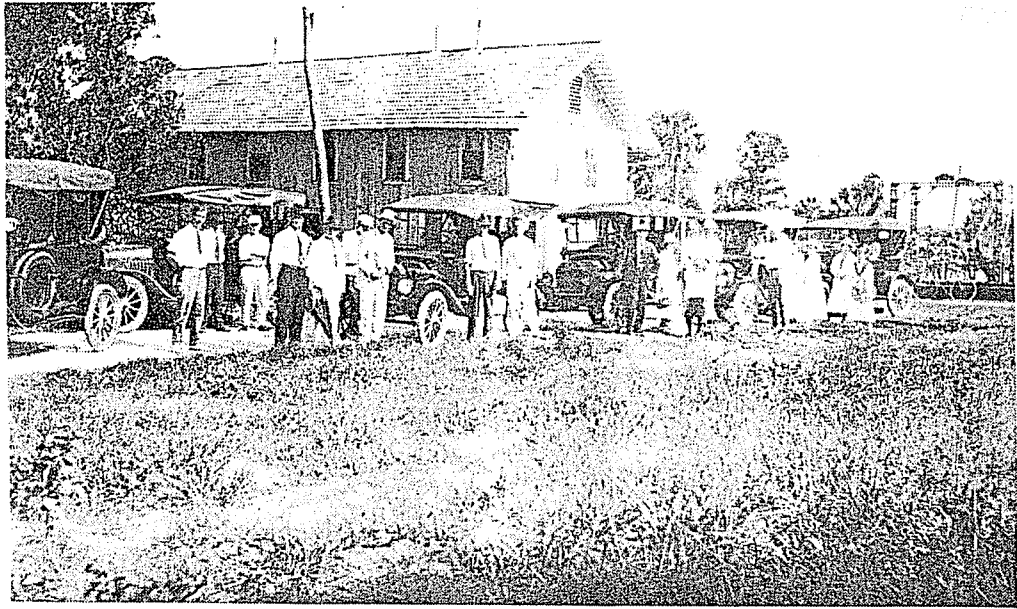
"Now one object in studying to know the microcosm, to get at the principles of life and form, that we may be able by our knowledge of principles and activities to control them for application to life. When I say life, I mean life in the supreme sense, because we do not know anything that is not life in the highest sense. The brain and body; this vidual structure, can be studied specially only when we study it in the light of the law of analogy. By this we reach a perfect conclusion concerning the functions, physiology, and activities of the structure."



A portion of the Koreshan Unity at a Koreshan festival. Teed is seen in the characteristic dark suit in the right center.



Koreshans in costume from two of their plays.

