

the PALMS CAFE



The Spanish River Papers

August 1993 Volume XIII

Women In Boca Raton Fifty Years of History

Lola Zimmerman and husband Louis in front of the Palms Cafe Confectionery circa 1926. Their first restaurant was operated by Lola in Boca Raton.

The Spanish River Papers



Boca Raton Historical Society

Board of Trustees

Eunice Canty, Chairman
 Alice Lee Fraser, President
 Michele Broadfoot, Vice-President
 Carole Putman, Secretary
 Mark Ortlieb, Treasurer
 F. Lucille Barton
 Lillian D. Clarke
 Dr. Donald W. Curl
 Countess Henrietta deHoernle
 Katharine Dickenson
 Merle Haber
 Robert I. MacLaren II
 Peg McCall
 Alice K. McMullin
 Jan Middlebrook
 John Nash
 Joan Notes
 Sylvia Oliver
 Marylew Redd
 William Shubin
 Charles Steuber
 Sara Jane Sylvia
 Kate Toomey
 Elaine J. Wold

Honorary Trustees

David Ashe
 Joan Bream
 Patsy Chamberlain Hedrick
 Christine Critchfield
 J. Herman Dance
 George Elmore
 Myrtle Butts Fleming
 Dr. Charles Goby
 Tom Head
 Jane Lott
 Anne Merrill
 Flo O'Brien
 Nancy Pomar
 William Rutter
 Nancy Schmidt
 Jamie Snyder
 Doris Ann Stephens
 Robert Tylander
 Clement C. Winke

Staff

Susan McDermitt, Director
 Cindy Strasser
 Roman Scott

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Timeline of Boca Raton History
3. Pioneer Cook in Southeast Florida
4. Farming on the Florida Frontier
5. Women in Yamato
6. The 1920s - Growth and Community
7. The 1930s - Raising a Family in the Depression
8. The 1940s - The War Years
9. Post War - Back to the Home

Acknowledgements

The Boca Raton Historical Society wishes to thank the following for their contribution to this publication: Joanne M. Lloyd, Historian, Peg McCall, Archivist and especially to Martin Strasser for typesetting and production.



Group at Town Hall circa 1927. Lillian Race Williams foreground.
 Front row from left to right: Eula Raulerson, Ruby Bender, Clementine Brown, Beulah Butler, Mary Alice Lamont, Erma Habercorn, Pauline Raulerson, Mayor John Brown, George Akins, and B.B. Raulerson. Back row left to right: Mrs. C.W. Stokes, Peg Young, Florence Purdom, Audrey Purdom, Mamie Riley, John Cramer, Mamie Habercorn, Mrs. Bill Sherman, Mrs. George Young, Lorene Cramer, and Annie Raulerson.



Cindy Strasser in front of the Pioneer Era panel for the March 1993 exhibit, "Women in Boca Raton: Fifty Years of History."

