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The Spanish River Papers

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OLD CITY HALL
Jeanne Nixon Baur, Artist

A report to the membership of
Boca Raton Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 1113 • Boca Raton, Florida 33432

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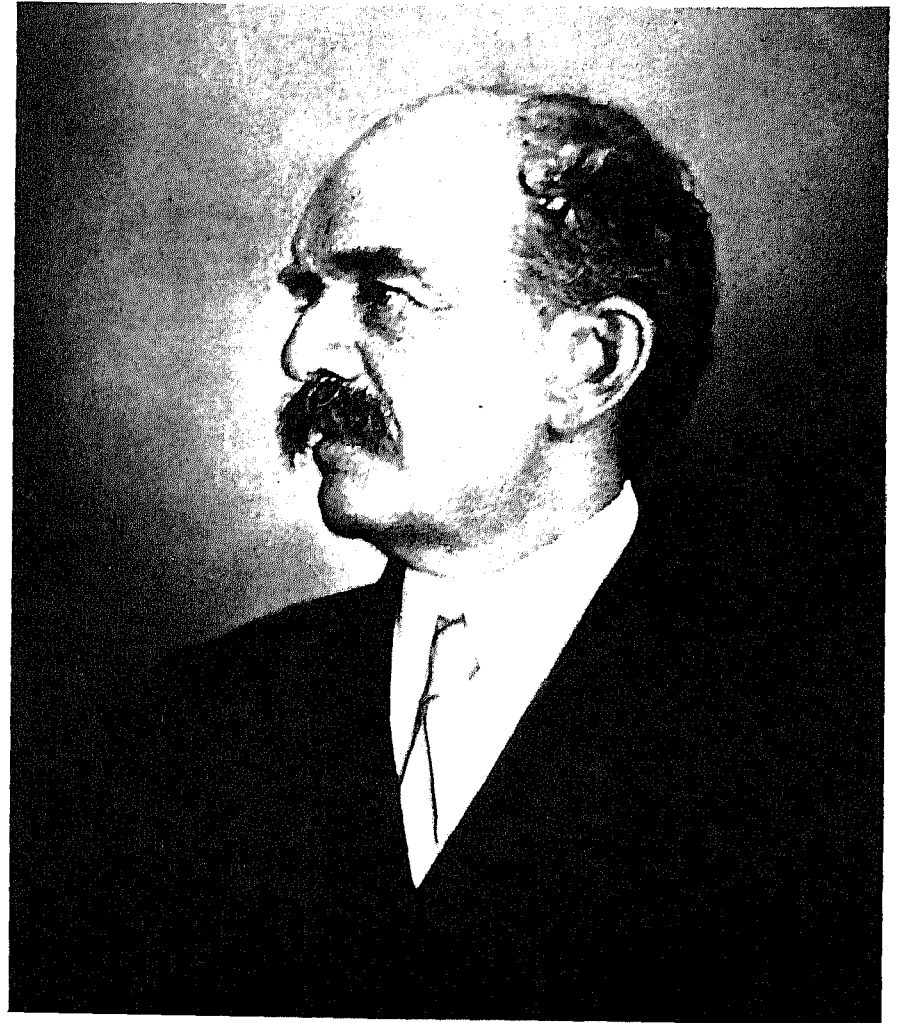
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FRANCIS VINTON LONG

Born in Boca Raton September 14, 1909 to George Ashley Long and Catherine O'Hare Long.

Married his present wife, Mary Catherine Volpert Long on January 28, 1967.

Children:	George Ashley	Francis Vinton
	Michael Vinton	Ashley Lynne
	Alicia	John Davis
		Catherine Helen



GEORGE ASHLEY LONG
June 19, 1854 – February 24, 1929

This year of 1976 marks the centennial of his graduation from Harvard in 1876.

It also marks fifty-two years since he was called on by Boca Raton's citizens to be their first Mayor.

During the period of his mayorship, he endeavored in every way to make the fledgling town a better place to live, and he set about motion to make it an incorporate town as the first step in that direction. On August 23, 1924, Boca Raton's City Clerk's Records (Page 1, Book 1) show that Mayor Long and Councilman B.B. Raulerson were to study how neighboring towns conducted their business of incorporation. \$2,500.00 was authorized to be borrowed for expenses of incorporation and an election was held on October 4, to bond the town for this loan.

This was done and an election was held on June 24, 1925 for the office of Mayor, Commission of Public Works, and Town Clerk.

There was little campaigning by the incumbent mayor, in fact, there was little to do in a town of this size. Voting results showed 41 votes for John W. Brown with 37 for Long. B.B. Raulerson became the Commissioner of Public Works with 44 votes, and George S. Akins the Town Clerk with 49.

There was great rejoicing over the results — I can still remember sitting home with my father and mother when someone started up "Old Betsy" (fire engine No. 1) that evening after the votes were tallied, and with the siren going, accompanied by honking autos, drove for some time around the town.

There was some talk by the ex-mayor's friends that the votes should be counted and signatures verified, but father, being a proud, proper Back Bay Bostonian, would not hear of such a thing. He considered his opponent a gentleman, and besides, his wife, Clemintene, was my first school teacher and was loved by all her class.

