

Life On The Loxahatchee

By DORA DOSTER UTZ*

*Dora Doster Utz was born Dora Annie Doster in Atlanta, Georgia November 7, 1892 and passed away in Shreveport, Louisiana January 8, 1959.

Her father, Ben Hill Doster, moved his family to Jupiter, Florida about 1894 to help his recently widowed sister, Mrs. Gus Miller, on her homestead there. The Dosters lived first in Jupiter, then in West Palm Beach until about 1908, when they moved to Shreveport, Louisiana.

Dora remembered her Florida childhood with so much joy that she finally began to write down her recollections of those days and various articles of hers were published in Florida papers. She possessed some old pictures of Jupiter and West Palm Beach which have been either copied or sketched from by interested persons in that area. The now familiar picture of the old Celestial Railroad engine No. 1 with little Dora standing on the cowcatcher is displayed at the Flagler Museum in West Palm Beach from time to time and has been used in several articles published by various writers. Her recollections follow.

The first Sunday afternoon following our arrival at the Florida homestead on the Loxahatchee to rejoin Papa, he thought it would be enjoyable to row us up the river to Hunt's Mill and back. The outing had indeed been pleasant, and novel to a city bred mother and two city bred little sisters, until we turned to come back. Suddenly the warm scented breezes became quite chilly, so that we drew our skirts up over our shoulders, and Papa rowed a little faster. More and more the air cooled, as if someone had left open an icebox door. The temperature dropped until we were shivering. Mama put us children in the bottom of the boat and drew her full skirts around us. Papa rowed like mad, not only to get us home, but to keep himself warm. This was *most* unusual! By the time we reached the cabin we were blue with cold, half frozen, and all made a wild dash for the house to start a big wood fire in the kitchen stove.

Throughout the night the temperature continued to drop, freezing pineapple patches, citrus groves and everything it touched. Startled homesteaders heard the boles of their orange trees burst in the night with the

Introductory note supplied by Mrs. Margaree N. Pleasant, a daughter, living in Shreveport, Louisiana.

report of a rifle. Next morning everyone woke to a sad sight. Fruit orchards, pineapple patches, vegetable gardens, the work of many years, were frozen and dead. On the river, the fish were frozen and lying on the surface of the water, some feebly waving a fin; the water birds and vultures were having a feast. Enterprising fishermen, at some points, were gathering up the frozen fish, packing them in ice and hurrying them north. Some homesteaders took one look at their ruined hopes and summarily left their cabins and acres to the encroachment of the jungle, the wildcats and the panthers.

That was the winter of 1894-1895, and was to go down in Florida history as the "winter of the big freeze."

It was our introduction to the homestead. We were to have many more unique experiences; some enchanting, some frightening, but all part of the bewitching fascination that is Florida.

Just a short while before the big freeze, Papa had taken temporary leave of his desk in the office of an Atlanta newspaper to come to Florida and assist a recently bereaved sister whose husband had died, leaving her with a small daughter to raise, a store to be managed, and the homestead which, in order to be proved upon, had to be occupied another year.

After Papa saw and sized up the situation, he decided to stay on in Florida. He sent for his family. He agreed to live on the homestead for a year. He took hold in the store and soon had it running smoothly again. With the help of some Negroes, he cleared a mile long trail through the swamp to town, raising the path a few inches above the water line. Undaunted by the freeze, the sixteen acre pineapple patch was replanted. Men were sent out from town to work it.

The Loxahatchee and the Indian rivers merged their waters at the town of Jupiter, about two miles away, and together flowed out to sea through a wide inlet. Up and down the rivers were other settlers and homesteaders like ourselves, many of whom were people of culture and education, who enjoyed the challenge of a new environment. There were "cracker" hunters and trappers, and fishermen, making their living from the woods and streams. There were Seminole Indians who found their way into town from the Everglades, paddling their dugout cypress canoes through devious and mysterious channels unknown to most white men. They brought their squaws and children with them and pitched camp along the trail. They traded their hides, plumes, venison, for whatever they needed in the stores, and often got soggly drunk at "blind tigers" operated by designing white men, whose pasts no one thought of inquiring

into, who existed by trickery, thievery, and who often got the Indians drunk in order to cheat them. Once the Indians became thoroughly convinced of this deception, they began to come into Papa's store, who always treated them fairly and gave them full measure of goods for goods. Papa said the finest compliment he ever received was one day when the Indian chief, Tommy Tiger, put his hand on Papa's shoulder and said: "You good man."

The solid heart of the town held small merchants, a frame hotel, citrus grove and pineapple planters, the lighthouse keeper and his assistants, the life saving station boys, most of whom had families, the weather bureau station keeper, and the telegraph and cable office. By way of contrast, in the winter wealthy, fashionable tourists came down the Indian River by steamer or in their own sumptuous yachts. Some of these spent the night at the two story frame hotel near the dock at Jupiter, and proceeded on their way in the morning. Others stopped for a meal at the hotel and departed. Most were on their way farther south to Palm Beach and Miami, which were rapidly becoming the mecca for fun and frolic among the rich and leisure class of "The Gay Nineties." The tourists who preferred the inside water route rather than the coastal steamers necessarily had to quit the river steamer at Jupiter, because there was no water route wide enough to take the big steamers farther south. They boarded the Celestial Railroad cars at Jupiter and rode to Juno, eight miles south, to the head waters of Lake Worth, where they again took boat, by way of large napptha launches, for their destination.