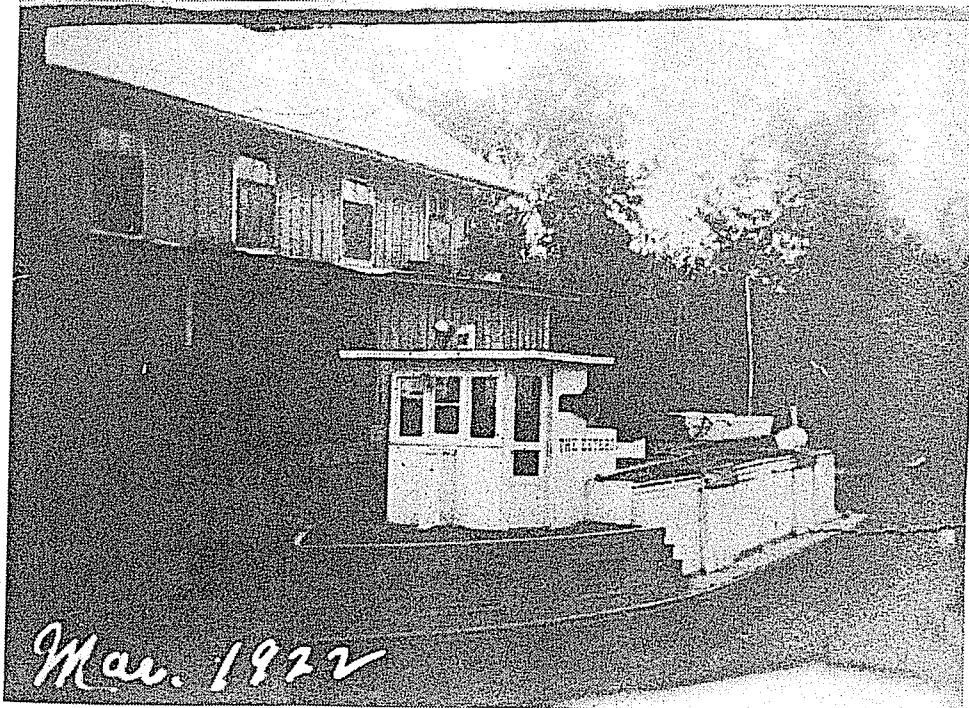


"The Trail Blazers", a mixture of Koreshan and other pioneers, and two Seminole guides, who cut a path from Estero to Everglades City around 1923.

