

Tequesta:

The Coconut Grove School

By GERTRUDE M. KENT*

1887

What was Coconut Grove, Dade County, Florida like back in 1887? At that time it was just a small bay settlement of a half-dozen homes hidden in a wilderness of dense tropical growth. Although in the same state as St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States (1565), it had remained undeveloped while the original thirteen colonies had grown into a nation of thirty-eight states with Grover Cleveland, the 22nd President, in office. Soon there would be added the western states following the expansion of the railroad, while Dade County still remained inaccessible except by boat!

Now Dade County in 1887 included all the land from the northern tip of Lake Okeechobee south to the Monroe County line. If that description doesn't get through to you, would it help to know that in subsequent years four counties were formed from Dade: Martin, Palm Beach, Broward and Dade.

The earliest record of any organized effort to establish a Dade County School system is in the minutes of the Board of Education dated at Miami, Florida on June 27, 1885. Present at this first meeting were C. H. Lumm, Superintendent, and Messrs. W. H. Benest, Joseph F. Frow and Adam C. Richards, members of the Board. The business discussed concerned the dividing of Dade County into four districts. Lake Worth was to be District #1; Miami, District #2; Coconut Grove, District #3, and Elliott's Key and all other islands or keys, District #4. The superintendent was instructed "to ascertain the number of children in each district and report to the Board at the earliest possible time on the most eligible sites for erecting the school buildings." He was instructed to "purchase a book to keep a record of the transactions of the Board." (We are quoting from this book!)

The next year on April 3, 1886, the Board "excepted [sic] a site

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for a school in District #1," and Lake Worth had the honor of the first school building in what was then Dade County.

At the above meeting a site for a school in District #2 at Miami was also accepted. After the school was built the board refused to pay the contractor until "the roof be put on according to custom." The minutes further complained:

That there is not sufficient paint
That there is no shelf for books
That there is not sufficient bracing
to resist a common hurricane.

Evidently the contractor was a fast worker, because just four days later they met and agreed to pay him seventy dollars for his labor (Nov. 6, 1886). This was the last official meeting of the first board. They had established one school at Lake Worth which was being taught by Miss Susie Brown. No teacher was hired for the Miami School. For some unknown reason they just stopped functioning!

While the Board is not functioning, let's find out what "Cocoanut" Grove and its environment was like in 1887. The spelling was "corrected" to Coconut in 1919 when it was incorporated. Here is the description by Commodore Ralph M. Munroe, renowned sailboat designer, as he describes it in *The Commodore's Story*:

"It is instructive to note the points of interest considered worth picturing in 1887. They were almost entirely natural features, the works of man being represented only by a few primitive houses and small sail boats. The Everglades were still an unexplored wilderness . . .

"The 'Hunting Grounds' of Cutler were still the haunt of deer, bear and panther. Indian Creek was a desolate lagoon, haunt of the wild duck and crocodile . . .

"The Miami River was a mangrove bordered stream, with four or five small buildings on its whole length. There was no Coral Gables, no Miami Beach, no race track, no golf course, not a single orange or grapefruit grove, nor even the suggestion of a truck farm. There was not a mile of road anywhere, the water of the Bay being the only highway."

The life of the Grove revolved around the comings and goings at Bay View House, the only hotel in the Bay area. It was built about four years earlier by an Englishman, Charles John Peacock, his wife Isabella, and their three sons as their home. In those first years Commodore Ralph Munroe became their star boarder every winter. His enthusiasm for their

green turtle soup and warm hospitality combined with his wide acquaintance of boating enthusiasts caused their home to evolve into Peacock Inn. The year 1887 was their first important tourist season. Besides the Commodore and five of his relatives, there were Count Jean deHedouville of Belgium; his friend, Count James L. Nugent of France; the botanist, Isaac Holden; Rev. Charles E. Stowe, son of Harriet Beecher Stowe; Mrs. Abbey Goodell Sheppard, granddaughter of Dr. Goodell of missionary fame; writer Kirk Munroe and his wife; and Miss Flora McFarlane.

