

# West Palm Beach

by DORA DOSTER UTZ\*

It was not long after this that Papa decided to move down to West Palm Beach which he did, and again set up his merchandising business. This lovely resort town was just eighteen miles south of Jupiter.

He built a comfortable two-story house on a big lot with a picket fence around it and a gate to swing on. Since all the streets were named for tropical plants and were laid out alphabetically, we were just one block from his store on Datura Street, whereas his store was on Clematis Avenue, the main street. In fact, he could step out the back door of our home, walk through a vacant lot, and reach his store in a few minutes. We occupied this home about a year and Papa had such a profitable offer to sell it that he sold and built another two-story home on Evernia Street another block away. Again he was offered a price for the house which he felt he could not afford to turn down, so that house was sold also. Then Papa brought the house we had owned and lived in on the shell mound at Jupiter, and another house he owned in Jupiter, on big lighters to West Palm Beach and deposited them on a half block lot he owned there. This lot was on the corner of Fern and Poinsettia Streets. We rented out one house, and the other one in which we had lived in Jupiter he placed on the corner and built an addition to it. He added a large dining room and kitchen on the back, separated from the main house by a latticed-in "open" room, as we called it, but which would be called a "breezeway" today. In this open room we had a water pump which provided the clearest, coolest water I have ever tasted—quite a change from the covered rain barrels we used at Jupiter. The water from the pump was so cold that we put watermelons in the trough under the pump and kept them at a very satisfactory temperature. In the open room, the doors of which could be locked the same as the rest of the house, we kept a rack for our bicycles and our icebox.

When I contemplate our childhood in West Palm Beach some fifty odd years ago it seems to me that we were especially privileged to have lived in that paradise during our most impressionable years. [Written about 1956] We were southerners in a southern town, yet how different from the magnolia and moss-draped live oak region of northern Florida around Tallahassee, or the pine tree flats of north central Florida, or the grassy cattle lands and vegetable growing areas. I had never seen a cotton plant until we went to visit some kinfolk on a Georgia farm, where I was given the thrill of plucking the fluffy white cotton out of the bolls.

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\*For identification of the author and introduction see the article by Mrs. Utz in *Tequesta* XXXII (1972) describing their life at Jupiter.

In our yard in Florida we had garish red hibiscus plants, both red and yellow and double hibiscus. We had yellow alamanda bushes. We had orange, lemon, lime and banana trees in our back yard, and bougainvillea and clematis vines on fences and arbors. I planted a coconut in the ground and nurtured it, and was thrilled to see it sprout and in time grow into a coconut tree. We had night blooming cereus plants whose rare, large white waxey flowers opened about midnight, perfuming the air with a heavy overpowering sweetness. We had cape jasmine, oleanders of different colors, and crepe myrtle, but roses were scarce in that sandy soil and needed high cultivation.

Our town was so clean and quiet. The streets were white crushed rock and shells. The clop-clop of passing horses' feet was only an occasional dray. There were almost no carriages. Bicycles do not make any noise other than the musical tinkling of their bells, and everybody rode them. During the "Season" the tourists rode in wheelchairs, pedaled by colored men from a rear seat. Some few old people and invalids used them in town the year round. Once in the early days, Gin Rickshaws had been introduced, but our colored men were not thinking about running around all day, pulling somebody in one of those "traptions," so the rickshaws were stored in a small warehouse, locked up and forgotten.

We had fine churches of all the well known denominations. The Episcopal Church was just two doors from us but since it did not have a regular minister until later we attended the Congregational Church. We never missed a Sunday at Sunday School. We had one large two-story frame building which served the elementary grades as well as the high school. In contrast to many small towns, our teachers all had to meet standards of higher education. They had to have college degrees. We had a music teacher just to teach us how to read music and sing. We had fine choral groups. School was opened every morning by the whole student body meeting in the auditorium for chapel services at which no one was allowed to be absent without an acceptable excuse.

We had law enforcement officers, I am sure, but I do not recall that we ever needed them very much.

We had a large fire station but the apparatus was drawn by the volunteers themselves.

When we first moved to West Palm Beach the ferry was plying regularly between the east and west sides of the Lake. There were no telephones, no electric lights, very little indoor plumbing, except the hotels and public buildings but that condition improved very rapidly.