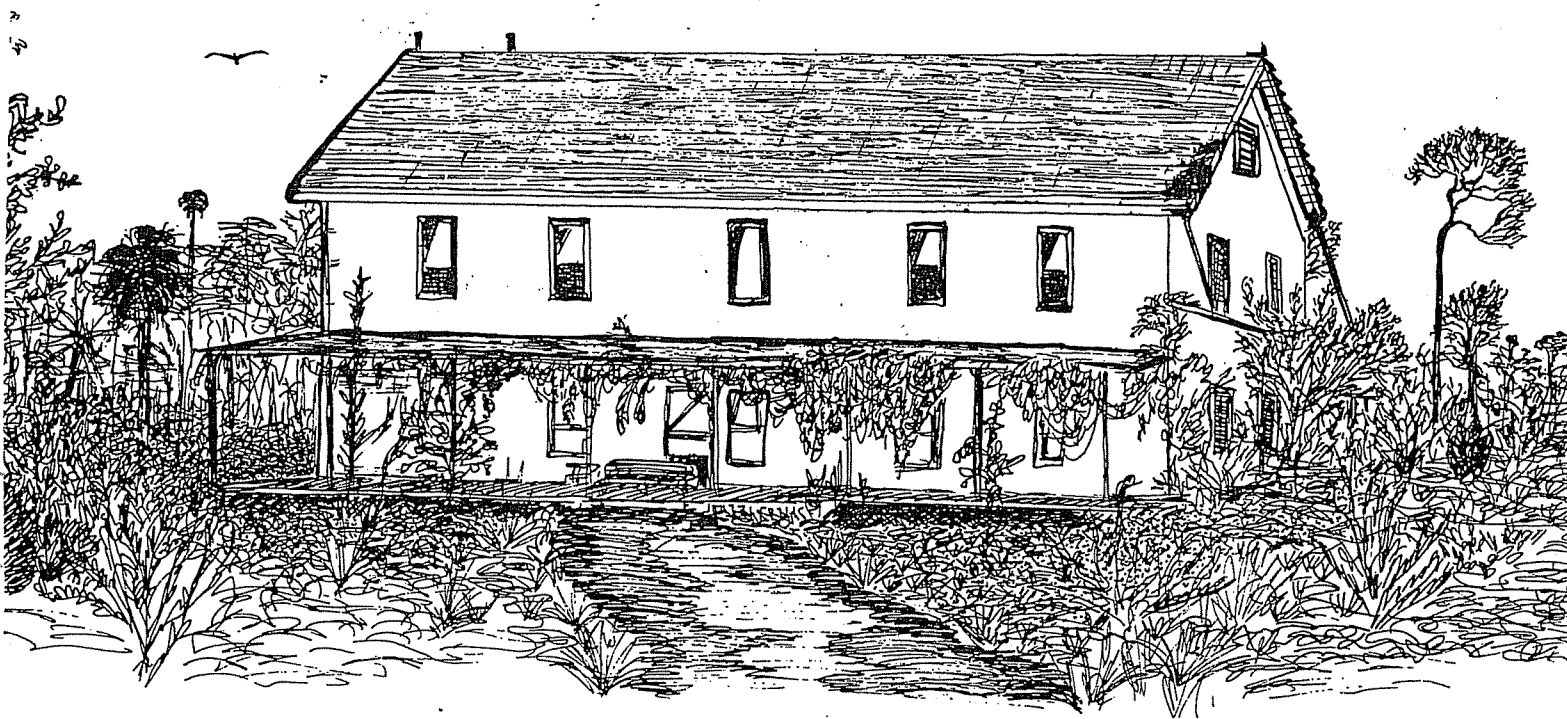
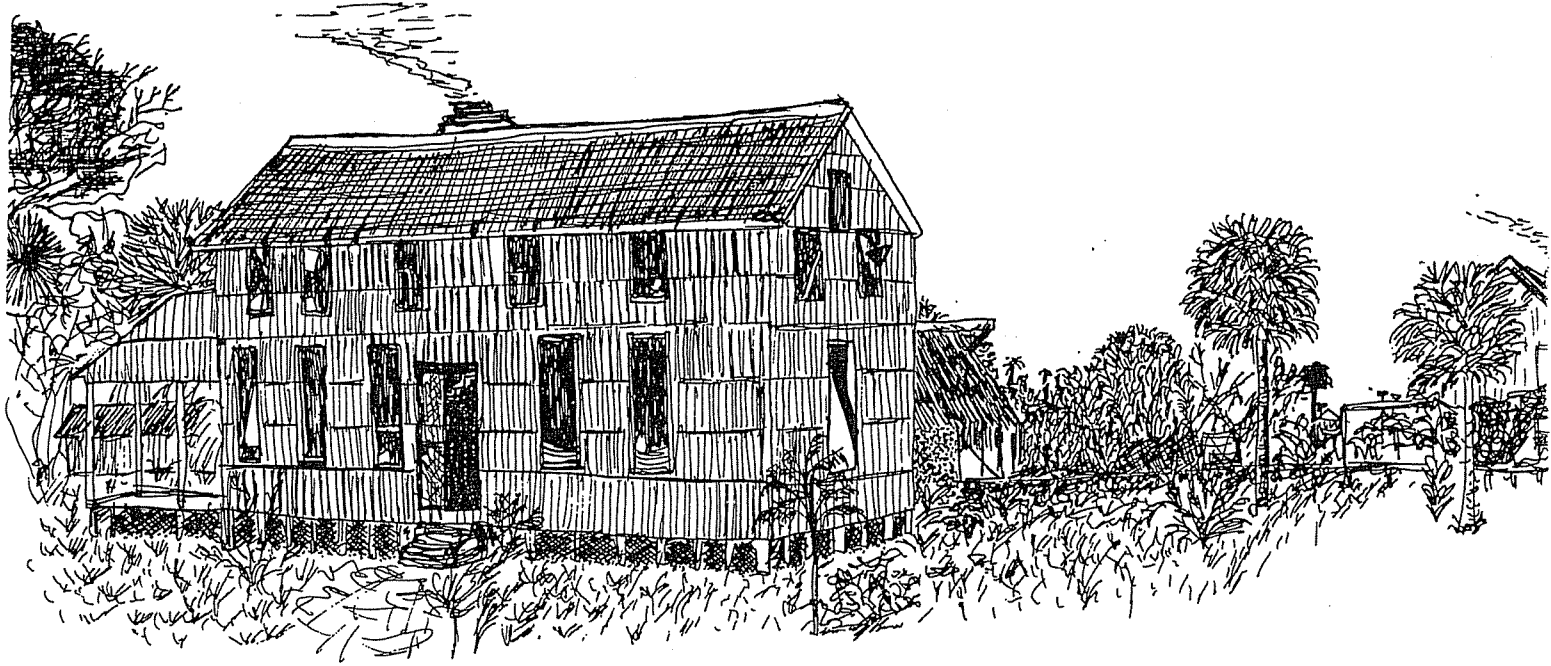