Some political interest must have been in my father's blood though, for his uncle, John Davis Long, was Legislator from Massachusetts, Governor of Massachusetts, and Secretary of the Navy under two presidents. He also dedicated the opening of the Washington Monument, and is honored on a monument in Union Square, San Francisco.

My father, one of three brothers and two sisters, first worked for E.W. Bowditch of Boston as a civil engineer. A prolonged illness decided him to come to Florida for a while, and he never went back.



Instead, he married what I call "Shanty Irish" in 1892. She was from Baltimore and her name was Catherine (Katie) O'Hare.

They lived in Interlachen, Putnam County, Florida and had three children: George A. Long, Jr., Helen Mary and Hatty.

During this period my father entered the citrus growing business, did extensive engineering for the Florida Southern Railway Company and did surveying in the northern part of Florida for numerous bonding companies. He acted as Town Alderman and as the County Surveyor for Putman County.

He became associated in many engineering projects with Captain T. M. Rickands, and it was through their friendship that my father moved to Boca Ratone and made it his permanent home. He made his first visit here in May, 1901, and returned in 1902 to buy Captain Rickard's home, built out of driftwood on the east bank of the intracoastal, where the present Palmetto Park Road bridge is located.

Later he had built for him a home on a site at the corner of Palmetto Park Road and Northwest 4th Avenue, where a stand of his pine trees still exists. (It was the site of a Army Air Corp. Radar School during the last days of World War II.)

After a short while on "Boca Hill", the family moved to a location on South Dixie Highway and Palmetto Park Road. There, our white house, with the front gate at Palmetto Park Road, and the South fence at the Chesebrough Estate, remained for many years until the entire three city block estate was sold to the widow of Miami's famed Paris Singer in 1950 for ten thousand dollars. Calico Corners, originally the home of J.C. and Floy Mitchell and their two children, still stands, together with the magnificent banyan tree which my mother gave to Mrs. Mitchell to plant.



In this house I was born in 1909, to the great consternation of my mother, as she was forty-five and my father was fifty-five at the time. There I had a home-made radio station, and at the age of twelve became the youngest licensed amateur radio operator in the United States. This later stood me good when I joined the U.S. Naval Reserve as Radioman, 2nd Class, under the direction of the Commander, Judge Rufus Robbins. This further helped me to obtain my commercial F.C.C. radio operators license, which in turn enabled me to talk myself into a job with Pan American Air Ways, flying out of Dinner Key and the present 36th Street International Airport. I had to do a small amount of lying about my previous flying experience. I did this so well that on my first flight (to Havana) they decided I didn't need a checkout man to supervise me. I'll never forget the feeling as we lifted off 36th Street in a Fokker Trimotor and headed across the Gulf. You see, P. A. A. did not know it, but it was my first flight!



Besides being the first mayor (and continuous dreamer), he had many other firsts here. For instance, he became local representative for the F. E. C. Land Department, first Postmaster in 1908, helped bring Boca Ratone into Palm Beach County in 1909 and became in 1919 the first Boca Ratoneite to become County Commissioner for a two year term followed by a second term.

While County Commissioner, it was through his untiring efforts the Ocean Boulevard (now A1A) became a reality, and the Traylor Road was built, which helped the farmers from the range line to the Dixie Highway.

He had visions of this as far back as 1913, as you can see from his letter on "Old Colony Plantation" letterhead to his brother, Harry V. Long in Cohasset, Massachusetts.

Old Colony Plantation

George A. Long

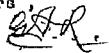
Boca Raton, Palm Beach County, Florida

Nov. 13, 1913.....191..