The little Celestial Railroad, so named because of the galaxy of stations along its way—Neptune, Venus, Mars, Juno—was unique in that, on the return trip from Juno, which was at one time the county seat of Dade County, it had to back up the eight miles since it had no turntable. The useful life of the little railroad was doomed, however, for Henry M. Flagler, the Standard Oil magnate, had already pushed his new railroad—which he called the Florida East Coast Railway—as far south as West Palm Beach and was now contemplating a further extension to Miami. Miami had been spared the "big freeze" and its citizens persuaded Mr. Flagler that, by all means, his railroad should extend to that favored and bustling town. The advent of the Florida East Coast Railroad created a new town of West Jupiter, which faced the tracks, the Loxahatchee having been spanned by a high trestle and drawbridge. The heyday of the town of Jupiter itself was waning, but, for the moment, and for a few more years, it still waxed important and lively.

THE HOMESTEAD

The homestead was a 160 acre plot hewn from the scrub oak, pine and palmetto flats of that area. Besides the pineapple patch, a strip about 200 feet long and 100 feet wide had been cleared to the river, and the cabin put down in the middle of it.

The cabin was one large room, a small bedroom, and a kitchen. A pump in the back yard supplied water.

On three sides of the clearing, the woods and swamps hemmed us in, but on the north the lovely, dark, mysterious river flowed by. The Loxahatchee was one of those fresh water rivers of Florida which had its source in that little known, vast swamp area called The Everglades.

We sat in front of the cabin late in the afternoons and enjoyed the living picture of the river. Mangroves and large-boled cypress trees lined its shores and marched out into the water. Spanish moss and beautiful airplants hung from their limbs; graceful reeds swayed in the sweet-scented evening breezes, and a profusion of varied colored water lilies spread their artists' palettes to the sunset. In the shallows graceful white herons stood like statues, and water birds of many varieties dove for fish, rose and circled, and dove again. Sometimes one espied an eagle beating his way up from the fishing flats in the river.

When this view was bathed in a gorgeous sunset, it was breathtakingly beautiful. I remember most vividly the red ones, when the woods to our west seemed on fire; the river reflecting the flames, the house and grounds taking on a scarlet tint, and one's very face flushed with a feverish glow.

We saw all kinds of pictures in the billowing cumulus clouds, some beautifully tinted by the last rays of the setting sun.

We listened to the birds settling down for the night; the deep-throated bellows of an alligator; the orchestra of tiny insects and frogs beginning their nightly serenade. The tiniest frogs crying, "Tea Table, Tea Table"; the medium sized ones: "Fry Bacon, Fry Bacon"; and the big bull frogs: "Jug o'rum, Jug o'rum." Somewhere back in the darkening woods we heard the hoot of an owl, the thrilling call of the Whip-Poor-Will and the distant echoing answer of his mate. Sometimes at night in those woods a blood-chilling scream as of a woman in distress froze the whole orchestration into silence, and we shivered in our beds. The first time Mama heard that scream, she had bolted upright out of her chair, but Papa had laid a gently restraining hand on her arm and remarked to her incredulous ears that it was a panther prowling around and that she must never go

outside to seek a poor woman in distress at night, for their screams were alarmingly similar. Besides, he said, there were also wildcats, poisonous snakes, and further away in the densest undergrowth, bears and deer.

Mama was to have a very frightening encounter with a panther during our stay at the homestead. She was raising chickens to add to our larder of fish and wild game. One day she was feeding the chickens when she heard a squawking commotion back of her, and whirling around, she saw a huge panther leaping over the bushes towards the woods with a chicken in its mouth. He must have been lying in wait for his prey as she passed by just a moment before. She went cold with terror but, realizing that something had to be done, for once having tasted chicken meat, the animal would return again and again on his forays, she started for the house and the shotgun. Just then she heard the put-put of a motor boat on the river and ran down on the dock and signaled to the boat to put in. When our fellow-homesteader and good friend, Mr. Ziegler, came along side the dock, she asked, since he was headed for town, that he tell the lighthouse boys to come and bring their dogs. The men came with their hunting dogs and took up the feathery trail at the clearing where the huge tracks led off into the dense woods. They followed it all day through the jungles and the swamps, and at dusk we saw them coming back with the dead panther strung up on poles across their shoulders. It was the largest animal anyone had seen around there. One of the dogs had been so badly mauled he had to be shot.

A disturbance among the chickens could mean other marauders besides a panther, and we came to know them all. Hawks and snakes were the worst offenders. One never knew, when reaching for eggs, whether or not one would touch the scaly back of a snake. Of course, we learned to look before reaching. The only consolation about coming into contact with one of these snakes, however, was that most of them were non-poisonous: black snakes, coachwhips and chicken snakes.

One brilliant moonlight night when we were rowing home from a dance in town, we heard a big furor in the chicken yard while we were still some distance from the landing. Hastening up from the dock, we found the whole yard strewn with feathers and dead chickens. The brooding coops for the hens and baby chicks had been overturned and their occupants destroyed. The small tracks leading everywhere about told us unmistakably that this time it was the small animals who had launched this foray: 'coons and 'possums.