It was wonderful when our home was piped for water, to be able to just turn a spigot and have running water in the kitchen sink even though the pump was only a few feet away; but we did not as yet have both hot and cold running water. We still dipped the hot water from the reservoir in the back of the stove. We did likewise for the bath tub, carrying pails of hot water to match the cold running water, but it was wonderful to be able to stretch out full length in a big tub and no longer have to sit cramped up in a tub in the kitchen for a bath. The bathroom was a good-sized room, and Mama had shelves put up all down one side on which she kept towels, linens, etc., and old books and magazines which she could not bear to throw away, always thinking we would read them again some day. The magazines were a mistake, however, for it was so easy to grab a magazine off the shelf and linger and read for an hour or so until somebody came pounding on the door to root you out. So we came to call our bathroom "the Library," and laughed when we referred to it.

In the matter of street lighting, an old colored man came around every evening at dusk, put up his little step ladder and lit the street lamps. A few years later, however, acetylene lights were erected on the street corners. They made such a brilliant light that the neighborhood children gathered under the light on our corner to play games until called to bed. Then, a little later, electricity came and we got the first electric lights in our home, a single bulb hanging from a cord suspended from the exact center of the ceiling. I think it was Mr. Joseph Jefferson, the famous actor and winter resident, who pressed the switch which turned on the electricity in our town for the first time, quoting as he did so from the Bible:

"And the Lord said, 'let there be light'

And there was light."

I was particularly glad when our house was wired for electricity. It had been my Saturday morning chore to clean, polish, and trim the wicks in twelve kerosene lamps. I had to wash the glass chimneys in hot soap suds, for sometimes ocean breezes caused the flame to gutter thus smoking up the chimney. Also tiny insects, like gnats and sandflies, came in through the screening and met their fate on the hot lamps causing a pretty messy appearance. I had to polish the chimney so that not a shadow showed and rub up the metal bases. So electric lights looked fine to me although I often had to stand on a chair to turn them on at the globe.

We had a colored wash woman and cook, but Mama thought children should have their chores to perform, and especially that little girls should be taught how to keep a house in order.

Our town was divided in half by a sizeable hill. The white population were on the east of the hill next to Lake Worth. The colored population were on the west side of the hill next to Clear Lake which was well named for it was a large, clear, fresh water lake. Everybody was satisfied and happy. In colored town they had their homes, their schools, their shops and lodge halls, and their churches. The cemeteries, however, both white and colored, lay south of town and the route was down Poinsettia Street right by our house. Often when we heard a colored funeral coming we stopped whatever we were doing and observed them. The "Poinciana Waiters' Band," a group of colored men who were waiters during the "Season," usually led them with measured tread and solem hymnal music. Their playing was superb and well worth listening to. The procession stretched out for blocks and was usually very impressive. One old colored man stopped in front of our house one day to observe with hat in hand such a cortege go by. After they had passed he stood looking after them as if spellbound for a few minutes then shaking his head, he remarked to no one in particular:

"Umph! Umph! I wouldn't mind dying if

I could have a funeral like that!"

But coming back from the cemetery the band played the liveliest ragtime music in their repertoire, and everything was gaiety and light. It seemed to be the custom.

### *THE ROYAL POINCIANA*

When Mr. Henry M. Flagler had extended his Florida East Coast Railway to West Palm Beach, and then on to Miami, he practically "made" both towns, as well as many others which sprang up along the right of way. But he did more for Palm Beach. He built two luxurious hotels there: The Royal Poinciana and The Breakers. Miami had but one Flagler hotel at the time: The Royal Palm. Before he died, Mr. Flagler was to realize his dream of extending his railroad clear on down to Key West, after having overcome many grave engineering problems as well as natural setbacks in the way of hurricanes among other things, thus providing one of the most unique travel experiences one could imagine, that is, going to sea by railroad train. One span of the "Overseas Railroad" was so long as it reached from Key to Key that travelers on the train were entirely out of sight of land and could look down from their coach windows into the clear depths of the sea on the one side or the Gulf on the other and view the fishes swimming about, and not to be able to see the roadbed gave one the

frightening sensation of a dream fantasy, that is, of skimming over the ocean on a railroad train.