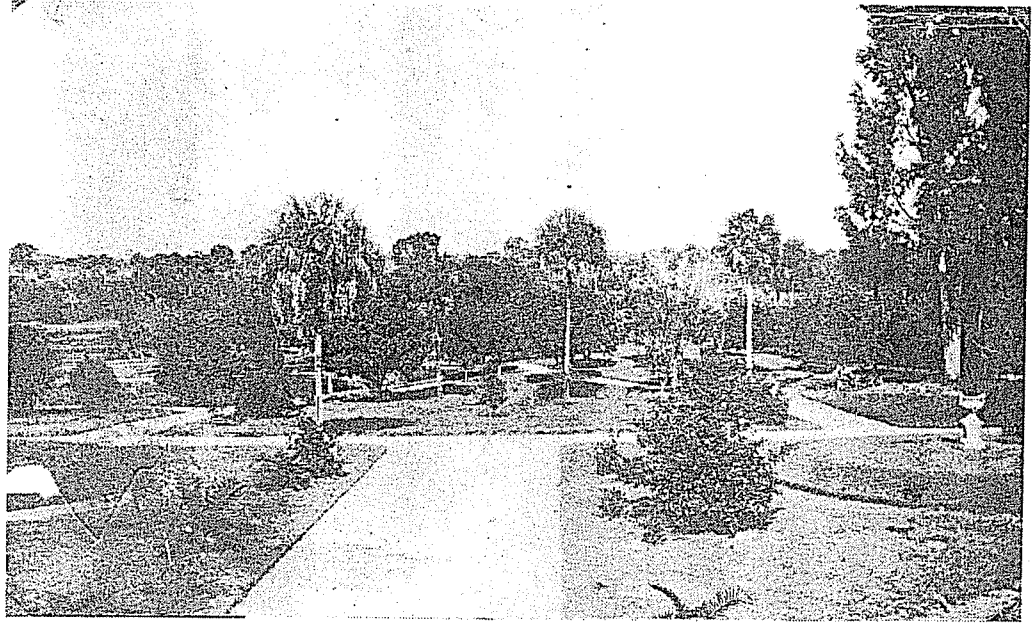
Koreshan children in costumes from one of the many Koreshan cultural programs.

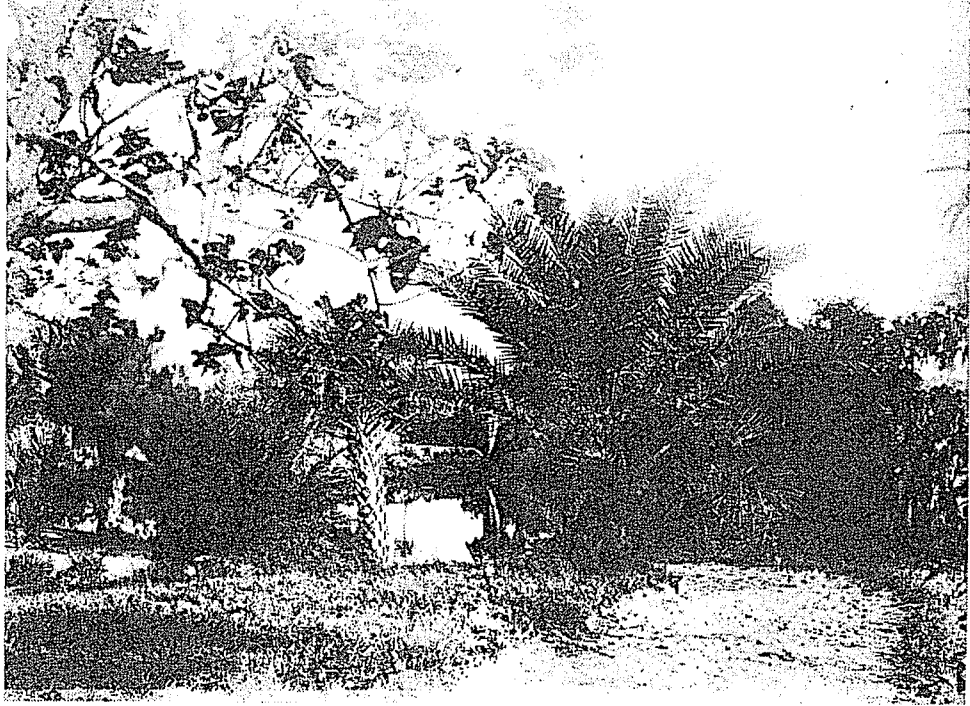
Following pages: Various views of the Unity grounds during its prosperity.
All construction, including sculpture and stonework, was done by Koreshians
at the Unity.