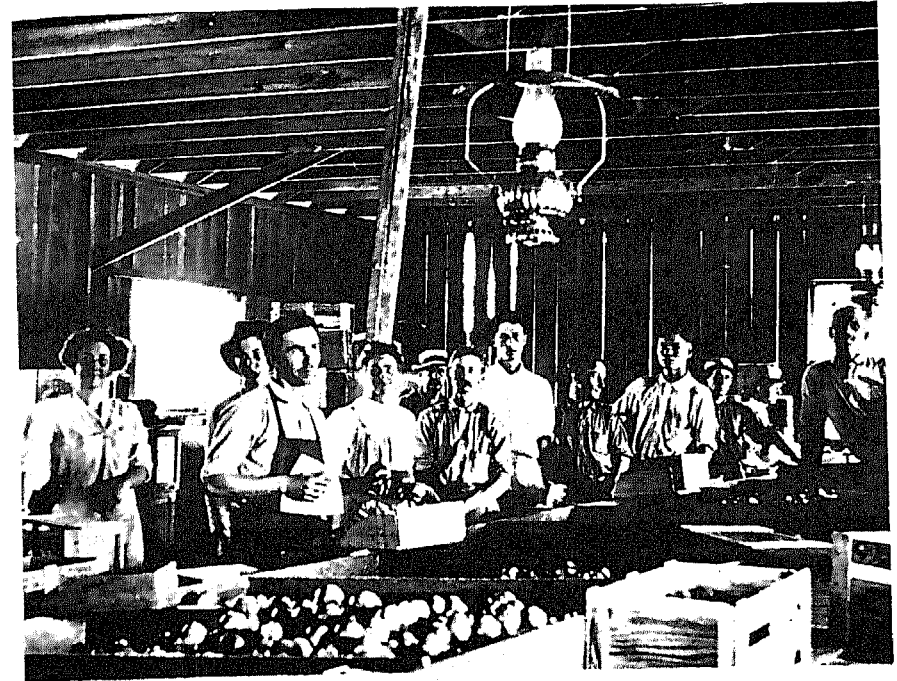
Dear Harry,

Last Saturday, Night I shipped, to Chase Express, 3 crates of grape-fruit, to be delivered, as follows; 2 to you at Gayton St., (or as you direct,) 1 to Charles E. Ware, Fitchburg, & 1 to Mrs W. A. Thalen, Springfield. I hope they will arrive safely, & in good order. When you have "destroyed" these, I will ship some more, would you prefer all Grape-fruit, or half of each, grape-fruit, & Oranges? I have not heard, from your family for some time. How are you, these times, do as many fly as used to? I do not have time to shoot any, I am Local Agent here, for all the land Co, s Boston & Fla; Fla East Coast R., y, Canal Co, & am Engineer in charge, of the R., y drainage work, & have a crew of Japanese, running an Excavator, that builds a canal, & throws up a Road at the same time; I also have charge of the Palm Beach County Road building work in this vicinity, & am getting up a Special road District here, that takes in the south 1/3, of Palm Beach Co. & is to build a Boulevard, along the Ocean ridge, close to the Beach, & overlooking it. This will make an Ocean Drive, extending from Lake Worth Inlet 3 miles North of Palm Beach, south the entire length of the county. So I am pretty busy. I was asked to take the position of County Engineer, But I did not want that, as I am my own "Boss" now, & as Co Eng, r, I would be the Object of constant Criticism. I am paying off the Fertilizer bills that two bad seasons of Farming left me loaded with. It has been a hard proposition, although I have had a pretty good monthly income for some time. A year ago last May I must have been \$3000.00 in debt. to them & it will take me six months more to get straight. I hope your family is well

Yours



My father also had the first Railway Express office post, and handled thousands of boxes of produce being shipped to the northeastern market.



Also, he had a large community packing house (about South Dixie Highway and South 2nd Street) which served as a meeting place for all, held in the second story including dances and other events. It also served as Boca Raton's first school. He also had the first overhead irrigation system, with a large water tank (later blown over by a hurricane), the first home electric plant (a 32 volt D.C. Kohler unit with batteries), I believe the first inside toilet, the first transport system across the intracoastal to the beach (Long's Rowboat!), the first Model T and the first grape orchard (it was a bust). Also I had the first home broadcast receiver and on good nights we could hear music (on headphones) from KDKA - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The family (at that time I was the only child living at home) often visited the Charles Gortons (living by the canal on the south side of Palmetto) and Harley, Harriet, and Imogene Alice (Dianne) Gates, who lived on the north side of the road. I remember the Welsh rarebit the Gortons treated us to after the card games.

About this time my family donated the land for the first church in Pearl City.

My father continued his surveying until the day he died (at 75). He would head for the back country with his transit over his shoulder, and two young men as rodman and chainman, and walk them until they dropped. He helped fortify himself with a lunch of an ounce of whiskey and a raw egg.

From the beginning my father dreamed of great things to come. There is in the Historical Society files a copy of a letter written in 1920 in which he urged some eastern friends to consider building a hotel on the beach or lake.

The next stage in his activities was when he met Addison Mizner. This occurred in Palm Beach where my father had many personal friends, belonged to the Elks Lodge, and commuted there in his work to set up Boca Ratone as part of Palm Beach County, act as County Commissioner, and his efforts to bring the Ocean Boulevard (now A1A) from Lake Worth inlet to Boca Ratone and the Broward County Line.

They became good friends and Mr. Mizner commuted to Boca Ratone, where he finally set up his houseboat as an office, located in the extreme north-east part of Lake Boca Ratone. I can remember many days when I would accompany my father and drink cokes while my father and Mr. Mizner discussed what could be developed in Boca Ratone.

From these talks came the famed Cloister Inn, and later exotic housing on Camino Real and Old Floresta. Also, they discussed the gondolas and the ill-fated canal (center of Camino Real) which was built to carry F. E. C. passengers from their train to the Inn.

Later Mr. Mizner designed a 2½ story mansion for my family to be located on the beach sand dune about half way between Palmetto Park Road and the inlet. My father got as far as clearing the site and grading to level, ready for the foundation, when the boom began to falter.

Finally, Addison, his brothers Wilson and Reverend Henry (with wife and daughter Alice) were forced to move away. He and my father took heavy financial losses at this time. However, my father continued his surveying to keep things together, and I completed high school in Delray (Class of 1927). On February 24, 1929 he passed away and I know of no more fitting tribute than that carried by the Palm Beach Post:

***"BUSINESS CEASES AS PIONEER IS INTERRED.
CITIZENS PAY TRIBUTE TO GEORGE ASHLEY LONG.***

Such a tribute as has been afforded few residents living or dead in this county was paid yesterday at the bier of George Ashley Long at Boca Raton.