Mr. Flagler loved and preferred Palm Beach. He sought to keep it exclusive and quietly elegant with an appeal to the old, settled families of inherited wealth like the Astors, the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, the J. Pierpont Morgans, the Wanamakers and the Scribners. Even our town, the commercial area of the resort, was not as large and bustling as Miami. We liked it that way. So did Mr. Flagler. He built his handsome mansion within a stone's throw of the facade of The Royal Poinciana on a little point of land extending out into Lake Worth. He called it "Whitehall" and, although he had a high ornamental iron fence around the grounds, the uprights were spaced far enough apart that they did not obstruct the view of the exquisite grounds nor the beauty of the residence.

Mr. Flagler had also donated a large acreage to the town for a new cemetery. It too had an ornamental iron gateway and was partially fenced. Over the gateway was inscribed the comforting thought:

"That Which Is So Universal  
As Death Must Be A Blessing."

Mr. Flagler evidently wished to live and die in this home of his choice. He did die at Whitehall but his burial took place elsewhere.

The two splendid Flagler hotels at Palm Beach around the turn of the century were in their heyday. The Royal Poinciana faced beautiful Lake Worth and was said to be the largest wooden hotel in the world. The Breakers, smaller but likewise luxurious, faced the Atlantic Ocean. Both hotels attracted the wealth and fashion from all parts of the United States as well as foreign countries. The Royal Poinciana was named for the exotic flame tree of the tropics. It was razed by fire many years later and was never rebuilt, but its sister hotel, The Breakers, which was burned while we still lived there in West Palm Beach, was rebuilt and is standing today as beautiful as ever. [1956]

Winter visitors came by the hundreds for the gay season which lasted but six short weeks, from just after Christmas through Washington's Birthday. The Florida East Coast trains backed across a long trestle over beautiful Lake Worth right up to the north entrance of The Royal Poinciana so that the elite might descend with the least possible inconvenience. Many visitors arrived in their yachts. The lake became dotted with sleek, shiny, handsome craft of all kinds from sea-going yachts to smaller cabin cruisers which had come down the rivers, inland. [Inland Waterway]

When the season approached our little town took on new life. Many

town folk prepared to accommodate some of the winter visitors. Smaller hotels on the town side of the lake like The Palms, The Seminole and The Holland House which had been closed all summer now refurbished their appointments and opened their doors to visitors who preferred to enjoy a less expensive and more casual vacation away from the glitter and pomp of the great hotels.

Our servants often took "French leave" of us, to become waiters, wheelchair boys, or caddies for the wealthy people, who tipped them outrageously. Our laundresses, cooks and housemaids sought jobs as nursemaids for the children of the visitors, ladies' maids, or work of some sort or another in the fabulous atmosphere of "The Gold Coast." Who could blame them? In other Southern states quite often servants were released at cotton picking time to which they looked forward not only as a sociable assemblage but as a means of earning extra Christmas money. So the winter season here at Palm Beach was "cotton picking time" for our colored population, as indeed it was for most town folks as well. They returned at the end of the season with pockets well lined and took over their normal lives again as did all of us.

Many people of prominence owned "cottages" which indeed were mansions on large estates along the ocean or lake front at Palm Beach and these gentry habitually spent their winters there. The famous actor, Joseph Jefferson, was one of these. In his wheelchair, pedaled by his valet, he was a familiar figure on the streets of West Palm Beach. He had become so renowned for his portrayal of the character of Rip Van Winkle, that he practically *was* "Old Rip" himself. At one time our parents secured his consent to give a reading of his famous character before the school children of West Palm Beach. The day was set and the time, but unfortunately Mr. Jefferson was taken ill and could not fulfill his promise to his disappointment as well as ours. A little anecdote was told of Mr. Jefferson in connection with one of his wheelchair trips into town. He went into the bank to cash a check. The young teller was new to our town and did not immediately recognize Mr. Jefferson, nor his name on the check. He told Mr. Jefferson that he would have to be identified. Whereupon, Mr. Jefferson, assuming the tone of voice and posture of Old Rip, drawled:

"Well, if me old dog, Snyder, was here,  
*he* would know me."

The startled teller then instantly knew who was before him, and with profuse apologies, cashed the check without further ado.

The tourists found much of interest and amusement at Palm Beach.