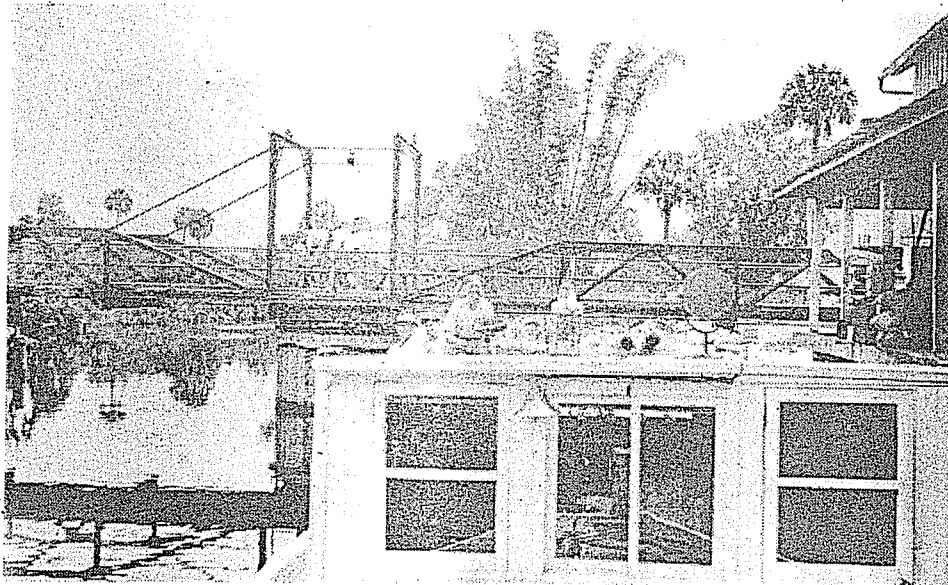
"The Estero" docked at the Koreshan Unity.







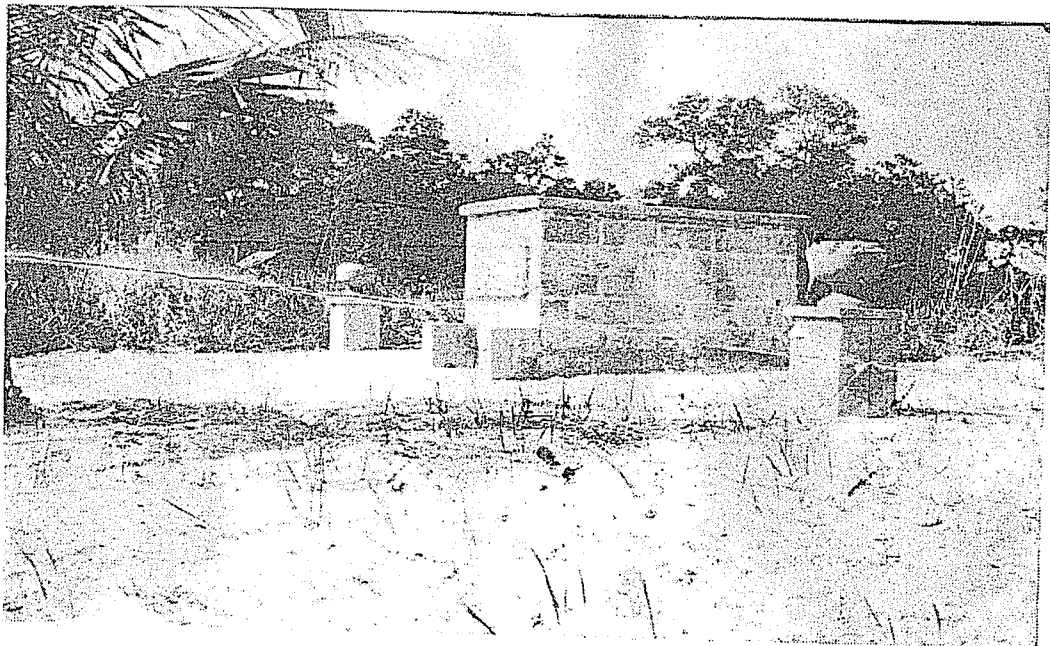
Teed's funeral in 1908.



On board "The Estero". (Note horse and wagon on bridge, later to be part of the Tamiami Trail.)



Teed's tomb following the Hurricane of 1921.



Teed's tomb, on what is now Fort Myers Beach.