Old timers of the county who had known Long in the pioneer days, fellow members of the Elks Lodge, and many public officials formed a procession consisting of 69 cars to attend last rites for one of the county's oldest and foremost residents.

Mr. Long who died at his home at Boca Raton on Sunday, at the age of 75, had lived for 30 years in the southern part of the county. A retired engineer and farmer, he has served a number of terms on the county commission and had made his influence felt in the county in many ways.

Business in Boca Raton, public and private, was suspended for the funeral which was held at the town hall at 3:30 o'clock. Members of the Elks Lodge had complete charge of the rites."

My father was a good man. I never heard him raise his voice in anger nor think ill of anyone. He did not attempt to work for glory, but for the good of both the rich and the unrich people. He was an honest hardworking man, perhaps a dreamer to the fault, but he never thought of giving up.

I wish he were here now.

Vinton Long
March 31, 1976



HILDEGARDE F. SCHINE

Daughter of Martha and Morris Feldman

Married J. Myer Schine August 30, 1925

Has four children: Doris, Renee, Richard and David

Moved to Boca Raton in 1948

" along life's way as we meet new friends . . . "

I was a perfect stranger in Boca Raton but being the type of person who wants to get involved I joined a group of women who were organizing a library. I had four children, two boys and two girls, who were pretty well grown up by then, so I had been through the library bit before.

The organizers were very sweet to me. We talked over the library's needs. We had just bought the Club (Boca Raton Hotel) and we had hired men to do carpentry work so we had them build bookcases in the Old City Hall. Friends donated encyclopedias and Harvard Classics and the women indexed all the volumes. It made a nice little library for the time being.

Unfortunately the Town Hall was the only city building in Boca and space was at a premium. We decided we should build a regular library. We didn't quite know how to go about it.

I talked with a few women and found there were a lot of people in and around Boca Raton who did crafts or paintings. So we decided to start an Art Guild strictly for the benefit of the library fund.

Mrs. MacSpadden, Mrs. Spalsberry and her sister, Mrs. Mann, started to make preparations for an art show. Kay Driscoll, a most talented girl, was head of the crafts display. She went to Briny Breezes and found people who did pottery, beadwork and all sorts of crafts.

I wasn't quite satisfied so I spoke to a friend of mine who was curator of Knoedler Galleries. She brought us Renoirs and Manets. Mr. Carlsberg, from Miami Beach Gallery, also brought us beautiful things from his gallery. We used one of the rooms in City Hall. The exhibit was free but we sold as many crafts and paintings as possible. This was a very crude beginning but a profitable one.

*" When sincere friends happen to meet,
Memories of yor come back truly sweet "*

Our family moved from Miami Beach into the Club in 1948. We had all types of fund raising affairs. We had musicals to benefit either a church or the Art Guild. Sometimes I had art shows lasting two or three weeks. I would have the hotel chef make a cake that looked like the guild or church building proposed. . . . Then we would serve petit sandwiches and tea or sometimes just have cookies and punch. By this time loads of artists and craftsmen had joined the guild.

One of the benefits I especially remember was a musical held in Mrs. Shapiro's garden. I was to play the piano part of a symphony and Tony Cabot's orchestra was to accompany me. I don't mean to pat myself on the back but I have played with many symphony orchestras and this piece I knew almost by heart. But, all of a sudden, a wind came up and little tiny gnats landed on my clefs and there I was playing the bugs instead of the notes.

Tony Cabot gave me a strange look for we had rehearsed thoroughly. Then he got absolutely hysterical, came over and wiped the gnats from my music. After that episode all went well.

These musicals to benefit the Art Guild were very successful. We'd have from 150 to 500 people who would each pay a dollar. After the musical, we'd sell arts and crafts or cookies so we would make \$200 and upwards at each event. Before long we had accumulated over \$85,000.



*" For they come from far and near,
and each one has their own niche "*

These women were wonderful and worked so hard on the musicals, card parties and teas. But you know how women are. They argued one against the other and the library people decided to split from the art people.

My husband had previously given me a lot for the building that would incorporate both the Art Guild and the Library. I thought the two should be together because sometimes you see a painting and want to go immediately and read all about it. The library women didn't agree.

As it turned out, there wasn't adequate parking space on the building site anyway so I sold it for \$50,000. I divided this equally between the Library and the Art Guild. This amount plus half of the \$85,000 from the benefits gave each group \$67,500 to start their projects. And that was a long time ago — when a dollar was a dollar.

“ . . . Small town people know each other . . . ”

In the early fifties quite a few people in Boca were Methodists, so Mrs. Lavonne Mouw and I decided to give more musicals until we built a new church. We did this for four or five years. One day the very good looking minister — a younger, shorter Errol Flynn type — got up and told us that he had been transferred from Boca. He said that when he came here he had to go to a funeral parlor each Sunday to rent chairs for his congregation. The choir had no robes, no books, no organ, no piano. But with the help of Mrs. Mouw and Mrs. Schine we now have all those things plus money in the bank. So if Mrs. Mouw and Mrs. Schine want to give a concert for another charity, that will be fine. Our church really doesn't need any more money.