They could take a wheelchair ride every afternoon and go a different and interesting route: the Jungle Trail, for instance, on which was the big rubber tree, whose immensity was a marvel of nature; or, a trip to the ostrich farm where it was amusing to watch the little colored boys ride the huge birds which stepped around with such dignity. We had watched them unloading a freight car of ostriches one day and noted the birds were blindfolded with a hood over their heads. We were told it was the only way to manage them, and if one of them kicked you, it was comparable to the kick of a horse. Nearly all the roads and lanes were palm lined with exotic and exquisitely hued flowers growing between the palms.

Washington's Birthday, which marked the end of the Season, was a particularly gala day. There were motor boat races on the Lake. The moored craft, decorated especially for the occasion, displayed their flags, banners and bunting in an attempt to outdo each other. On land there were contests of all kinds. Evening brought the gigantic fireworks display which was enhanced in splendor by the reflection of the lights and colors in the waters of Lake Worth. The end of the evening saw the Washington's Birthday ball in full swing at The Royal Poinciana. The grandeur of this ball was world renowned. The fashions and jewels displayed there would almost have paid the national debt. Famous orchestras were brought in to play for this ball, as well as noted bands which gave daily concerts at the tea hour out under the palms.

Invitations were extended to many of the town people to attend the ball. Our father being a prominent merchant and civic leader was invited to attend, and he and Mama dressed out in their formal attire looked resplendent to us children as we saw them leave for the ball. Next day their account of it was breath taking.

Occasionally two young school girls—my chum and I—were permitted to go "across the lake," especially on cotillion days, to watch the rich boys and girls dance the cotillion on a raised platform in the Palm Garden of the Poinciana. We wheedled two nickels from our fathers, each bought a big bag of candy, jumped on our bicycles, and pedalled across the long, white pedestrian's bridge, spanning Lake Worth. Having arrived, we leaned our "bikes" against a palm tree and took our seats on one of the benches in the gardens, munched our candy, listened to the enchanting music, and watched the dancers go through their numbers. We were interested and fascinated by the new Buster Brown hair cuts many of the children wore, as well as the Buster Brown mode of clothing. We were sure our mothers would not hear to this new bobbed style of hair dress, but we looked down at our shiny, long braids speculatively.

The adults watched their offspring perform or strolled in the gardens. The tea hour in the Palm Garden was the time of day for general mixing and conviviality among the guests. Tea was served by white-coated waiters. Some of the gentlemen guests wore caps, tweedy knickerbockers with heavy golf stockings, and swung canes. Probably they had just come from a round of golf on the Poinciana's well-manicured greens. Some were in yachting costumes, no doubt just back from a run up to the Inlet, or "outside" down to Miami, the Bahamas, or fishing grounds off the Florida Keys. The ladies wore long ground length dresses, the height of fashion in those times, full, or leg-o-mutton sleeves, big picture hats, and carried lacy parasols which they twirled over their shoulders. As they strolled about the gardens their curiosity was insatiable regarding the exotic flowers, trees, and shrubs which made the Poinciana grounds a veritable paradise. The name of each flower, shrub, or tree was printed on a small wooden sign and stuck in the earth by it's side. The strollers would go to great pains to read these botanical names and "Oh'd" and "Ah'd" over them which we children thought quite amusing because they were so commonplace to us. During a lull in the dance we also would stroll about. Our particular interest was the magnificent fountains in the gardens which sprayed from large pools in which goldfish of every variety swam about amid delicately colored water lilies. We glanced across the lake shore boulevard to Whitehall and whispered to each other that it was said Mr. Flagler had one of the finest pipe organs in the country installed there and kept a young man organist on his payroll just to play the organ for him.

We went into the hotel itself. The high domed, palm lined rotunda was magnificent. One stood there and looked down the long corridors on either side to the far exits which were so remote they looked like small sunlit orifices in the distance. We window shopped down these richly carpeted corridors the sides of which were display windows from the fashionable shops of the world. The merchandise to us children was likened to that found in Ali Baba's cave, or the rich loot taken by pirate ships on the Spanish Main. We enjoyed riding in the gilded cages which were the elevators. It was like stepping into a jewel box to enter them. They were heavily carpeted; the walls were lined with mirrors, and a handsome velvet cushioned seat extended around them on three sides.