Coconut Grove would never be the same again. Commodore Munroe decided to make his permanent home here; the two counts became extensive land owners and developers; while Mr. and Mrs. Kirk Munroe (he was a writer of adventure stories for boys) moved into their new winter cottage on the Bay—which they dubbed “The Scrubbubs.” Mrs. Kirk Munroe and Miss Flora McFarlane became life-long friends who thereafter determinedly directed the life in the Grove with firm hands. They could always count on the generosity of Isabella Peacock to help them in spite of her many duties as proprietress of Peacock Inn.

Isabella Peacock, affectionately called “Aunt Bella,” not only “mothered” the whole village, but she went to great lengths to accomplish her personal goal—which was to see to it that in spite of the fact there was no church the children should have Sunday School lessons.

When the Peacocks first came from England they lived at Fort Dallas in Miami, where she came to know the William Brickells and J. W. Ewan, known as the “Duke of Dade,” and his mother. After the Peacocks built in the Grove, Aunt Bella and Mrs. Ewan organized Sunday School picnics which were held in Miami on the ground where now the duPont Plaza Hotel is built. In this situation can you imagine the amount of effort and time it would consume just to go to Sunday School! First, weather permitting, everyone would have to sail up to Miami. The meeting would open with spirited gospel singing led by one of the Brickell girls, followed by the lesson prepared by Isabella Peacock. Then the moment the men had been waiting for would arrive: the picnic baskets would be opened and all hands would enthusiastically devour everything in sight.

After Mrs. Ewan’s death the Sunday School picnics at Brickell’s Point were discontinued. Also, by the year 1887 the Peacocks were having their first important tourist season. Now Aunt Bella was to accomplish her goal: she collected donations from her guests toward a Sunday School fund. She even sent members of her family out to collect from boats anchored off shore! Before the year was ended she had persuaded the men folk to build a Sunday School room on her property. Legend has it that it

was built of lumber from a shipwreck. At last she had a permanent place where the children could go to Sunday School and the grownups could be corralled for services by visiting ministers. Thus, our little one-room school building was born.

Two new families settled in the Grove that year. Mr. and Mrs. Caleb Trapp and their son, Harlan, came from Iowa to join her uncle, Samuel Rhodes, who lived on the ridge opposite Dinner Key. They were the first to build their home of native rock cut from the bluff. The George Roberts family came a little later. He was a fisherman, who married Kitty, the daughter of Simon L. Frow, who had come as lighthouse tender for "Uncle Sam" at Cape Florida on Key Biscayne in 1859. This is her description of Coconut Grove in 1887.

In the year of July 4, 1887 our little family moved to Coconut Grove and our first home was a log cabin situated on what is now Bayshore Drive near the present site of the Pan American Airways building [now known as Miami City Hall]. Little time elapsed before litigation over the homestead caused us to move a short distance away where another home was built.

Our little settlement at the time 1887 consisted of about a half-dozen wooden structured homes on the ridge spaced about ½ mile apart and the population totaled roughly thirty souls, including the children.

At this time the district was no more than a vast wilderness of palmetto and pine trees and the inevitable wild life creatures of the frontier days. Wild cats, coons, possums, the red panther, and a variety of snakes, mostly harmless, but also numbering among them the deadly cottonmouth and rattler as well as the coral snake . . . the Grove's only store, or semblance of one was operated by and at the Bay [View] House.

Now let us return to the history of the School Board. When the winter had passed without anything having been done, orders were sent down from Tallahassee in May appointing a new five-man Board, of which Samuel Rhodes of Coconut Grove was a member. They were advised to meet at some point between the extremes of Miami and Lake Worth so as to make it more convenient and less expensive to have the meetings.

The first meeting of the new board was held in July in Lake Worth. That was why Joseph Frow had to walk the seventy grueling miles of sandy beach to Lake Worth to register the ten pupils necessary for a school in the Coconut Grove district. There were really only nine children of school age: The two children of "Jolly Jack" Peacock, Annie and Harry;

the four Pent children, John, James, Trinnie and Mary; and his own three children, Lillian, Grace and Charlie. To qualify for ten pupils he included his youngest son, "Little Joe," who was not yet six years old!

I must tell you about Little Joe. When he was a baby his mother discovered one day that he had a high fever accompanied by convulsions. There being no doctor, she had to rely on her own home remedies to cure him. After a few days the convulsions and fever left. Little Joe was well again except for one thing—his right foot was twisted. At the time the mother thought he had caught his foot in the crib. But it never straightened out. The family later decided that he must have had polio.