Mrs. Mouw turned to me and said, "Well, I guess we've fixed up your church." "But," I told her, "I'm not Methodist, I'm Jewish!" And I thought she was Methodist, but she wasn't either. She was Presbyterian!



“ . . . Marriages, families, are busy beehives . . . ”

For my youngest daughter's wedding I wrote a song called the "Renee Waltz." When I wrote it I said to my husband, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if I got an opera star to sing it at Renee's wedding?" He told me I was silly. Nobody would sing my song. I thought I would try anyway.

I wrote to one man in the Metropolitan Opera. I told him my daughter was getting married and having a beautiful wedding at the Waldorf Astoria. I told him that I had written a song especially for the wedding and asked if he would sing it. He wrote back that he couldn't be bothered.

I thanked him very much and then asked Lawrence Melchior, who was the most famous Wagnerian tenor in the world. His wife wrote me the sweetest letter. She thought it the most wonderful idea and said they would be privileged to attend. They did come and he sang my "Renee Waltz" as the young couple danced the first dance.

The Melchiors came to the Boca Hotel as my guests for years. They were the most delightful couple. Mr. Melchior was the most tremendous man. He would do the Viennese Waltz triple time and get all out of breath because he danced so fast.

*“ . . . old friends always greet me
And seem happy again to meet me
And so I sing this song —
I have never lost a friend . . . ”*

When I first came to the hotel here in Boca the place was teeming with soldiers. The caretaker gave me a tour and all I could think was how ugly it was. All the beautiful furniture had been replaced with Haywood-Wakefield beds and little bureaus for the servicemen.

All the columns were covered with plywood because the soldiers carelessly swung their guns as they walked and chipped the plaster. The caretaker got up on a ladder and removed some of the plywood so I could see how beautiful the columns really were. I couldn't even get into the main dining room as it was being used as radar headquarters.

World War II was over at this time but the government had a lease on the hotel. When the lease was up the government neglected to renew it so we asked them to leave so we could open the hotel for business. We had to do it for we were paying a lot of money on taxes.

Before we bought the hotel it was a private club. As we moved in the townspeople came to us saying the hotel was the only major industry in Boca and many townspeople worked there, but no Boca Ratonites had ever set foot in the front door.

I thought that was awful because there were many lovely people here. So I gave a party and invited everyone in town. I sent emissaries to each of Boca Raton's four districts to invite the people. I don't know whether I had a cocktail party or a dinner but I do know that hundreds of people came. I made a little speech and welcomed them.

I must say they weren't too friendly. They were all very suspicious. But that all changed. I have a lot of friends here now. That is why I stay in Boca Raton.

*Song excerpts from "I Never Lost a Friend"
by Hildegarde F. Schine*

ROBERTA KNAPP MacSPADDEN

Wife of Col. Arnold Mac Spadden, married on October 28th, 1925.
Daughter of John H. Knapp and Carolyn Reker Knapp.
Settled in Boca Raton permanently in 1944.
Daughter, Mary Jean Wilson (Mrs. C. S.) of Miami, Florida



The following is a quote from a speech given by Col. Arnold MacSpadden U.S. engineer, retired, to the Circle K Club at Florida Atlantic University on March 30th, 1966.

THE WAR YEARS

It seems odd now to imagine this Post (U.S. Army Air Base) to be in any danger of attack — but it was. During the period of construction, the entire East Coast of Florida was lined with sunken ships, mostly tankers sunk by German submarines. In fact, it was stated in 1942, that every four miles from the Keys to Jacksonville there was either a bow or a stern of a sunken tanker showing just off the beach.

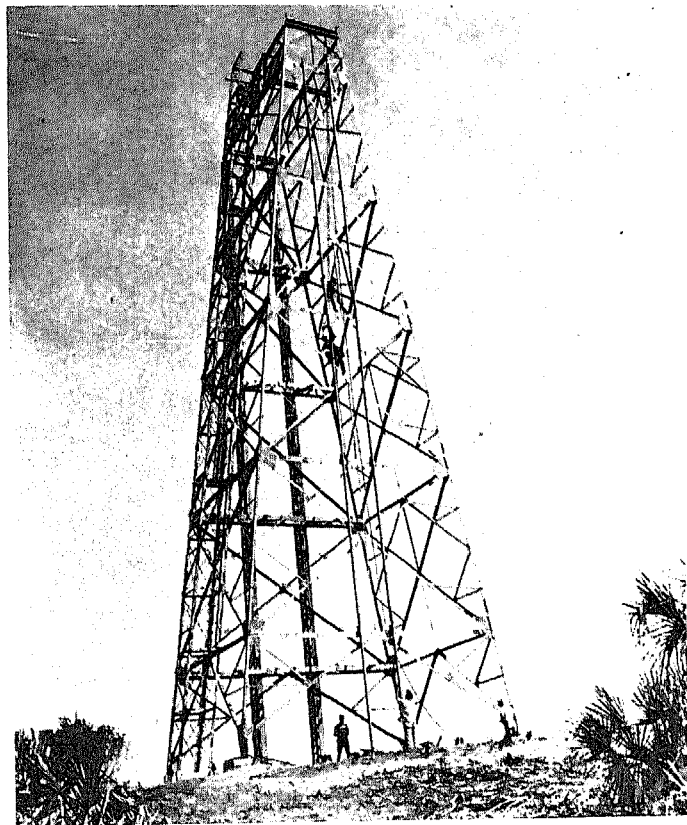


MRS. MAC SPADDEN COMMENTS ON THE U BOAT PROBLEM:

We lived in Delray, for when we came to Boca all the housing was taken so we lived just one block from the ocean on Andrews Avenue. It was all blacked out and you could only have the lights on the west side of the house turned on. So it was all blacked out toward the ocean. You couldn't light a match. When my husband came home . . . he would be working very hard, and he was exhausted . . . he'd come home for dinner or something quite late and we'd walk along the ocean . . . He loved to sing and I did too . . . and he loved the old Irish songs.

Well, we'd walk up on the ocean and sit on the bench and sing "My Wild Irish Rose." And that was our relaxation in those days.

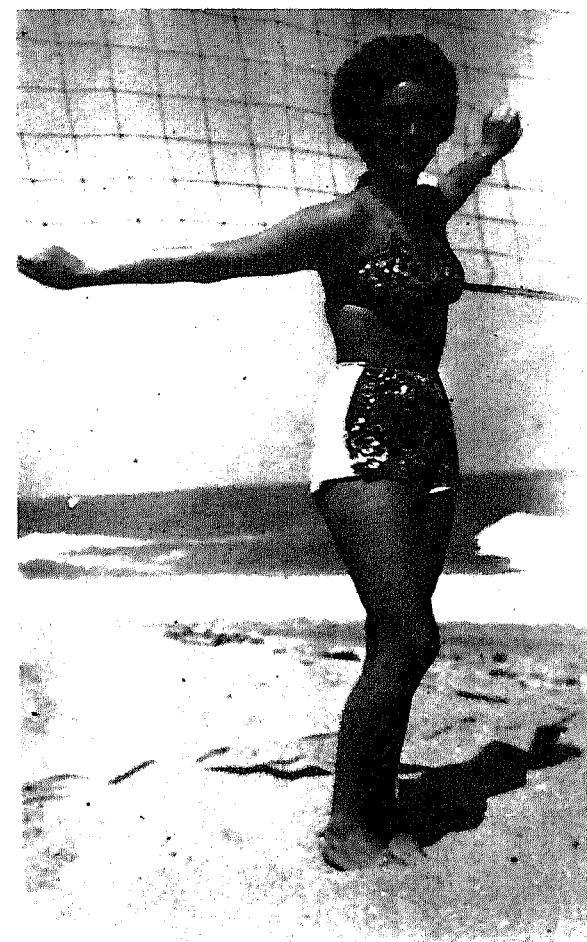
They had men that went around and kept watch all the time . . . all the yards every night . . . to see if everybody had their lights properly fixed. You could have lights toward the west but you couldn't have lights in any other part of the house or the shades had to be pulled. And it was hot! There were no air-conditioned houses in those days.

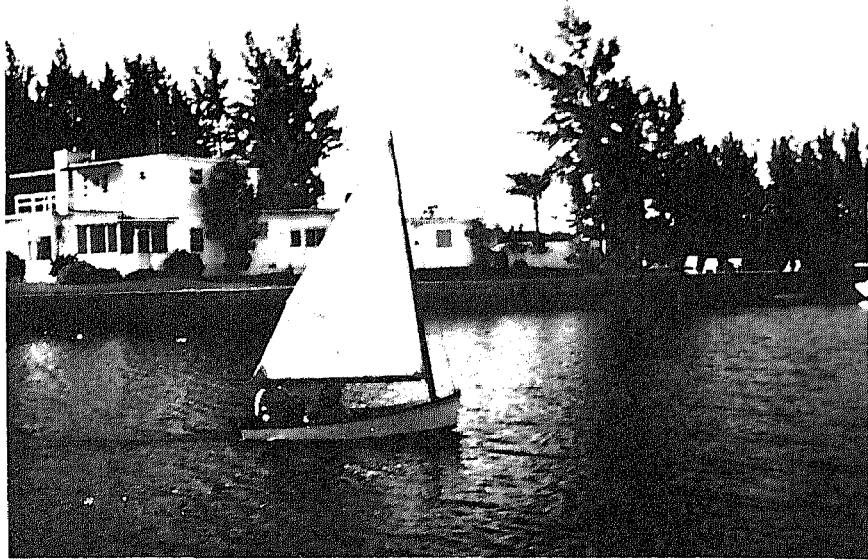


It seems to me we saw suspicious things all the time. I just don't remember. They (U boats) were in the water. The submarines were in the water and came right up close to the shore. But I wasn't scared, not with the army there.

SOCIAL LIFE DURING THE WAR:

He (Col. MacSpadden) had to build that base so fast . . . three and a half months, I believe, a thousand buildings . . . that we didn't participate in any social activities. I can remember we all had a cabana at the club . . . all the officers had a cabana at the club . . . but I think possibly we used ours twice. I can remember joining the Red Cross. We were taking instruction at the Cabana Club. They had an instructor and all the army wives who wanted to, could go over there and get the instruction. It was very serious. And then one of the colonels, the Commander of the Air Corps, lived over on Camino in what is now the Carcaise house. They had a party one time. I can remember going to that party.