Emerging from the hotel we spent our remaining nickel on the mule-drawn car which plied between The Poinciana and The Breakers. It was a mile long ride one way down a beautiful avenue of tall Australian pines with flamboyant hibiscus plants between each tree. A nickel gave us a round trip of two miles, going and coming. This was great fun and good for an hour's amusement.



Having decided we had done and seen all the sights, we rode back home. Tomorrow we would play dolls under the palm trees on our side of the lake and throw tidbits to the wild ducks which found sanctuary here every winter. We would look across the lake at the imposing facade of The Royal Poinciana and little realize that the spot upon which we were quietly playing in a very few years would be one of the scenic drives of the ever expanding population of this winter Eden.

By now we had become an interested, and we hoped, helpful part of our community. Mama organized a chapter of The United Daughters of The Confederacy there. She had been shocked to learn there was none. Summer evenings were spent on the cool verandas of friends' homes or on our own chatting, or often with the young people picking their guitars, mandolins and banjos and singing. On family of friends who used to stroll over to our house frequently had two of the most unusual pets I ever remember seeing. It was very amusing to see them coming down the street followed close at heel by a little fawn and right behind him a tall long-legged crane, strutting along with dignity. They would wait patiently all evening until our friends were ready to go home and then follow them back as before. Papa's friends ran him for Mayor of the town but he lost to a prominent judge who was also a good neighbor of ours. When the election returns were final, Mama went across the street to call on the judge's wife. Advancing with outstretched hand, and smiling face, she said:

"Congratulations, Mrs. Mayor!"

Whereupon the lady burst into tears and exclaimed:

"Oh, I did not want him to win. I  
did not want him in politics."

### PAPA'S STORE

Papa's store was on Clematis Avenue which is the same as Main Street in most towns, but in West Palm Beach some fifty years ago the streets were all named for flowers which was very appropriate to that lovely Florida setting.

The store was on the ground floor of the Masonic Temple. On Saturday nights which were the only nights Papa kept open—except during the Christmas rush—we heard the Masons tramping around upstairs. On initiation nights it was particularly noisy. Papa said the initiates were being made to "ride the goat." We all laughed when he said that.

Papa carried a general line of merchandise in his store: dress goods and patterns, china, glassware, crockery, kitchen utensils and a line of hardware. When the winter tourist season was over and The Royal Poinciana and The Breakers across Lake Worth were preparing to close, barrels of fine Haviland china, slightly damaged, were sold cheaply. Papa bought much of this upon which he made a nice profit. Many West Palm Beach housewives gloated over their Poinciana china which they had secured at such reasonable prices.

In the rear of the store, Papa had his big roll-top desk and a high-backed swivel chair to match. He also had there his safe, letter press, and some "captain's chairs," to accommodate any friends who might drop in for an exchange of views and a cigar. If he had to be out of town on a buying trip or for any reason Mama came and tended the store and we children joined her after school.

At Christmas time Papa laid in a big supply of toys. For a while he was the only merchant in town who had such a complete line of Christmas gifts. This being so, Christmas shopping days were extremely busy ones in the store. All the family turned to and helped, and we hired an extra clerk or two as well. Most of the winter visitors came after Christmas, but many wealthy people had cottages at Palm Beach which were really mansions and spent their winters there. Some had a genuine neighborly feeling for the town and often came into the store to chat with Papa who was president of the Board of Trade and The Utopia (Social) Club, and had a hand in many civic enterprises.

One year some weeks before Christmas a wealthy prominent gentleman who had a cottage at Palm Beach and spent his winters there conceived the idea of giving every child in West Palm Beach a Christmas present. He enlisted Papa and Mama's help but he impressed upon them the obligation that his name was not to be mentioned.

Mama and Papa formed a committee to call upon the school teachers of West Palm Beach. They soon had the name of every child, white and colored, rich and poor, who lived in town or its nearby environs. The gifts were purchased from merchants all over town. On the night of Christmas Eve, a large pine tree, brilliantly decorated, was lighted in the little park by Lake Worth. The town band played Christmas music from the bandstand and the gifts were distributed by a jolly, well-rounded Santa Claus and his helpers. The happy faces of all the children that night must have greatly repaid the kindly gentleman who was responsible for it all. To this day, I do not know his name.

With the help of an old friend of artistic ability whom he occasionally hired to help him in the store Papa used novel ideas in window decoration. Town folks as well as visitors watched with keen interest for his new arrangements.