At the next board meeting in September, 1887:

School District No. 3 was taken up and Joseph Frow, Samuel Rhodes and R. A. S. Peacock unanimously appointed Trustees. A request that Mrs. C. L. Trapp be if possible employed as teacher in the district and signed by most of the parents having children of school age therein was submitted. Also the application of Mrs. C. L. Trapp (Samuel Rhodes' sister) for the position. Whereupon, it was ordered that the trustees be hereby authorized to employ her to teach school for the term of five months for \$175.00.

School District No. 2 was taken up. A similar request that Harlan A. Trapp, [Mrs. Caleb L. Trapp's son] be employed to teach this school together with the application of Harlan A. Trapp . . . whereupon it was ordered that he be employed for said district for the term of five months."

On December 8, 1887, the new Superintendent, Allen E. Heyser, visited School No. 3 (he was paid \$2.50 for the trip) and reported:

Twelve on roll. Temporarily taught in house belonging to Samuel Rhodes. Place central, but not suitable. *Prospect of soon being removed to Sunday School building at Cocanut Grove.* [Italics by author] Progress of children remarkable. Some text books are needed.

In these school minutes we have the earliest documentation we can find of the existence of our Sunday School building. The Samuel Rhodes house which was being used was a log building erected in 1876 when he filed for his homestead. Joe Frow told me it had a palmetto-thatched roof.

1888 - 1889

The Superintendent's recommendation to move the school was not carried out at that time. Mrs. Caleb Trapp was hired again. On August

26, 1889 the School Board met at Juno, Florida, which had now become the county seat of Dade. It was voted that 3½ mill tax be levied for school purposes. It was also voted that "in District No. 3 in Cocoonut Grove, J. F. Frow be appointed Supervisor."

At the October 7th meeting "a bill of \$12.00 for rent of house for school purposes in District No. 3 was approved and ordered paid." So Samuel Rhodes received \$12.00 for the use of his house for one school year.

The School Board met at Lake Worth on November 29, 1889. It was voted that: "Miss (written with old style script Mifs) Flora McFarlane be employed as the teacher for District No. 3 at \$40.00 per month." 'Miss Flora', who had voluntarily taught several pupils at the Peacock Inn, was now the official school teacher of District No. 3. From now on, she would gently assume the leadership of her adopted community. Her English background was a great help. Her father, Henry, was an English sea captain who had sailed the Atlantic many times, often accompanied by his wife. After the birth of their seventh child, the family left England and settled in Rocky Hill, New Jersey. Their eighth child, Flora, was born in the United States. Now the McFarlanes and the Munroes, who had known each other back in England, resumed their friendship.

Years later it was only natural that when Flora's mother died in November, 1886, that Commodore Ralph Munroe offered to bring Flora to Florida as a companion for his mother. That year they lived in a little frame house that had been renovated for their quarters. Beginning in 1888 they lived on the upper floor of his boat-house, and had their meals at the Inn. This arrangement proved so satisfactory that Flora came with them each winter.

1889 - 1890

So this official school year opened with Miss Flora teaching in Aunt Bella's Sunday School building. Our little room suddenly found itself in a whirl of daily activity. On Sunday the organ and chairs would be carried over from Peacock Inn. Services would be conducted by various itinerant preachers. Most important, Aunt Bella would make sure that the young had a Sunday School lesson. From Monday through Friday the children would come trooping in to be taught the "3 R's." Miss Flora also insisted that the boys sweep the school yard every day. They accomplished this task by brushing the ground with large palmetto fronds which they also used to whack each other with spirited fervor when not chasing the girls squealing with feigned fright! At noon while the children were having lunch she taught a young mother who still wanted an education.

I asked a former pupil, Mrs. Maude Black, (née Maude Richards) what she took for her lunch, and she answered matter-of-factly, "Oh, I didn't carry a lunch—I always went over to Mrs. Peacock's!"

To round out our story for this winter, we are fortunate to have an eye witness account from the diary of Mrs. John R. Gilpin, who took the boat trip with the tax collector in his calls down the East Coast of Florida. In the days of the homesteaders a tax collector actually collected the taxes *personally*—it was up to him to seek out the taxpayer to extract the money.

Saturday, April 12, 1890.