We played contentedly about the cabin, but were not allowed to go down to the water or into the woods alone.

Mama, on the other hand, must often have gotten very homesick and lonely at the cabin. From our kitchen door the new Florida East Coast Railroad trains could be seen through the trees off in the distance, and when the mournful wail of the locomotive sounded the approach to West Jupiter and points north, she must often have stood and watched the cars in the far distance, snaking their way along, now hidden by palmettos and cabbage palms, now out in the open again. A nostalgic yearning to be on them and headed for her Georgia home must have filled her eyes and put a lump in her throat. She had been born and raised in Atlanta, and this was her first experience with pioneering.

NEIGHBORS

Although the Government had passed the Homestead Act many years before, it was not until 1885 that this sparsely settled region of lower Florida began to be opened up to homesteaders. Since that time, many fine people as well as adventurers of all sorts had decided to cast their lots in this temperate climate whose exotic growth showed such promise. One of our neighbors, who lived across and some miles up the river, was a physician. That must have been a reassuring thought to the parents of two small children! Dr. Jackson was a highly educated and cultured gentleman, whose health had been impaired by the rigors of northern winters while making his medical rounds, so he had brought his family to a milder climate. He was a source of merciful healing not only to the body, as he continued his profession, but to the soul as well, for there was no church in Jupiter at that time and Dr. Jackson read the Episcopal service to whoever felt inclined to come on the Sabbath to the little octagon-shaped frame schoolhouse at Jupiter. A small frame church was built not many years later and a regular minister made his rounds of the area.

Another gentleman and his family living on a Loxahatchee homestead was a Princeton graduate. He was a man of remarkable talents and ability who loved this area and homesteading and didn't care who knew it. He had a keen sense of humor; was somewhat of a mimic and ventriloquist. A visit to his home was a tonic and sure to be amusing.

There was an Englishman, suave, poised and affable, who lived on the river. It was rumored that he had but to return to his native land to claim an honored title.

Flowing into the Loxahatchee, and extending practically one hundred and fifty miles along the east coast of Florida, was the Indian River. It was a tidal river. Between it and the Atlantic Ocean were many islands

occupied by old residents who grew fine oranges, limes, tomatoes, guavas and bananas. One of these gentlemen was internationally known as a manufacturer of fine tomato catsup, which he made from the plants grown on his acres.

When Mama's loneliness became an urge for company, she took us children and rowed up the river to spend the day with our neighbors on other homesteads. Sometimes a group of neighbors met at one home and spent the day pleasantly sewing together, or putting up jelly. Never will I forget the heavenly aroma of guava jelly cooking, or orange marmalade in the making.

Sometimes we started out along the trail Papa had cut through the swamp to town to be among people, to see and hear and talk, and accompany Papa home. Mama always carried an umbrella, for she had that lovely Georgia "peaches and cream" complexion which she was trying hard to preserve against intense tropical sunshine, and the umbrella was handy in case of a sudden Florida downpour or snakes in the path.

It was sort of an adventure to go down the trail towards town. There was always the scurrying of small life in the underbrush: the little swamp rabbit and squirrels; the masked face of a raccoon peering from the palmetto scrub, a 'possum in a tree. Lovely, graceful butterflies flitted about; frogs croaked and small turtles, or "gophers," as we called them, clung to logs and crawled across the path. Scrub oaks or cabbage palms dripped with moss, or were entwined with wild grapevine. On tree trunks grew exotic air plants which, we were told, are related to the pineapple.

One day when we were on the trail to West Jupiter, there came a crashing through the brush, and half a dozen frightened cattle charged down upon us from around a bend in the path. Mama hastily opened her umbrella and shook it at them, and they scattered to either side of the road and we continued on, thinking we had had a narrow escape thanks to Mama's quick thinking and her habit of carrying an umbrella.

To walk the trail to town was sometimes a hazardous experience, as we were to find out one dark and stormy night.

We had rowed to town to attend a soiree of some kind at Jupiter. During the evening the winds commenced to rise and thunderheads boiled up, portending a tropical storm. The party broke up, and people living along the rivers hastily gathered up their children in order to make it home before the water became too rough. We started out in our small boat for the homestead. In midstream the Loxahatchee became so rough and the wind so high that Papa thought it best to land and continue on

by foot. There was no trail through the swamp on the south bank of the river, so we had to cross to the north side and walk along the trail until we came to the railroad trestle; then cross back on it to West Jupiter, and so on up our own trail to the cabin. Papa pulled the boat well up on shore and, while we crouched in the lee of a tree, he scaled a fifteen foot embankment to the trail above and scouted it for a way. Then he came back for us. Each parent took a child and struggled along the way to the trestle. The wind had grown so strong that, having gained the bridge, it was all each could do to keep his balance, and from plunging into the waters below. Mama's skirts were whipping about her so wildly, time and time again she almost tripped and fell, and sometimes it was necessary to crawl along, buffeted by the full force of the wind, and peppered by the flying spray from the river. The trail home through the swamp still had to be negotiated, but, with Papa going ahead with the lantern, we were able to slosh along, keeping a sharp eye out for water moccasins and to keep from slipping off the trail into the muck of logs and undergrowth along the sides. Finally, half-drowned, we stumbled into the cozy shelter of the cabin kitchen. That was a night to remember!