One Christmas season he decorated one of his windows with a realistic fireplace and chimney with toys of every variety heaped about the floor. Every afternoon just as school was letting out children passing by paused to stare into the window as Santa came down the chimney with a fully loaded pack. Santa was well padded, in his traditional suit of red, trimmed in white. He had a flowing white beard and thick white hair. The mask on his face was a very genial one. His stature was small.

Naturally! Santa was I, ten years old. Santa would hold up a toy and point to some child in the crowd outside the window, and if the child nodded "yes," then an unobtrusive clerk would make a note of the sort of toy, and the child's name and address which would be a big help to shopping parents, in addition to being an ingenious way of selling more Christmas toys.

Soon some of the older children observed that I was getting out of school a little early each afternoon. It began to be whispered around that Santa and I were the same. So we had my chum play Santa for a while, and I appeared outside the window, big as life, to the astonishment of the children. Then they caught on to that too. Whereupon we asked another girl to pinch hit while both my chum and I took stands outside the window. It worked this time. The children were utterly nonplussed.

I remember one arrangement of Papa's window which caused a small sensation. Many tourists from Palm Beach made trips into town especially to see the window. The arrangement was kept intact for many weeks, to allow every one to see it. Papa called it "A Georgia Farm." He and his artistic clerk had formed a hilly terrain of as red soil as he could get around town. They built tiny barns and houses to scale, and planted small trees and crops. There was even a mill with a running stream cascading over the mill wheel and down the hillside. The dusty miller stood in the doorway of the building. About the farm, tiny domestic animals of various kinds stood in natural poses. This depiction was easy for Papa, for he was reared in a small Georgia town.

We were accustomed to having Seminoles from the Everglades come into our store. I will always remember the frightened little thrill it gave me when they came filing swiftly in on moccasins, the chief leading the way and the women and children bringing up the rear. They had a particular

wild odor by which they were recognizable even without being seen. Their method of trading was perhaps the original of the now popular self-service. They made a few signs and said practically nothing, but went behind the counters and selected what they wanted. Papa stood amicably by and watched them. The women and children huddled in a meek, silent group and let the chief do the shopping.

If one of their black piercing eyes fell upon me I felt a self-conscious quiver of apprehension pass over me, for I could not be sure but that my flaming tresses were being considered for scalp exhibition purposes. I need not have worried. It had been many, many years since the terrible and bloody Seminole Wars, and this present chief, Billy Bowlegs (Lillian has a picture of him), led his people in ways of peace.

When all their selections were assembled in one place, the trading began. So much of this or that for so many skins, so much venison, or whatever might be in demand.

One day when Mama was tending store and we children were there the Seminoles came in. The procedure was as usual but this time a winter visitor had quietly followed the Indians and, unobtrusive in the background, was deeply absorbed in watching their movements. Mama told us afterward that the gentleman was none other than the famous artist Whistler.

The only times I ever knew the store to be closed during the day were the summer afternoon The Breakers Hotel burned, and when West Indian hurricanes blew in from the Atlantic. The day The Breakers burned the whole town closed up and went over the lake to see that fire.

When West Indian hurricanes blew in everybody holed up for the duration. We did not have the elaborate warning systems then that we do now, but when the ominous red flag with black center went up from the Weather Bureau the storm was not far behind. As the winds grew in strength Papa and his good friend, the groceryman next door, consulted and decided they'd best close up and try to make it home.

When the storm abated we would go down to the lake front to see what the storm had tossed up, or torn down, and Papa would unlock his store, check any damage that may have been done, and everybody would be dropping into the store to talk over the ordeal of sitting out the latest twister. There wouldn't be much shopping done, but Papa's store would be open, as usual.

If one could turn the kaleidoscope of memory and have all the little rosy pieces fall precisely into pattern it would be a big help, but when one selects a treasured piece, a dozen others come crowding into focus, so that it is difficult to make a well-ordered pattern from so many happy and golden days.

A few I would select, though, would be the school and Sunday School picnics, some of these to Manalapan Beach, which was one of the early houses of refuge built by the government as a refuge to shipwrecked sailors. The house was empty when we used it as a beach house for donning our bathing suits; the girls using the upper floor, the boys the lower. Once some one whispered that a gruesome murder had been committed there once and so panicked us that our teachers had a hard time getting us to go back inside to claim our possessions for the homeward trip.