Sail down further to Coccoanut Grove to anchor for Sunday. Mr. Ralph Munroe comes out to speak to us; he is Commodore of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club stationed here. He has a small boat "Egret" and a large boat "Presto." Mr. Thomas Hine has his boat "Nethla." Mr. Kirk Munroe has his boat "Allapattah" [accent on last syllable as it is the Indian name for alligator], and there are several other members. They have leased the old lighthouse on Cape Florida, now abandoned, for the B.B.Y.C. headquarters. The Commodore invites us to come ashore this evening. He comes over for us, and we are taken to the rooms over his boat house, where his mother, and a friend, Miss Flora McFarlane, have their quarters. The latter take meals at the Peacock Inn, and the Commodore and Mr. Dick Carney of Red Bank, New Jersey, live aboard the yacht. The sitting room was very snug and homey, and we had a delightful evening there.

Sunday, April 13, 1890.

Beautiful day, strong wind, cool. Walk through Commodore's grove, an old plantation of large trees; is clearing out some and planting new things — bamboo and royal palms. Go to Mrs. Peacock's house, and meet a cheery, motherly Englishwoman. *Go to the little school house, built in the pine woods*, [author's italics] where divine service is held by a young Methodist minister, Mr. W. W. Rife. Mrs. Thomas Hine plays the organ for them, and all sing with vim. They have a houseful of hearers, and many young men among them. On the way back stop to see Mrs. Peacock's new baby, a grandchild born on Easter Sunday—a week old today. What a life of isolation and self dependence—no doctor to call upon short of Key West!

Friday, April 18. . . . Miss McFarlane teaches the District school here, which will be over in three weeks, when she and Mrs. M. will go north also. The evening wind dies down, and we anchor for the night.

Saturday, April 19. . . . get our bread off Mr. Peacock, and prepare to go over to Florida Cape for a picnic with the ladies and the school children; wind ahead for our up-coast trip. Half an hour later we start, and sail nearly over, when the wind changes to S.E. ahead for the Cape. The men are anxious to avoid a rough blow, and a norther is still predicted by the weatherwise so the Heron changes her flight and steers for Bear's Cut, on we sail, and out, and our Biscayne cruise is over. I feel much disappointed at not landing at Cape Florida and the old light-house.

She was not the only one who was disappointed because she missed the school picnic. The former pupil, Mrs. Maude Black, now in her nineties called it one of the greatest disappointments in her life. The event had been discussed and planned weeks ahead. But when the gala day arrived, her mother was suddenly called to take care of a neighbor who was "expecting" (no doctor yet in the Grove). So Maude had to stay home to take care of her younger brother. She brooded over her bad luck for weeks. The lady who was the cause of it all tried to assuage her grief by giving her a present—a vase! But how could a vase compensate for the excitement of a picnic?

There was not only the well-filled picnic baskets to set the mouth watering, but just imagine the thrill of the whole class shoving off and shouting to each other as the boats raced across the Bay to the Key. The men of the Grove gladly took the day off to sail everyone over and help Miss Flora keep everything under control. There would be games on the hard, sandy beach, swimming in the clear water climaxed by exploration of the Old Cape Florida Lighthouse. One of the games enjoyed the most was a contest to see who was the fastest runner. This was determined by one of the men acting as timekeeper. He clocked each perspiring pupil on the time it took to race up and down the winding stairwell of the old lighthouse tower.

1890 - 1891

The minutes of the School Board on October 8, noted that "the application of 'Mifs' Flora McFarlane was accepted at Coconut Grove."

In *The Commodore's Story*, Ralph Munroe wrote that, ". . . in November, 1890 my mother and Miss McFarlane sailed with me from New York to Key West. Dick Carney met us there in "Presto" and we were soon settled in Coconut Grove. Mother had come early from the North on the advice of her physician, in the hope that the Southern climate

would better matters. She did not improve however, and within a few weeks passed away at Peacock Inn."

In the death of the Commodore's mother, Miss Flora not only lost a friend, but it also meant that she would have to find added means to support herself if she were to be able to stay in her beloved 'Cocoanut Grove'. Could her loyal friends have whispered to the School Board of her plight or was it luck that at the next meeting on the sixth of December the members voted to increase her salary to forty-five dollars per month. ". . . being a proportionate salary according to attendance."