THE SEMINOLES

Seminole Indians were a common sight in Jupiter at that time, much more so than Negroes. Unlike most southern towns, we had almost no Negroes. The Indians, on the other hand, appeared and disappeared quietly through those secret channels and waterways known only to themselves which bore them into the inner fastness of the Everglades. The few hundred who lived now in the 'Glades were the descendants of those fierce warriors who defied and held the might of the United States Army at bay for the seven years duration of the dreadful and bloody Seminole Wars back in the 1830's, which Wars, fought from the borders to the Keys, ended in bafflement for the Army, who tried in vain to smoke them out of the bewildering maze of channels, sawgrass and palmetto hammocks into which they had fled, and finally concluded in leaving the remnants of the tribes alone, after having sent thousands of this recalcitrant branch of the mighty Creek Nation with their Negro runaway slaves and allies, to whom they had given sanctuary, to western lands. The exile of those who had gone west from their loved homes in Florida had been brought about mostly by deceit and treachery on the white man's part, and it must have rankled even yet in the hearts of the comparatively few who still cherished their independence and who were prepared, no doubt, to fiercely defend it even yet, if need be. Two of the present chiefs, Billy Bowlegs and Tommy Tiger, were descendants of two of the fiercest of those Seminole War chiefs.

Much fighting had been done at Jupiter during the Seminole Wars not only at Fort Jupiter, where the tall, red lighthouse now stood, but on the very sand dunes of the beaches up and down the Indian River, and crossings of the Loxahatchee; the Indians striking suddenly and then eluding pursuit by completely vanishing into those watercourses and intricate passageways which led into the fastness of the Great Swamp.

No wonder, then, that we were frightened the first time we laid eyes on a Seminole. We had heard of them, of course, and many of the tales we had heard were spine-chilling ones told us by our French grandmother, whose Huguenot ancestors had owned a plantation outside of Tallahassee, which region had been a well fought over battleground of the Wars.

So, the afternoon we were sitting quietly in front of the cabin taking the breeze from the river, Mama's attention was caught by a movement over the rise of the hill towards the river. It looked like a plume stuck in the turban of an Indian. It was! Then she saw another, and another, and soon the whole file of them were coming up the trail from where they had beached their canoes. She was terrified, and grabbing us children, she raced into the house and bolted the doors. They filed silently by and headed for the trail to town. Then, to her consternation, she saw they were preparing to camp along the trail for the night on our ground, practically cutting us off from town. To increase her further fears, she saw them come up to the back yard pump with their pails and buckets for water. She remained indoors. When Papa came home along the trail that night from the store, he saw the Indians at their evening meal. The men were sitting about a large pot in the center of the circle while the women remained at one side, cooking and occasionally replenishing the pot with meat. Papa paused to address them, but they paid him little attention until the Chief spoke. Nodding his head in the direction of the cabin, he said: "Humph, white squaw scared."

There was another instance in which Mama really showed her courage. One hot afternoon she and we two children were taking afternoon naps. There came a terrific pounding at the kitchen door. Mama raised up and peeked through the edge of the shade. She saw the red-elbowed sleeve of an Indian's shirt. Her heart turned over. She hastily robed and got the gun down off its peg. She closed the bedroom door firmly on us, put the gun handy, and went into the kitchen. She said she knew if she ignored the knocking the Indian would probably break down the door, so she summoned all her courage and opened it. She said a young brave staggered into the room and took a seat at the kitchen table, cradling his head in his hands. He said not a word and neither did Mama. Finally he looked up and said:

"Me drunk. Me *very* drunk."

Mama immediately busied herself with the coffee pot. When the steaming mixture was ready, she poured a cupful and handed it to the Indian. She said he gulped it down as if his mouth were lined with asbestos. Then, extending the cup in both hands, he asked for more. She poured him a second cup which he gulped down as before. After a little he got up and strode out into the yard to the pump. Putting his head under the pump, he doused himself copiously, came back, and went through the procedure again. Mama said not a word. Finally, satisfied and feeling better, he started off down the path towards the river. Mama stood in the kitchen door and watched him. He reached the edge of the bluff overlooking the river and looked up and down for a long while. She said he was a magnificent statue of a man as he stood there silhouetted against the dark background of the river. Being aware that she was watching him, he turned, raised his arm high above his head in a gesture of thanks and farewell, and called "Hi-ee-pus," which, she understood, was the Seminole word for goodbye and I go.

Many years after, remembering all these experiences on the homestead when we went to visit our kinfolks in Georgia from our home in West Palm Beach, as the train neared Jupiter and the mournful whistle of the locomotive sounded the approach, Mama would say, perhaps rather smugly:

"Now, children, if you will look way off there in the distance, among those scrub palms and palmettos, you will see the little homestead where we used to live."

JUPITER

We were still to enjoy the life at Jupiter for a few years before we finally moved down to West Palm Beach.

