



The Xanadu Mansion.

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Wednesday, December 5, 2012

1926 marked the arrival to the Hicacos peninsula of the American millionaire Mr. Irene Dupont de Nemours, who in 1920 launched a campaign to promote an opinion favorable to the use of poisonous gases in war, which, he alleged, were more humane than conventional weapons. The introduction of the "pious" product would be supported by the industrial tradition of the IE Dupont firm, founded by Pierre Samuel Du Pont, his illustrious ancestor who escaped from the guillotine during the French Revolution and went into exile in North America, where he founded a Gunpowder factory. Mr. Dupont, who was born on December 21, 1876, showed political concerns from a very young age, together with his brothers Pierre and Henry and in 1925 he opposed, together with them, a conference on disarmament held in Geneva .

In addition, he helped financially - like his brothers - the employers' unions in their fight against the labor movement, he collaborated with the rise of fascism and was a friend of Adolf Hitler. Precisely, according to the Hearings of the Investigative Commission Nye - Vandenberg, part 12, he was one of the industrialists who collaborated with the rearmament of Nazi Germany.

Also, he made the largest contribution to the Republican campaign against Franklin D. Roosevelt. Mr. Dupont's arrival in Varadero was preceded by a visit to the peninsula in January 1926 by Charles A. Meade, one of his employees. Mr. Meade had been sent by Mr. Dupont to Cuba in order to investigate what on the map of the Island appeared as: "... an exquisite strip of sand north of the Bay of Cárdenas.

Meade left our territory on January 9, 1926 and weeks later he cabled his boss: Just what you wanted. In March a lawyer from Havana, J. Cesar Trujillo, received instructions to organize a company. The new corporation, founded on April 6, 1926, was given the name of Compañía Henequenera de Cárdenas S. A, but its true purpose was to seize almost the entire Hicacos peninsula in order to turn it into a private preserve, to where only Mr. Irene Dupont and her guests had access .

Later, this Company was named in 1931 "Peña de Hicacos S. A", later becoming part of the Company "Dupont SA". From the founding of the Compañía Henequenera de Cárdenas S. A, Mr. Dupont became the main owner of the spa, with the acquisition in the Peninsula at ridiculous prices - around 4 cents per square meter - of 512 hectares of land ; which currently cover the space between 54th Street and the space occupied by the Xanadú Mansion, a building that was the temporary residence of this North American millionaire since 1930.

The first extensions of land acquired by Mr. Irene de Dupont were the 14 caballerías and 2924 square yards of surface that remained, of the farm that he owned in the Peninsula, in the area known by Figueroa, to the Carden historian Leonardo Abad Severo García Chávez . The heir of



Casimiro García Zalva sold them for 98,000 pesos on December 21, 1927 to Lawrence Briggs Ross, Mr. Dupont's front man and representative of the “Compañía Henequenera de Cárdenas S. A”, according to deed No. 376 of the notary's office habanera from Arellano and Recio. Mr. Dupont ordered the construction of the airfield from where Victor Dallin , from Philadelphia, United States of America, flew in this place in 1928 , hired by him to draw an aerial map of the Peninsula.

The Xanadú Mansion, named by Mr. Dupont in honor of the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge who wrote a poem with this name inspired by the legendary warrior Kubla Khan, was designed in July 1929 by the notable Cuban architects Govantes and Cabarrocas , who made also the project of the National Library, of several residences of the Chautauqua neighborhood, located in the Hicacos peninsula and of other constructions of the farm - the residence of Mr. Paul Edwards, for example - that the North American millionaire owned in Varadero.

The construction was carried out at a cost of 400,000 pesos by the “Frederick Snare Corporation”. The precious woods used in its construction were expressly brought from Santiago de Cuba. Its floors were made with Cuban marbles while the bathroom was made with Italian marble.

It was completed in April 1930. The furniture that was placed inside cost around 200,000 pesos. The gardens and the golf course of the mansion covered an area of 21 hectares.

It consists of 4 floors and has an elevator, bar, cellars, warehouse, terraces, library, dining room, tea room and basement. In the latter, a huge organ has been installed since 1932 - the largest that exists in a private residence in Latin America - whose cost amounted to 110,000 dollars.

In March 2002, at the proposal of several Matanzas personalities and the Matanzas branch of the National Union of Architects and Engineers of Cuba (UNAIC), she was nominated, along with six other architectural wonders of Matanzas, to integrate the selection process of the most relevant works of Cuban architecture of all time.

Despite the manifest interest in taking over a good part of the territory of the Hicacos peninsula, Mr. Irene Dupont brought various benefits to the resort, which result in the gradual increase in residents and seasonal visitors . Among these improvements, the arrival of electricity to the town in 1926 stands out, which is taken from the nearby “Dos Rosas” power station, then “Humberto Álvarez”.

This service was charged by the Cuban Electricity Company. Thus, Mr. Dupont, who envisioned since then “... a multimillionaire era of tourism, with dozens of luxurious hotels overlooking the Straits of Florida, with private clubs for the great families of the North, with roulette, baccarat and poker , with private docks without customs. (...) a paradise for the mafia and the North American industrial aristocracy where everything burned in the bluish flame of brandy ”, he quickly realized the magnitude of the business at hand.