We had an excellent library, or "Reading Room" as we called it. It was facing a dock at the edge of the lake by the little park. Part of it was built on piling out over the water, and we could go there in the afternoons, select a book, and sit out on the breeze-swept porch and read to our heart's content. In this small library were all the children's classics and loved stories, and I shall always remember gratefully that I had the privilege of reading them in those early years. For just one penny a day, too, one could select any book one wanted and take it home. We used to use up our allowances in this way, becoming avid readers, to stay within our budget.

Then there were the times when the dog and pony shows came to town, or the circus, or a street carnival. The great big circuses never came that far south, but sometimes sent part of their attractions. However, to us they were all marvelous and grand.

There were magic lantern shows put on in the auditorium of the Lodge Hall; and itinerant ventriloquists and sleight of hand artists who found their way down there and put on a performance for us.

We were always having amateur theatricals ourselves, and special gala evenings at the Utopia Club, such as the Chinese Party, for instance. The evening was to be strictly in the Chinese manner. For weeks ahead everybody was making his costume to be worn that evening. Mama made Papa's costume to represent a Chinese Mandarin. I was a barefoot Chinese boy, with a long black pigtail and round pill box hat. My sister was a beautiful, graceful Chinese young lady, with kimono, sash, fan, high hair dress, slanting eyes and tiny slippers. My mother was a dignified Chinese matron. The evening was one of the most successful gala times the Utopia ever put on. Everybody had a time eating rice with chopsticks though!

One more little insight into the amusements of those long ago days, and then we will close up the album and lock it away.

It is about the Fourth of July celebrations.

### *SHAM BATTLES AND CROQUET*

The Fourth of July at West Palm Beach soon after the turn of the century was a welcome relief from the summer doldrums.

A few months before, another brilliant Florida Season had ended with a flourish after Washington's Birthday. On that day which was the highwater mark of the winter we had the beautiful regatta on Lake Worth, the motor boat races, the contests of various kinds on land, and brought the exciting Season to a close with the fabulous ball at the Royal Poinciana Hotel. Then, like a family with company gone, we settled back in our rocking chairs and hammocks in the cool recesses of our shady porches. We were a little town again with the northern wealth and fashion gone.

So when the "Glorious Fourth" came around we stirred to life and planned to celebrate the day. Shops were closed and store fronts decorated: everyone displayed Old Glory. I remember gazing on our beautiful flag as it undulated like a living thing in the breeze and had almost a sense of being in the presence of Deity. I wonder how many children today feel such reverence!

Some of our neighbors practically swathed their homes in bunting and flags, but most of us were content to display our one beautiful emblem. We had a fierce pride in being Americans. If our parents recalled with warmth and affection a lost love—the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy—that made them no less patriotic. A younger generation of American boys had fought, shoulder to shoulder, re-united again just a few short years before in the Spanish-American War almost at our front door. We had watched the long troop trains go by on the Florida East Coast Railway, the youthful faces crowding the windows. And we had cheered the battleships just off shore as they steamed away for Cuba.

West Palm Beach and Miami took turns each year in having the big celebration. One year both towns conceded the festivities to near neighbor Delray. That year I remember the Japanese colony from Yamato thrilled us with jujitsu demonstrations.

When it was our turn to entertain, a large crowd met the Miami special train in the early morning. Headed by the local band, a parade escorted them to the ball park. We decorated our bicycles for the occasion with gay

ribbons and bunting laced into the spokes of the wheels. Everyone rode bicycles in West Palm Beach at that time and a few rode in chairs pedaled by a Negro servant from a seat mounted in the rear. There were almost no carriages—most horse-drawn vehicles were drays for hauling. There was, of course, the hack which met the trains and the handsome matched pair of black horses which drew the hearse.

The parade ended at the ball park where the big Independence Day game was played between the towns' rival teams. There was a "Miss Liberty," one of the pretty town girls, who was the center of envied attention. After the ball game picnic baskets were brought out, and dozens of watermelons were cut. In the evening everyone gathered in the little park by Lake Worth for a band concert, and patriotic speeches by local politicians, or silver-tongued orators who found it a great opportunity to bring themselves before the public. The finale was always a huge fireworks display.