Our year's tenancy at the homestead being accomplished, we moved down into town. That was a happy move, for now we were among people; had near neighbors; started to school; had parties, sewing bees, and many other interesting experiences.

We moved into a little house on a hill; that is, the hill was said to be a shell mound which had been thrown up by the Indians many years ago. Straight in front of us about a mile away was the magnificent Atlantic, which was an ever moving picture. On our left the Loxahatchee and Indian Rivers merged at the base of a high bluff, upon which stood the weather bureau and signal station, the lighthouse, and the residences

of the men who tended them. At the base of our hill lay the right-of-way for the Celestial Railroad, which ran out onto the pier upon which Papa had his store, built on pilings over the river. The tourists coming down the river by steamer always found their way into his store, and he became a sort of first official greeter for the community. He met many wealthy and distinguished people. At one time President Cleveland and his party, en route to Palm Beach, stopped briefly and had dinner at the little hotel before continuing on. (Mrs. Hebert has a picture of Pres. Cleveland and party. It was her father's hotel).

To the south a hot, sandy, sandspur-infested road led off along the right-of-way to the little stations of Neptune, Mars, Venus, and finally to Juno and the head waters of Lake Worth. These stations or stops along the Celestial, except Juno, were nothing more or less than a few shacks and pineapple patches, soon to be deserted when the Celestial ceased functioning.

At the foot of our hill and facing the tracks on the east was the post office, and along the river road east was the telegraph and cable office, more homes, and, winding on around, one finally came to the life saving station on the beach, later to be known as the coast guard. Adjacent to the tracks on our left, built on pilings out over the swamp, was the little two-story hotel and other one-story frame buildings, one a saloon. The stairway of the hotel was on the outside of the building. Its kitchen was around a boardwalk in the back, and its outhouses further out on pilings over the swamp. One had to practically "walk a plank" to get to them. Once, when a tiny girl, I fell into the swamp from the outside stairway of the hotel and had to be fished out from the morass of underbrush and logs, snakes, and perhaps an alligator or two from the precarious footing of rolling logs. Perhaps the only thing that kept me from drowning was the fact there was not enough open water in which to sink. The hotel dining room was large and ran down one side of the structure, commanding a lovely view of the rivers. Dances and entertainments of various kinds were held in this large room. For instance, one Christmas a community celebration was held in this room. A large pine tree which touched the ceiling was erected and beautifully decorated with candles, strings of popcorn and other decorations, besides Chinese firecrackers. Quite a combination!

Back of our house, we still had the familiar pattern of dense cypress thickets in which wildcats lurked, and swamps infested with snakes. It seemed we were never to be rid of the snakes and once a wildcat was bold enough to come up on the back porch to steal the housecat's food. And another time our pet dog was so lacerated from an encounter with a "cat" that he had to be shot.

THE PASSING OF THE CELESTIAL

After we had lived in Jupiter proper for a year, it became plain that the heyday of the river steamers and the little Celestial was past. Mr. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway had sealed their doom. It was so much more convenient for tourists to pursue an uninterrupted journey to the paradise that was Palm Beach, and its world-famous and luxurious hotels, The Royal Poinciana and The Breakers. In fact, Mr. Flagler had built a railroad bridge across Lake Worth which connected the towns of West Palm Beach and Palm Beach so that tourists rode on the cars right up to the north entrance of The Royal Poinciana with no inconvenience at all. Those winter visitors who still preferred inland water routes went out through the inlet at Jupiter and back through the inlet at Lake Worth and Palm Beach.

So, the Celestial fell into disuse, and Papa was commissioned to dismantle it. Some of the river steamers, such as the St. Sebastian and the St. Lucie, were beached along the river and eventually rotted away there. For a time the Captain and his family lived on one, and its grand salon was used for entertainments of various kinds. Often itinerant theatrical groups came down the river and put on performances on these boats for us.

The little mail boat "Dixie" was tied up in the canal and disintegrated there. The big railroad carried the mail now, supplanting the primitive years of boat, stagecoach, and even barefoot mailmen walking their routes along the beach.

The hotel was abandoned and the nearby saloon vacated, becoming the meeting place for more respectable pursuits like dances, for instance.

There was something sad about how quickly the little stops along the Celestial right-of-way were abandoned, but it was natural that they should be because transportation for their produce was no longer available. So shacks were left with doors ajar, and the odoriferous pineapple patches ripened and perfumed the air with their golden fruit unpicked.

The jungle and underbrush were fast claiming the right-of-way, and the sorrowful call of the Mourning Dove seemed to be sounding a requiem to its passing.

Papa continued for a time to operate his store at the end of the dock in Jupiter. He owned it now, having bought out the interest of his sister, who had married the young weather bureau man and moved across the river to his station. Papa also built a second store along the tracks of the Florida East Coast Railway at West Jupiter. A half interest in this store was sold to a young partner, who operated it; Papa going over only oc-

casionally. A new two-story frame hotel had been built at West Jupiter and other stores and buildings.

To carry his freight from the tracks at West Jupiter to his store at Jupiter, Papa had a large freight boat rigged with sails which he called "The Bacon Box." I remember how on Sunday afternoons he used to take us sailing up the Indian River to Hobe Sound to visit friends. Often he included friends in these jaunts and we had a picnic, returning home by moonlight; everybody singing the old songs en route home. I loved these trips, and, laying my sleepy head in Mama's lap, would look up at the big sails and ask her to sing "White Wings";

"White Wings, you never grow weary,

You carry me safely over the sea."