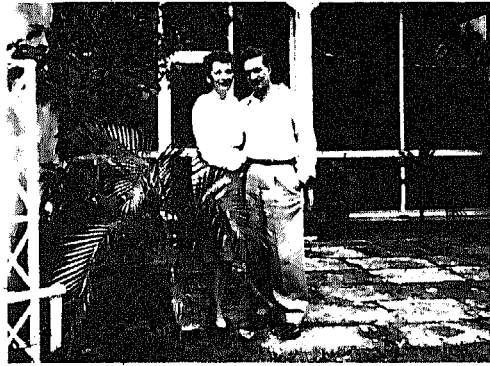
MRS. MAC SPADDEN FINDS SHE MUST ADJUST TO FLORIDA'S MOSQUITOES AND FIDDLER CRABS:

We really were bothered by mosquitoes. I don't remember Boca Raton, although we were right in the thick of the woods down there, but in Delray I can remember going out in the evening to empty the garbage and taking my hand and wiping them off my arm they were so bad . . . they were terrible, yes. We had another thing down there I was introduced to and that was the fiddler crabs. They were all over the road in those days. The drive between Delray and Boca . . . there was a low spot on A1A and there'd be hundreds of them crossing the road and they'd be rattling, you know bumping into each other, and they said if you ever ran over them you'd puncture your tires. They'd move when they heard you coming if you'd go slow enough. One morning, my husband had gone to the job and I was looking out the window from the dining room and I saw this peculiar thing at the edge of the lawn. He was blue and I thought it must be a snake because he was acting so funny. And the milkman came and so I said to him, 'What is that thing?' and he said, 'Oh, that's harmless, you don't have to be afraid of that. It's a fiddler crab. All they do is dig holes in your lawn.' But we had a little dog, a little cocker spaniel, and she had a lot of fun playing with the fiddler crabs. One day she came howling home and I thought she'd been hit by a car. She had been after a fiddler crab and his claw had come out and was hanging in her nose. His whole claw! I had to pull that out. The house was furnished and some of our furniture we were able to store in the garage, and so Peaches, her name was . . . she was born in Georgia, she would chase those fiddler crabs behind the furniture against the wall and then they'd die of exhaustion. Then we'd have to move the furniture and get those things out.

I do remember sand flies. The little things that come through the screens . . . they were bad. One evening one of the engineers came and stayed all night. When he got up the next morning I asked him how he'd slept and he said well fine, but the attack at dawn was something. I asked him what he meant and he said he didn't know but something was biting him. So when I went in to change the bed, it was full of blood. Those things had come in and really attacked him. So I tried to find out what in the world we could do about the "no seeums." I went to the gas station and I asked him and he said to get fuel oil and put mothballs in it and stir it up and paint your screen with that. Well, I don't know if the mothballs did any good or not it certainly made an icky thing on the screen but they stuck to the screens and it did help.

After his retirement in 1944, Colonel Mac Spadden's doctor recommended Florida as a place to live because of its easy climate. The MacSpaddens moved to Fort Lauderdale, could find nothing except a room on the New River. She remembered sitting around in their rented room listening to the radio and hearing an ad quoting \$55.00 per foot on the ocean in Boca Raton. So they drove up to investigate and saw Mr. Mitchell. The land was available but there were no materials to build with because of the war. They were introduced to Mr. Von Holst in Floresta who thought that a tenant of his in one of the Mizner houses was leaving. He indeed was, and the Mac Spaddens bought the house . . . on Azalea now owned by John Freeman. In the following anecdotes, Mrs. Mac Spadden reminisces about her life in Boca in 1944 and the years after the war . . .





I can remember we had trouble with wood rats . . . big ones. One night I was awakened in the middle of the night and at the head of my bed, somehow I sensed it, I guess; I saw this huge rat with a long tail going back and forth on my windowsill. I got out of bed, got my husband up and we got out of the bedroom. Arnold had a trap that he set up that night. When we woke up the next morning, we found him dead in the trap.

I remember the most ugly thing was a huge rattler. I was in the habit of getting up early and working in the garden, I was in the back this one morning working right at the edge of the property, which was right at the edge of the woods. Suddenly I heard this rattle and there was a huge rattlesnake . . . He was not coiled but was stretched out because he had swallowed a rabbit. In fact, the rabbit's two feet were sticking out of his mouth. If I had stepped a few feet further I would have stepped on him. He was immobile because he had swallowed that rabbit. I ran and called my husband . . . he was in the habit of sleeping in the morning and resting. Well he got his gun and came out and shot it two or three times and ripped it down the throat so that the rabbit was exposed. Then we called on all the neighbors to come see it and they all said it was the biggest one they'd seen.