Miss Flora didn't waste any time worrying about her future. She devoted herself to the task at hand. In spite of unruly boys it is to her credit that "no one ever saw her out of temper or rude. She seldom criticized anyone or anything, and yet she was a woman of strong character and opinions. The things she worked for she believed in."

Now it was the Christmas season again. The children's spirits leaped at the thought of all the excitement Miss Flora had planned. She taught them ingenious ways to decorate with what was available. A program was put on mostly by the girls who vied with each other for the honor of reciting while the boys waited impatiently for the climax—a special gift of a sack of hard candy to each one which Miss Flora had thoughtfully brought with her from the North. To some it was the only Christmas token they would receive.

When the New Year began, Miss Flora found that she had free time after school hours, so she decided to do something for the ladies of the village. Accordingly, on Feb. 19, 1891 she invited six women to come after school to discuss organizing a woman's club. Let the minutes speak for themselves:

"The first meeting of the Club was held in the Sunday School building February 19th, 1891 with a membership of six as follows: Miss McFarlane, Mrs. Charles Peacock, Mrs. Charles John Peacock, Mrs. Joseph Frow, Mrs. Benjamin Nuble and Mrs. Kirk Munroe. All but Mrs. Charles Peacock were present. Miss McFarlane, the originator of the Club, was chosen President; Mrs. Kirk Munroe, Secretary; Mrs. Joseph Frow, Treasurer. It was decided that it would be best to make a small fee necessary for membership, and the sum was fixed at 10¢ a quarter or 40 cents a year, the first quarter beginning March 5th.

That Housekeepers either here or elsewhere may become members at any time by paying the necessary dues to the Club Treas-

urer Mrs. [Joseph] Frow and by sending their name to the Club Secretary (Mrs. Kirk Munroe) to be entered on the Club books. That the Club meet every Thursday from three to five during the entire year.

That only members be allowed to vote on club matters.

That the Club will always welcome visitors and be glad of suggestions and gifts from anyone interested.

As the object of the Club is:

First to bring together the mothers and housekeepers of our little settlement, and by spending two hours a week in companionship and study, learn to know each other and thereby help each other, and

Second: To add to the *new* Sunday School Building fund. Therefore it was voted that the members make several articles of clothing with the club's money to be sold at a fair, and the money obtained from such sales be given, as before stated, to the New Sunday School Building fund. That all articles should be sold cheaper to members.

It was also voted that some member should read aloud household articles at each meeting while the others were busy with needle and thread.

It was also voted that some motto should be chosen each week, something that would help us in our daily life and remind us of each other. [The first one chosen was "Lend A Hand."]

It was also proposed that the secretary, Mrs. Kirk Munroe, should collect from the members cooking 'receipts' for a Housekeepers' Cook Book which the club will publish and have ready for sale as soon as possible." [They finally got around to it in 1906.]

The second meeting was on February 26, 1891, ". . . but only the President and Secretary were present as the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club Regatta day, February 23rd, and other entertainment coming as they did, interfered with attendance."

The third meeting, March 5th, 1891, there were twelve women present. Rules were suggested and accepted. The Club was now a reality. Every Thursday for the rest of the year in spite of bad weather and mosquitoes the women would tramp over the rough and rocky ground to our little Sunday School building to enjoy the fellowship while working to improve the life in the community.

It was in this month that Flora made the most important decision of her life. She decided to homestead some public land. No other single woman in the village had ever attempted to brave such a hardship, but she was determined to leave no stone unturned so she could stay here. To homestead, one had to reside upon and cultivate a portion of the land in the homestead entry for a period of five years. After settling on the land for a period of six months it could be purchased for cash. On the other hand, the homestead would be forfeited if the settler was absent for more than six months.

Of course, Miss Flora would not have been so brave if she had not had the help of the Peacock family. Alfred Peacock built her shack, referred to later as the "Bandbox," on land that is now the southwest site of Day Avenue and Douglas Road. The homestead of Alfred's brother, Charles, joined Flora's on the north, so she could always count on her neighbor if she needed help. Richard Carney's homestead joined her on the south, and both of their claims extended to what is now known as Poinciana Avenue.