Sometimes, though, our boat rides met with minor disasters. The rivers were full of shoals and oyster beds, and we had to keep a sharp watch out so as not to run aground. In fact, quite often in the old days the river steamers had gotten stuck on these sandbars and been delayed for hours. Dredges were constantly in use to try to keep the channels deep, but not always with success. On Indian River pyramids of logs were embedded upon which were depth gauges to prevent boats from grounding. Sometimes we were on the sandbars before we saw them; other times we saw the yellow water in time to pull up the centerboard and tack the sails around to draw the boat into deeper water. If we got stuck, however, Papa had to roll up his trouser legs and get out and push, while Mama maneuvered the big sails and awkward boat to shift it off the bar. These times were always distressing to me, for we never knew how long we would be stuck, and Mama and Papa worked so hard at getting us off, and the wet sail ropes had a penchant for dripping on me and dragging across my tiny frame, entangling me.

Papa now secured a colored man-of-all-work who had been employed on the Celestial. Old Milton was kind and gentle to us children, and very helpful to Papa in the store and hauling freight in the boat. He was also a very creditable cook, and was our cook at home for some time.

Nearly every afternoon Milton rowed a group of us children out to the sandbar in the river, threw the anchor out and sat in the boat and watched as we swam and cavorted about in the shallow water. The water was crystal clear at this point, for it was not far from the inlet. Sharks had been known to come into the river through the inlet—we knew of one man who had his leg bitten off—but this danger was very remote, especially on the sandbar; nevertheless, Milton was there to watch us. Milton also rowed Papa back and forth to his West Jupiter store.

A BATTLESHIP COMES TO CALL

The Spanish-American War, which had been festering for some time, was now come to a head. War had been declared by our Government against Spain. One of the main bones of contention was the Isle of Cuba just a few miles south of us. Our new uncle was a busy man now, keeping passing ships informed on war conditions. In those days he signaled them by day with flags, and at night, by flares. The declaration of war had caught many ships en route into the war zone. One night there must have been some twenty-odd ships anchored off shore in the Gulf Stream, awaiting important messages from him. It was essential that they get orders from their headquarters as to whether or not to proceed or turn back to their home ports. In order to "speak" to these ships clearly and distinctly, our uncle took his flares to the beach. The whole town followed him to watch proceedings. We children were left at home, and when we saw the fires flaring up along the beach we were terrified and thought our Mama and Papa would be killed, but old Milton was there to comfort us and to assure us it was only our uncle signaling the ships.

Another night to be remembered, which was to go down in the history of the war, was the visit to Jupiter of a mysterious battleship.

At the time of the declaration of the Spanish-American War, one of our mightiest battleships had mysteriously disappeared and nothing had been heard from her by the world at large for months. She was then the greatest floating fortress the world had ever seen, and she was on her way to the harbor of Santiago, Cuba, to join the fleet of Captain W. T. Sampson.

Starting out in March, 1898, from a harbor on the Pacific Coast before the days of the Panama Canal, she was forced to sail entirely around South America. However, even allowing for the 14,000 mile journey and the lack of radio and wireless communications in those days, she was considered to have mysteriously disappeared, as this lapse of time was not required to make such a journey. With war excitement at fever pitch, every one was asking what had become of "the pride of the American Navy."

Jupiter was an important town at that time because of its Government stations: the tall, red lighthouse, which guarded the treacherous coast; the cable to the West Indies terminated there; the weather bureau and signal stations which gave messages to passing ships.

These services were essential to the progress of the war, as Florida was the funnel through which troops and supplies poured into Cuba. Scarcely a day went by without its long troop trains on the Florida East

Coast Railway. Jupiter always gave the boys a warm welcome. Their youthful smiling faces jammed the windows. Their blue uniforms were natty and new. They waved their large campaign hats enthusiastically in their hands, and many of them hastily wrote their names and addresses on "hardtack" and threw it out the windows to any pretty girl who happened to be standing near. Seaward the Gulf Stream came in so close to shore that the citizens of Jupiter had a grandstand seat for the passing of battleships and supplies to Cuba. These formidable battleships, steaming so determinedly towards the battle zones with flags flying, never failed to thrill us to the core, especially my sister and me, who at such times waved our beautiful big flags enthusiastically, hoping that the men on board would descry on shore two patriotic little girls who had a fierce pride in them and were wishing them Godspeed.

