

THE LUCIAN

ALYS BEACH'S FIRST TOWN CENTER BUILDING RISES FROM A DREAM

by ERIK VOGT

1940s May Family Photos



In 1925, the land that lined the crystal blue waters of the Gulf stood untouched but for the Gulf's expiratory breeze and the sun's enlivening rays. Thickets of lush Gulf foliage grew wild as the boars and the cattle that roamed through—wild and unaware of the refinement to come about in the days ahead. This salty land, seemingly only owned by the flora and fauna that populated it, was given by the federal government, as part of the Homestead Act, to Lucian May, who would become the good steward of this coastal plain.

There was beauty in the potential of the wilderness that Lucian May and his wife undertook. Dreams grew out of the brush: dreams of home, and family, and a community poised to thrive in an area that by nature inspires connectedness as the sun and the sand and the ocean blend their properties in perfect intimacy.

The May family took their commitment to heart, clearing the land, planting orchards, and raising livestock. The Mays were creators upon the land, using their own resources, their own bodies working under the ever-present Florida sun. Their luxury was to see unblemished beauty in all directions—only their very own footprints marking the sand—as they cooled their bodies in

las—the legacy he grew along the shores is one still honored today. Though the vista has changed time and time again, the dreams of family and relationships he passed along to his children and to his children's children have remained the same. The heart of community was born out of his dream, and Alys Beach was birthed out of the ground he civilized.

And so it seems fitting that Alys Beach's first Town Center building should bear the name of the man who first homesteaded the land upon which it sits. Located on the southwest corner of the Amphitheatre, the Lucian stands four stories tall, with an enclosed parking garage beneath. There are eight residences, divided among one-, two-, and three bedroom suites, all with expan-



the clear waters, dreaming of the future and resting in the things presently exquisite. Over the years, they also hosted visiting friends and family, inviting them to also enjoy the unspoiled beaches along the Gulf.

Alongside the Mays was the Stephens family, who visited over generations and made this stretch of Gulf their home away from home. They were some of those lucky few to explore the Lucian May tract in those early years. They sat on breezy porches telling stories of long Jeep rides down sandy, slim roads and run-ins with wild pigs. They lived for the summer days when their car rolled up to the beach house, and they swung open the doors, running barefoot and headlong toward the sand. Since the 1940s, they've found unmatched rest by the water as they've connected with family and friends in their own sacred paradise.

When the May tract was put up for sale—intact from the day it was bestowed upon Lucian—in the late 1970s, Elton B. Stephens immediately saw its value and purchased it. The value he saw belonged both to the past—the memories he and his family had over countless summers at the Gulf—and to the future—the possibility that it would bear fruit for his family in generations to come.

And though Lucian May's land looks much different today than it did 90 years ago—the stretch now striated by rows of beach chairs and umbrel-

sive porches and views to the Amphitheatre and south to the Gulf beyond. The architecture, by Khoury & Vogt Architects, follows in the tradition of Alys Beach, with white stucco walls and piers divided by stained wood porches and balconies. A civic-scaled first floor, with an attached southern terrace, will accommodate retail/commercial activity and establish the standard for Alys Beach's permanent Town Center as it builds out in the years to come.

Lucian May and his family breathed new life into this land we now feel blessed to call home—using and preserving its resources, preparing a homeland, and growing a dream of community and of family. We at Alys Beach strive to be good stewards of this gift that is our land, inspired by the vision and industry of the man who first called this special place home. One can only imagine what Lucian May might think if he were able to see this place, our community, today. But our hope would be that Lucian would smile, knowing that his vision still lived, that the spirit of the place remained unchanged. It is with great pride and anticipation that we present to you, our community, The Lucian.

The Lucian residences will be available for purchase early Spring 2015. 🌻