When Miss Flora filed her homestead papers she stated that she took up residence there on March 16, 1891. Just think what a walk it would be for her every day to get to and from school over the rocky ground! After the school term was over she would still have to walk to the club meetings every week.

In the first quarterly report of the club it was stated that there had been thirteen meetings held in the Sunday School room. It also mentioned that ". . . on April 15th, the members bound fourteen fans with braid for the Sunday School use (gratis)."

Now on June 4th the Club held the first "Tea" in the Sunday School building. "The children: Charlie Frow, Leonard Newbold, Mary Pent and little Albert Victor Peacock [the baby who was born on Easter] were sent out to gather palmetto leaves, field ferns and wild flowers to decorate the room. President Flora McFarlane and Mrs. Charles Peacock received. Guests were served Tea, sandwiches and cake. Only the club members present—each member being allowed to invite her husband only, except the President, who was allowed to invite the Bachelors of the Bay on the tickets of absent members. There were twenty-three people present. The Tea was the social success of the season."

The Club met the entire summer in the school building. Mrs. C. L. Trapp was dropped from the Club roll for non-payment of dues (. . . "perhaps she has dropped us as she has taken no notice of our invitation to tea for nearly a month now.")

There were three items of interest in the School Board minutes for 1891. On June 1st, a motion was carried that all schools commence on the first Monday in October which meant that the school term would now be for a period of seven months instead of five. The application of 'Mifs' Flora was accepted for the coming year. On December 17th rent for school-house in District No. 3 of \$12.00 was paid to Charles Peacock.

1892 - 1893

Miss Flora was paid \$45.00 per month this school year. Mrs. Emma Swanson was paid \$20.00 for substituting.

On March 12 the Housekeepers Club held a Bazaar in Kirk Munroe's boathouse. After expenses were paid they gave \$86.70 toward the *new* Sunday School Building Fund.

Our little Sunday School building received national coverage in 1892 when an article appeared in Harper's Bazaar about the Housekeepers Club. The first paragraph describes Cocanut Grove and the beauty of Biscayne Bay. The last line of the second paragraph states:

"Of course there is a hotel, post office, store and *Sunday School Building . . .*"

In the same article there is another reference to "the faithful band of women who gather every Thursday afternoon in the little Sunday School building and join heart and hand in helping each other to enjoy and improve the two hours a week rescued from their household cares. The originator of the club is its President, Miss Flora McFarlane, of New Jersey, who has proved herself in every way capable for the life she intends leading, having homesteaded a hundred and fifty [sic] acres of government land, which she has gone bravely to work to clear and improve." The closing paragraph explains ". . . that resident members are elected by means of a vote cast with black and white beans!" (Mrs. J. W. Carey was the first member to be elected by black and white beans. Mrs. Carey received no black beans!)

On June 9, 1892, there was no meeting of the Housekeeper's Club because the President was "proving up" on her homestead. To do this she had to appear before the U.S. Commissioner with her two witnesses, Alfred Peacock and Richard Carney, to file her final papers. She had decided to exercise her option to pay cash for her land instead of working on it for five years. It cost her \$1.25 per acre for the 160 acres. She was forced to make this decision because of her health. Miss Flora had been working too hard. There was still no doctor in the Grove so she went back to New Jersey to see her family doctor.

While Miss Flora was up north Isabella took over the club meetings. During the long, hot, mosquito-plagued summer, only five or six brave souls came each week. But this had no effect on Aunt Bella. On August 16, 1892, she called for a special meeting. There were seven members present. The significant motto chosen for the day was:

“Do noble things, not dream them all day.” What noble things were they doing? The minutes state: “The Housekeepers met on this day instead of the 18th for the purpose of providing dinner and tea for 18 men who came to work on the new church land. The dinner was given by Mrs. C. Peacock, Mrs. [George] Roberts, Mrs. [Benjamin] Nuble, Mrs. Lillie Pinder and Mrs. [John] Pent.”

Aunt Bella had gotten permission to build the new chapel on land owned by Commodore Munroe. The grave of his first wife was on the front corner of the lot. She had the \$86.70 from the Bazaar. The 18 men donated their labor. How could they refuse when all her life Aunt Bella had cheerfully befriended one and all with no thought of the cost in time or strength? So now Isabella had once again provided a Sunday School building. This one was larger to take care of the growing village. From then on it would be called Union Chapel, because it was open to all denominations. The Housekeepers' Club would have to work two more years to pay off the debt. It is Union Chapel which became the Union Congregational Church in 1897 . . . now known as Plymouth Congregational Church.