One day my sister and I went to spend the day at our aunt's house and play with our cousin of the same age. The morning passed pleasantly and as the afternoon advanced our uncle told us he was expecting a certain ship and had been up on the tower watching for her. His observation tower and signal platform were located on a high hill back of his residence, which gave him an unobstructed view of the surrounding country, the ocean, and ships passing outside. While he ate a hurried dinner, he sent us to the tower to keep a keen watch out and report if we saw any ships coming. We took turns climbing the tower to watch. Finally near sunset my sister's sharp eyes discerned a wisp of smoke on the horizon and she called my cousin to come and look too. When they were sure it was a ship, we ran to the house to report. The ship was approaching very slowly from the *north*. Our uncle told us to tell him as soon as she was within signaling distance. It was about a half hour before sundown when he began signaling. No answer was returned to the usual question: "What is your name?" and "Where are you from?" He thought she might not be able to see the flags very plainly so he decided to wait until dark and use flares. She had now dropped anchor and was lying rather close inshore, a bit to the northeast. She carried no flags or identification and our binoculars and powerful field glasses could not determine her identity. She looked like an American battleship but we could not be sure, so our uncle telegraphed the news across the river to the cable office that a strange ship was offshore so to be on guard. As soon as the quick tropical darkness came, he began signaling with flares. Still the formidable shape lay quiescent and gave no sign. Our uncle now became most apprehensive. There had been numerous rumors that the Spanish fleet was somewhere about and might shell towns along the Florida east coast, and Jupiter seemed a most likely place in view of its importance. This ship might be a Spanish warship awaiting darkness to launch an attack. Our uncle telegraphed the cable office again.

The news went like a hurricane over the town that a mysterious ship was lying offshore and would not answer Mr. Cronk's signals. The excitement was terrific. We learned next day that one old lady had become so frightened that she had spent the night in a deserted pineapple patch where, I am sure, the imminent danger from panthers, wildcats and snakes was much greater than danger from the Spaniards.

The men got down their firearms of whatever nature and all agreed that the telegraph and cable station on the south bank of the Loxahatchee was the logical place to meet. Stores and other places of business were closed; women and children at home were given their instructions to sit tight for further news, and the men all met at the rendezvous and waited. Our uncle, like a modern Paul Revere, continued to watch from the tower until he saw swinging lights of lanterns and what appeared to be a boat being lowered and armed men getting into it. Then he telegraphed the cable station again. The excitement grew to fever pitch. The men held themselves ready. The landing boat approached the coast. The tension and suspense on shore were nerve shattering. The boat came on in through the inlet and headed for the telegraph station. The men went down to the shore to await them, determined to give them a fight to the finish if they had to. Imagine the scene when the boat got near enough for the townsmen to recognize United States sailors!! The uniforms were now unmistakable. A tremendous shout of welcome went up in which the sailors themselves joined. They were just as glad to see us as we were to see them. They soon made it known that it was the *Oregon* lying offshore, and that this was the first time they had stepped ashore in many long weeks. They had come around the Horn; coaled at Barbados; given Cuba a wide berth to avoid the rumored Spanish fleet lying in wait for them, and they had used further precautions by not answering our signals, for fear of being drawn into a net through some Spanish ruse. To say they were relieved at receiving such a welcome was enormous, and to say we felt the same way, was putting it mildly. This was May 24, 1898. The following telegram was immediately dispatched to the Secretary of the Navy:

“OREGON arrived. Have coal enough to reach Dry Tortugas in 33 hours. Hampton Roads in 52 hours. Boat landed through surf awaits answer.”

Again word went out all over the town. The ladies of Jupiter now gathered at the station and got their heads together, the outcome of which was a banquet and dance which did our little town credit. Nothing was too good for United States sailors, and especially from our noble battleship *Oregon*. The jollification kept up all night, and at dawn, when the sailors

boarded their boat to return to the ship, they declared that they would never forget Jupiter, Florida, and its citizens, and the wonderful reception they had received there. The news given the *Oregon's* men that night sent them full steam ahead towards the battle zone where they arrived in time to go into action against Admiral Cervera's Spanish fleet as he sought to escape the blockade effected by the Americans to keep his ships in Santiago harbor. The cables brought word of the *Oregon's* great part in the naval engagement; in fact she was given most of the credit for either sinking the Spanish boats, or sending them to the beaches where they burned.

A little sequel to our story is this: The official hostess to the sailors that evening was the charming young wife of the telegraph operator. During the festivities she had asked the sailor sitting next to her at dinner for a souvenir capband with the magic words on it and told the young man which was printed the words, "U.S.S. Oregon." Several years later, she was visiting her mother in Brooklyn, N.Y., when she learned that the *Oregon* was in drydock there. She told her mother they must go down to see her. When they reached the gates, the sailor guard told them no visitors were allowed on board. Then the lady triumphantly brought forth her souvenir capband, with the magic words on it, and told the young man she was from Jupiter, Florida. The words and the band worked like a charm. The sailor's face creased into a broad grin. He escorted the two ladies to his superior officer, and they were received most cordially and gallantly escorted over the ship. The men and officers remembered well the evening at Jupiter and had proved that they were as good as their word.

STORMS

Grandma was with us the night we experienced one of our worst storms, and we were glad, for Papa was in New York on a buying trip.

In those days we were not given much warning about an approaching hurricane. Our present day elaborate storm mapping systems were not in existence then. "Old Timers" simply took notice of the appearance of the clouds, the movement of the water, the closeness of the atmosphere, the little "storm birds" which came inland uttering their plaintive cries; but when the red flag with black center went up on the weather bureau station, we commenced to prepare.

Our house in its exposed position on the hill commanded an uninterrupted view of the anger of the ocean at such times. It seemed like a vicious monster, curling its jaws, showing its teeth, lashing its tail and sending the spume flying a hundred feet high.

