

## **Haulover Park History**

Haulover Park is one of two public beach parks operated by Miami-Dade County. Bounded by the city of Sunny Isles Beach on the north, the Atlantic ocean on the east, Baker's Haulover Cut on the south, and Biscayne Bay on the west, the 177-acre park with 1.4 miles of beach front as acquired starting as early as "1935 and was then Dade County's fourth major park". The land that the park now sits on previously contained a "Lighthouse Restaurant, a trailer and small refreshment stand, and charter boat piers". The Dade County Commission procured the beach front property in 1940 following a lobbying effort for a \$2 million municipal bond (\$32.8 million, adjusted for current inflation) by then County Commissioner Charles H. Crandon for the purchases of northern Key Biscayne (what later would become Crandon Park) and the area just north of Baker's Haulover Cut which was then called North Beach.

Construction began on beach facilities in 1941, halted soon afterward due to the onset of World War II. Development of the property resumed in 1945 with the clearing of land, addition of fill and construction of the five underpasses that would provide pedestrian access across the soon-to-be relocated A1A highway. The development plan that was used to design the park was put together by famed architect William Lyman Phillips, known for his design of Matheson Hammock Park, Greynolds Park, Crandon Park, and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens among others. The park was renamed Haulover Park in January 1947, opening to the public the following year in late 1948.

Baker's Haulover Cut which borders the park on the south side is a man-made channel connecting the northern end of Biscayne Bay with the Atlantic Ocean. The inlet was cut in 1925 through a narrow point in the shoal that extends to a point east of the mouth of the Miami River and which is now occupied by the Town of Bal Harbour, City of Surfside and City of Miami Beach. The name of the cut for which the park is named after originates from a local sponge fisherman by the name of Philip Edward Baker (1832-1898) who along with his crew frequently fished the near-shore waters of the present-day park. According to written accounts, Baker anchored with his crew on a nearby inlet, ordered that they "carry a couple skiffs, do some fishing, catch some turtles and come back later to the boat". Armed with machetes and axes, they cut their way through the mangrove forest near the inlet and across the shoal to the beach. This first "haulover" took half a day but subsequent passages became much easier once the trail was well worn and broken. Other fisherman then found Baker's Haulover far quicker to use to get across than to take the long journey around the shoal "and so began the name and history of Baker's Haulover".

There are other historical accounts which some like to associate with the park's namesake such as the "barefoot mailman" who carried U.S. mail on foot and by boat (1885-1892) on the first route between Palm Beach and Miami, Coconut Grove and Lemon City. At this time there were no roads connecting the 68-mile route. This "beach walker" as he was originally called traveled on foot along the beaches from what is now known as Delray Beach, through Fort Lauderdale beach, and across the New River to Baker's Haulover. Some say that after "hauling over" his mail across the beach to the bay, he would then take a boat down Biscayne Bay to get to Miami.

### **Haulover Park History cont.**

Others reference the Prohibition era, when boats would arrive from the Bahamas to deliver whiskey to be "hailed over" the beach to the bayside where speed boats would be waiting to head north on the Intracoastal Waterway.

The present day park is still known for many of the things that were already taking place on the property before it was developed and more. The white sandy beaches, with beautifully restored sand dunes now serve as a playground for the couple hundred, thousands of visitors from around the world that come to enjoy the sun and surf. The charter fishing piers serve as the home for the dozen or so vessels that have been taking people on deep sea fishing excursions and dives for decades. The palm tree lined picnic grounds provide locals a respite from the hustle and bustle to celebrate and create memories with their families on weekends and holidays. The marina provides a launch point for the thousands of recreational boaters that cruise the Intracoastal Waterway to explore Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. The northern section of the beach designated as clothing optional in 1991 offers world-renowned nude recreational opportunities along with beach concessions for umbrella and beach chair rentals and snacks. Dog-friendly areas both on the beach and off provide opportunities for recreation for dogs and their companions. And lastly, kite-flying fun has been a staple at the park for over 20 years, with our bi-annual kite festival and kite store which operates year round.

We hope that you will join us and explore the many wonderful things that Haulover Park has to offer.

Ref: [History of the Dade County Park System. The First Forty Years by A.D. Barnes](#)  
[Wikipedia](#)