I remember once Papa organized a fireworks spectacle to represent the Battle of Manila. This was wonderful. Yachts had been decorated to resemble gunboats. There was a large fleet, Spanish as well as American, and each boat was named for one of the ships which actually took part in the battle, the largest yacht playing Admiral Dewey's flagship. Various docks were "made-up" to resemble the forts of Manila Harbor. The fleet came down the lake from north of the drawbridge which was the entrance to the harbor. Papa had worked it all out so that each ship was placed just as it was in the actual battle. The "guns" were skyrockets and Roman candles and there was red fire and noise bombs galore. It was the most elaborate pageant West Palm Beach ever had.

The evening of the Fourth before the special train left at midnight for Miami saw many balls in progress. Some were private dances at the Utopia Club or elsewhere. The big public ball was usually held in the Fire Hall, with the mayor of West Palm Beach leading the grand march with "Miss Liberty" on his arm. The music was furnished by the local Negro band. During the Season the men were waiters at the Royal Poinciana Hotel and so they were known by and proud of the title "The Poinciana Waiters' Band." They played the liveliest rag-time music on occasion, but for the ball they gave a full program of waltzes, two-steps, quadrilles and schottishes.

One year, when it was Miami's turn to put on the celebration, we went down on the special train and spent the day with friends. In the afternoon, a company of veterans lately back from Cuba staged a sham battle in

Biscayne Park. We children were told in advance that it was make believe, and that nobody would be hurt, but the men played it so realistically with rifles cracking and men falling that was hard not to be terrified and to remember that the cartridges were only blanks.

In the years when it was Miami's turn to entertain some of our West Palm Beach folk who found it inconvenient to take their families down for the day planned their own quiet celebrations at home.

Being three little sisters we were not allowed to handle fireworks so we watched happily as Papa who waited until after dark to increase their effectiveness touched off the skyrockets, pinwheels, star shells and witches fire. During the day there were sail boat races which we watched from the shade of palm trees bordering Lake Worth or from breeze-swept pavilions at the end of docks. Then there were bicycle races, in which the West Palm Beach boys challenged the Lantana boys, or vice versa. Lantana was a town a few miles south of us. The object of the race was to make the round trip to the other town and back in the shortest possible time. Lots of good-natured rivalry was worked up over these races.

There were also croquet matches for the young ladies who wore their town's colors pinned to their shirtwaists and around their croquet mallets. They played by the most rigid rules. Two hands were not allowed on the mallet when striking the ball. One good whack had to be delivered with a single hand to send the ball through the wickets. These were colorful contests to which the women spectators wore their picture hats and prettiest frocks.

Sometimes several congenial families chartered the big school launch for a boating picnic. When school was in session the school boat and her skipper went about the lake gathering up children, whose homes were along the shore and brought them to school just as our school buses do today. In the summertime the skipper and his boat were available for charter parties.

One of the favorite places was the inlet about eight or ten miles up the lake. At the inlet a large double-decker houseboat had been anchored in the lake and was used as headquarters for the day. The young courting couples with their chaperones used to enjoy dancing on the top deck of the houseboat in the moonlight to the music of guitars, mandolins and banjos.

When Mama got down her big picnic basket and began her preparations, we children were ecstatic. Watermelons were stowed on board the launch. We took our bathing suits and big towels and since we all had red hair and



delicate complexions large straw hats were tied firmly under our chins. Mama's favorite lotion of glycerin and rosewater was applied to faces and arms. The feet were cut out of old pairs of long black stockings which would never see the darning basket again and these we pulled up over our arms to protect them from the sun. We did not court suntans as today's teenagers do. In spite of all these precautions we always came home with smarting sunburns but, oh, it was worth it!

To race along the beach, with the salt air blowing in our faces! To dig our toes into the warm, white sand, and build sand castles, drawbridges and moats for the sea to fill! To lie in the foamy surf and let the breakers surge around us! To jump the rollers, and vie with each other in finding new and different seashells! Or fish in the quiet waters of the lake from the houseboat and know the thrill of watching, in the clear crystalline water below, the fish come up to bite our hooks! Did ever food taste so good, as when eaten on the beach after hours of fun and excitement! And then that wonderful ride home by moonlight!

Yes, the Fourth of July was something very special in the Florida of those long ago days!

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