We had stout shutters at our windows, so we did not board up as

people do today. Mama laid in certain provisions. Before nightfall, Papa closed the store and came up the hill. We had early supper, and put out all fires and lamps. We stayed dressed throughout the night. Mama put mops and old rags handy to soak up the water which was bound to seep in around window and door frames. We sat in the dark and listened to the screech of the wind, like thousands of high keening demons trying to get at you; the roar of the surf, which could be heard for miles; the crash of trees, or the blam of unidentifiable objects striking the house as they flew through the air. The strain was terrific. We never knew when a wall might buckle, or the roof be blown off; but Papa reassured us. He said the little house had been built by inexperienced carpenters who used so many nails and such pitch-filled lumber that the house was as heavy as lead and that it might roll over like a box but would never break up.

But the night of the big storm, Papa was in New York, and Grandma, Mama and we two children sat in the dark and listened to the tumult going on outside. It must have been nearly midnight, when there came pounding on the door and men shouting Papa's name. We made out "Your store has been blown down." Mama opened the door and braced herself against the fury of the wind. Fishermen in oil cloth stood on the porch and told her the store was down and half awash, but so lodged on its pilings that they did not think it would be blown out to sea. They said they had already taken out as much as they could through the windows and put in the vacant hotel across the dock. When they learned that Papa was absent, they assured Mama that they would not hear to her coming out in the storm, but if she would give them the key, they would try to get other merchandise out; that they would keep an eye on the store and when morning came, if it was still lodged securely, they would salvage what else they could. They were as good as their word, and next morning when the storm abated, they were able to carry more goods into the hotel. The store was later raised again on its pilings.

After such a storm everybody went around next day, especially to the beach, to see what had been washed ashore. I remember one large freighter aground on a reef and breaking up fast in the pounding waves, and the sailors working like fiends to get its cargo ashore before it did. They had rigged a line to shore and were swinging as much of the cargo over the water on that, as they could. Some of the crew were coming ashore in breeches buoys. The whole town had turned out to watch this feverish activity and, of course, to lend a hand if possible.

TURTLE HUNT

We took storms more or less in our stride. But moonlight nights

simply did something to us. The moon in the tropics is fuller, more effulgent, and more brilliant, it seems to me, than anywhere else. We made full use of the waxing of the moon and planned soirees accordingly. Sometimes these evening entertainments were dances, which were now held in the vacant saloon next to the abandoned hotel. Or, the life saving crew would roll their big boats out on the sand and hold a dance in their station. Sometimes they came around in their large boats and picked everybody up and brought them to the dance, beaching the boats in a cove and everybody walking the mile along a narrow, palmetto-bordered path, to the station, keeping a wary eye out for snakes.

Then, by way of further amusement, there were the sailboat races in which the lighthouse boys vied with the life saving crew for honors. They called them "Cake Races" for a handsome cake, baked by one of the ladies, was presented the winning crew by the prettiest girl in town. These races, held in the late afternoons, were colorful and everybody gathered to do them full justice.

Sometime several congenial parties got together for a turtle hunt. These were always at the full of the moon and at a time when the big "loggerheads" came up out of the sea to lay their eggs. Some of these turtles weighed six or seven hundred pounds and were six or seven feet in length. It took several men to handle them.

We packed picnic baskets in the late afternoon and went over to the beach. We swam and played in the surf during the late afternoon and evening, then had our picnic dinner and put out the camp fire. As the evening grew late we were quiet as possible, and some of the men would scout the beach for a sight of the big turtle. Her trail was as wide as a wagon trace as she scraped her way along with her big flippers to lay her eggs high up in the sand dunes. If there was but one trail, we knew she was still on the nest and had not returned to the water and the men watched to intercept her before she regained the sea. It took the combined strength of several men to turn the turtle on its back where it was helpless. They returned next day to butcher it and pass around the delicious steaks. While we were not particularly fond of turtle eggs, it was fun to hunt out the nest. The "loggerhead" often made false nests to fool bears and panthers who were particularly fond of the eggs, so we often dug into several turtle wallows before we found the real nest with its hundreds of soft-shelled eggs. Once the turtle had laid her eggs, she left the hatching of them to the sun and the sand. When the baby turtles emerged from their shells, they were fully equipped to fend for themselves. Often we took some of the eggs home and re-covered them in a damp place near the river bank, where in time they hatched and became our playthings; but usually we

turned the little turtles loose to find their way back to their natural habitat, the warm waters of the Gulf Stream.

Turtle meat and the eggs as well were considered a great delicacy in many northern markets, and the shells had many industrial uses. So, once Papa conceived the idea of going over to the Bahamas for a boatload of turtles to be shipped north. There would be a nice profit in this. He secured the services of Will Bostick, a colored man, who had been a section hand on the *Celestial* until it was dismantled and who professed to be a seasoned sailor and thoroughly familiar with the route to the Bahamas since his wife lived there. They set sail, but after many days they were still not out of sight of the Florida coast, although Will kept declaring:

“I’se goin’ to kiss my wife in Bimini’s Land in the mawnin’.”

They finally made it to the Bahamas and returned with a boat load of fine turtles, but Papa never tried it again.