When Fall came and Miss Flora was still under doctor's care up north, the School Board approved the application of Emma Swanson to teach in her place. Emma was Mrs. John H. Swanson, the daughter of Mrs. C. L. Trapp. She taught the entire school year at a salary of \$45.00 per month.

On January 5, 1893, there was a tea held in the Sunday School room for the benefit of Union Chapel. At their regular meeting on January 19 four members of the Housekeepers' Club sewed on curtains for Union Chapel.

At their annual meeting on March 30, Emma Swanson was elected to succeed Miss Flora as President of the club. In the absence of Miss McFarlane, the annual report of the Housekeepers' Club was read by the secretary. It stated:

With this meeting the Housekeepers Club of Cocanut Grove enters upon its third year. It was said by some that the Club would not last, that gossip would soon take the place of reading and sewing and that the Club would fail. Those who said this are today ready to take off their hats to us.

We have accomplished no great work this year for there has been no call for it, but we have done what some few said we would not do and that is we have *stood together*. Not a meeting was missed during the entire summer although twice there were but 2 members present. On the 18th of Aug. the Club gave a dinner to the 18 men who were clearing the land for the Union Chapel Building.

On May 11, 1893 the certificate for the Homestead of 160 acres to Miss Flora McFarlane was signed by Grover Cleveland. She was especially proud of the President's signature because he was a friend of the family—her brother Will and the President having gone on many hunting trips together. He had even visited Peacock Inn.

Miss Flora's health improved that summer so she was able to return in October and resume her teaching.

1894

The last meeting of the Housekeepers' Club in our little schoolhouse was held on January 4, 1894. There were 14 present. Miss Flora was appointed general manager of a fair to be held in February at the time of the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club Regatta. (If you can't lick 'em, join 'em!)

So, on January 11th, the Club held their first meeting in Union Chapel to work for the Fair. They actually cleared \$120.00 at this affair, which was given to help pay off the debt on Union Chapel.

The move from the school building to Union Chapel was certainly well timed, for at the School Board meeting on February 7 at Juno, Florida, Supt. E. R. Bradley was “. . . directed to issue circular letters to all Supervisors restricting the use of school buildings to School, Religious or Literary purposes and meetings.” The chairman, W. H. Parkin, was authorized to order twenty single desks from Cleveland, Ohio for Coconut Grove, which clearly indicates the number of pupils. At this meeting Miss Flora McFarlane was voted a ten dollar increase in salary.

But time was running out for our little Sunday School building. The Club no longer met there and the larger Union Chapel was used by the itinerant ministers for religious services. The growth of the Bay area now made it imperative that a larger school be built. Samuel Rhodes offered to donate the land for a new school. Richard Carney, Supervisor of 'Coconut' Grove District No. 3 was informed that the Board voted an appropriation of \$200.00 to build a school. It was later changed to \$250.00—“. . . said amount to be used for purchase of material only, the inhabitants of said district to erect the building.”

At the August 7th meeting a warrant was drawn payable to E. L. White for \$250.00 for erecting a suitable schoolhouse at 'Cocoanut' Grove. And so that fall, school opened in the new building which was located off Tigertail Road on Lincoln Avenue. Miss Flora did not teach in the new school. From then on she gave private lessons.

EPILOGUE

We can find no record of events in our Sunday School Building until the year 1902. At that time it became a residence, when Charles Peacock sold the property for \$400.00 to George Richardson. One of Richardson's daughters, Katie Perkins, worked at the Coconut Grove Library, an equally famous early institution, which had been built just around the corner in 1901.

The Richardson family and their heirs kept the property until 1944. Then it passed through the hands of several investors until 1969, when it was purchased by Ryder Systems for \$75,000.

Only the land now had any commercial value. The building was obsolete and abandoned. But it had great historical value. The Rev. Dr. David J. Davis, who at the time was pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, was anxious to save it because of its early association with the religious life of the homesteaders. James Ryder, head of Ryder Systems, was a member of the congregation, and he gladly turned the structure over to the church. It was moved to the nearby church grounds and restored.

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