I remember one Christmas we had a delightful time. The Ted Pratts (our neighbors) came over to help us trim our Christmas tree and then we helped them trim their tree. But trimming theirs was a rather unique experience for us. They trimmed it with the old-fashioned metal candle holders that you pinch on the tree and put real candles in. They also hung fruit on the tree . . . real fruit: oranges, bananas and apples. After we had it all trimmed, Ted Pratt went out, got a big pail of water, brought it in, sat it down beside the tree and we sat and enjoyed it for we were prepared in case of fire. After a while we decided to take a walk and see what the other neighbors were doing. We visited the Flemings who were a few streets over and we were introduced to another custom. Tom and Myrtle served up syllabub, a delicious drink and it was quite a ceremony just making it. In those days we used to cut down our own Christmas tree, on a spot which was called Villa Ricca at that time. The Flemings went with us and we'd each pick out a tree and saw it down. It was a lot of fun looking all over trying to find the best shaped tree.

Several hurricanes in '48 and '49 were very bad and did a lot of damage in uprooting trees. Also Floresta was flooded. The water was very deep. It didn't get in the house but it came right up to the top of the stairs and patio floor. The little frogs were singing all over the place. When the storm subsided the next day, we got out in our bare feet. My husband rolled up his pants and I suppose I had shorts on, I don't think we were wearing pants in those days, we were out walking in the water, which was dangerous, but we were foolish and didn't realize it. We met a lot of our other neighbors and we walked around in water up to our hips, surveying the territory and seeing what damage had been done. That same year Denver Bratten (who worked for the Von Holst's and lived in a big house that they owned) because the water was so deep on Palmetto Park Road, put a row boat with some oars in it. My husband and I wanted to go to the post office so we waded to the boat and paddled our way to where we could get out and we walked all the way to the post office in our bare feet.

In 1946 I wanted to start a civic club. There were quite a lot of very capable women, many of them attached to the air base. The buildings where they lived were temporary ones put up on Palmetto Park Road and in the complex was a building for recreation. So we met there. We had one little church here at the time . . . it was called the community church, the minister was not ordained but he did a good job, and his wife wanted the club to be connected with the church. I really wanted a civic club to include the church but not to be of the church, but she convinced us and suggested that we call it Christian-Civic so that's what we did. One of our first projects was redecorating that little church. I can remember we went down and worked on the project. We took pails of water and razor blades because on the windows was paper which was simulated stained glass. So we took our pails of water, soapsuds and razor blades and cleaned the windows up.

We made our money through art demonstrations. Mrs. Von Holst had a friend, an artist, and she used to come down once or twice a year and stay at their place. Mrs. Von Holst would have a tea and Joy Postle would do some demonstrations . . . She had an easel with a pad of dark paper on it. She was a student of wading birds . . . egrets and herons and that sort of thing. Her husband had been a newspaper reporter and was an aggressive person while she was retiring. They would go to west Florida and that type of place and camp out for weeks studying the birds habits and their songs. She would paint their pictures and come back and sell them. She had worked out a very entertaining little demonstration. First she'd draw the nest, tree and the eggs. Then she'd crack the eggs open and erase that and draw the little birds. Then the birds grew up and she'd sing a song, a mating song, and would go through the antics that the birds did when they were mating. It was delightful. She was also a poet and we enjoyed this very much. So I got the idea of asking her to do one of these demonstrations. Then I asked the Boca Raton Hotel and Club if we could use their facilities. Well it all worked out very well. She agreed to do it and the Hotel and Club said we would have the auditorium. So we got busy. We didn't charge admission. But we did print raffle tickets because we were going to raffle off several of the paintings after the demonstration.

I was president of the outfit so I had to get up on the platform and introduce Joy and tell the people a little bit about her and what we were trying to do. They were all townspeople . . . well, most of them were townspeople . . . and I was scared because I hadn't talked at anything that big. I can remember when I was getting dressed and getting ready to go over, Tom Fleming dropped over. I was really nervous and he said, "Well, that's understandable. It's a hard thing to do. What you need is a drink." And he arranged that.

It was agreed that Gladys Crawford would play the piano. And then I would come out and speak my piece. I was waiting in the wings and she was playing the Warsaw Concerto . . . I love that . . . but I came out a little too soon . . . I thought it was near the end so she just ran her hand up the keyboard scale and banged on the piano and that was the end. And I thought, oh, I had interrupted her a little too soon but I had to go ahead so I did. It all worked out very nicely. And we made a nice little sum of money.



Then we started the library. We gathered up books that people donated and we started this little library in this little room in the recreation building. I understand there had been a library here at one time but when we came here there wasn't one. With moving around as much as I did, that was my first stop in a new town. That was my friend, the library. I would always go to the library and borrow books. I loved to read in the evenings. Quite often my husband and I would sit around and I would read for awhile and he would read for awhile. He enjoyed that. But there was a hurricane after awhile that blew the roof off the recreation building and the rain came down and ruined most of the books. There was also water on the floor so we had to close the library off. By then Mrs. Bebout had come in the organization and she took over and the library was moved to the Town Hall.

This was only the beginning of Roberta MacSpadden's contribution to the Civic and cultural life of Boca Raton. Her work with the library led her into helping found the Art Guild in 1950. She served as President of the Art Guild, for a total of four years during its difficult founding years.

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