Very quickly the land meter was resold in Varadero at 10 pesos, 20 pesos and up to more than 100 pesos, depending on the location of the lot. At an average of 40 pesos per meter, the profits, solely from real estate, were called to represent about 200 million pesos, that is, as much as dynamite had produced for Dupont in the First World War.

Mr. Irene Dupont, donated to the National Tourism Corporation in December 1936, as a direct consequence of an important meeting held in order to elaborate a Law aimed at creating summer camps in Varadero, a considerable extension of land, of the many that owned in the Peninsula, so that they were dedicated to the promotion of tourism.

In 1944, Mr. Dupont already owned about 40 caballerias of land - about 5 million square meters - in Varadero, which had cost him only about 200,000 pesos. Shortly before, in 1940, he had parceled out several square meters of land acquired from Cuban hands to promote the old Playa de la Torre, then Villa Cuba. On December 20, 1944, Mr. Dupont sold to the "Varadero Nuevo S. A" Society, for 18,000 pesos a part - 251,220 square meters of the area known as Estero de los Barcos - belonging to the property he had bought in 1927 to the Cardenian historian Leonardo Abad Severo García Chávez.

From this moment on, and following in their footsteps, other owners and vacationers begin an accelerated process of buying and selling land, many of which are covered by houses and hotels in the period in question. In September 1933, Mr. Irene Dupont de Nemours donated 40,000 pesos to the victims of the terrible cyclone and sea level that hit Cárdenas and Varadero on the 1st of this month and year, which earned him the award in November 1935, by decree of Carlos Mendieta, of the National Order "Carlos M. de Céspedes". This fact, together with the tribute that various institutions and authorities from Carden offered him belatedly in 1952, earned the North American millionaire the fame of altruism.

During the course of 1933, a stamp with the image of Mr. Dupont was published, which was placed free of charge on all correspondence that left Cárdenas. The stamp sought to highlight the monetary contribution made by the North American billionaire, to compensate the damage caused by the aforementioned cyclone and sea level to the Pearl of the North and Varadero.

No However, his pedigree millionaire status, notes Juan Ferrán Oliva, in an article published in the Cuban magazine "Review", Mr. Dupont: "... behaved like an upstart, those who buy books by the meter and diamonds by kilograms. At parties, he offered the guests boots, capes and other allegorical objects to achieve the atmosphere that he liked so much. To this childish hobby he added another eccentricity. He had domesticated several iguanas that, like little dogs, came to eat from his hand". At the end of 1949, construction began, at a cost of three million pesos, of the famous hotel "Internacional".

The land where this hotel was built - 14,728 square meters - was sold to Leonardo García by Mr. Irene Dupont, through the Company "Peñas de Hicacos S. A" for 150,000 - at about 120 pesos per square meter (he had paid 4 or 5 cents). Between the months of August and September 1952, the article by Dr. Jorge Quintana entitled "Irene Dupont, Enemigo de Varadero" caused outrage among the board of directors and members of various societies of Carden, especially the



Lions Club and the Pro Calles Acción Committee. Civic Citizen. The controversy arose from the assertions made by Dr. Quintana, who criticized the existence in Varadero of a private area - property of Dupont, which hindered the integral development of the Hicacos peninsula.

In response to the letters received from the Lions Club and the Pro-Calles de Cárdenas Committee, defending the image of who was considered, a benefactor of the Ciudad Bandera and Varadero, from the monetary donations that he had made to the victims of the cyclone and sea level that hit this area in September 1933, the magazine "Bohemia" published in September 1952 the illustrated article entitled "The Varadero that Cubans crave." In the aforementioned article, which reflects - based on an urban study carried out by Cuban specialists on the subject - the works that had to be executed in the Peninsula to achieve the: "... diaphanous and prosperous development of a Cuban area , called by the condition of its beaches, by its geographical location and by its extension to a higher destination, much more encouraging than the one that has been condemned at present "; It was crudely stated: "If Mr. Irene Dupont truly loved that area, he would be a sincere collaborator in these endeavors. If BOHEMIA achieves that purpose, it will be well paid for so much effort and care.

For BOHEMIA, the Hicacos Peninsula is an emporium of Cuban wealth. But you have to develop it. And it is not by raising fences, closing roads, litigating left and right that the development of this very rich region is achieved, but rather by all of us collaborating in the magnificent effort to make the beaches near Varadero, to make the entire Hicacos Peninsula a center. tourist as much or more important than the Miami floridano or the Mexican Acapulco. For this effort, the residents of Cárdenas and Varadero can count on the loyal cooperation of BOHEMIA (...) ". In the summer of 1957, Mr. Irene Dupont left the Xanadu Mansion one afternoon, when the rain stopped, and when he went down one of the stairs he slipped and broke his leg. He was transferred to the United States of America and never returned to Varadero. He died in the United States of America on December 12, 1963. Curiously, this same day the restaurant "Las Américas" was inaugurated in the mansion built by him in Varadero.