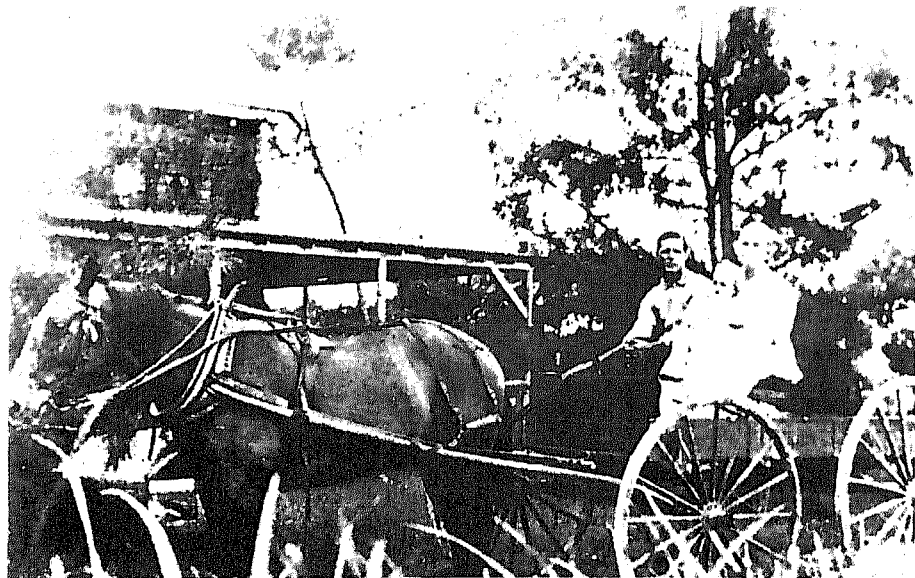
Introduction

Celebrating Boca Raton's Women and Their History

This volume of The Spanish River Papers grew out of the March 1993 exhibit at Town Hall to commemorate Women's History Month. Planned and executed by Cindy Strasser, the show traced the contributions to Boca Raton life by a group of amazing, yet rather typical, women of the community. From Lizzie Rickards who left a comfortable existence in Missouri to ultimately follow her husband to the tropical wilderness of South Florida to the gallant nurses who cared for the sick and wounded at the Boca Raton Air Field hospital during World War II, the exhibit highlighted the significant legacy of these women of Boca Raton. The American Association for State and Local History will honor the excellence of the exhibition with a **Certificate of Commendation** at its annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

This issue of The Spanish River Papers contains the slightly edited text from the exhibit, an excerpt from The Pioneer Cook in Southeast Florida, published by the Boca Raton Historical Society in 1975 and now out of print, and an essay by Joanne M. Lloyd, a on the Women of the Yamato Colony. Ms. Lloyd, a former graduate student at Florida Atlantic University, wrote her Master's Thesis on the origins of the Yamato Colony.

Donald W. Curl,
 Editor



Burt and Annie Raulerson and daughter Myrtle Lee
(the first white female born in Boca Raton) in front of the Chesebro farmhouse.



Perry Purdom and his wife Florence brought six children to Boca Raton.
The Purdom family left to right: Harry (front), Eula, Florence (mother), Ernestine (on lap),
Perry (father), Thelma, Viola, and Jewell. Perry, with help from daughters Eula and Viola,
worked on a vegetable farm as a sharecropper.

TIMELINE OF BOCA RATON HISTORY

- 1883 Workers begin to cut the East Coast Canal down the length of the Florida Peninsula by joining rivers, lagoons, and swamps to create an inland navigation canal.
- 1894 Henry Morrison Flagler brings his railroad to Palm Beach. Julia Tuttle is instrumental in persuading Flagler to continue the railroad to Miami.
- 1895 Captain Thomas Moore Rickards settles in Boca Raton. Later in the year, Lizzie Rickards and their five children join him. Flagler's railroad, now renamed the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC), reaches Boca Raton.
- 1899 Boca Raton's first post office opens.
- 1902 George Ashley Long, his wife Catherine, and three children move into the Rickards house.
- 1903 Jo Sakai founds the Yamato colony of Japanese farmers in northern Boca Raton.

A hurricane strikes the southeastern Florida Coast.

Frank H. and Jeanette Chesebro purchase sixty acres from Flagler's Model Land Company to grow pineapples.

Bert and Annie Raulerson settle in Boca Raton.
- 1906 Perry and Florence Purdom come to Boca Raton with their six children.
- 1908 George Long's packing house serves as a school for local children.
- 1914 William and Mamie Myrick build the house which is later named Singing Pines and is now the Children's Museum.
- 1915 Harley B. and Harriette Gates arrive from Vermont and build Palmetto Park Plantation.

George Long sets aside land along Dixie Highway to sell to African-American families for home construction. Pearl City is named for the Hawaiian Pearl variety of pineapples.

Bill and Peg Young move to Boca Raton and open one of the first grocery stores. Peg becomes the postmistress in 1916.
- 1918 Mrs. Hildreth Grey teaches school at the Yamato colony.

- 1919 Mrs. Clementine Brown teaches at the Yamato school.
- 1923 Alex Hughes, a co-founder of Pearl City, opens the Roadman Elementary School for African-American children.
- 1924 The Florida Land Boom begins.
- Boca Raton incorporates, sets city limits, and elects John G. Brown as first mayor.
- 1925 Mizner Development Corporation is founded for the development of Boca Raton. It builds the Administration Buildings on Camino Real.
- J.C. and Floy Mitchell build the Mitchell Arcade, the first large commercial structure in Boca Raton.
- By late in the year there is evidence that the Great Florida Land Boom has ended.
- 1926 The Ritz-Carlton Cloister Inn designed by Addison Mizner opens on February 6.
- The first Mizner designed houses in the subdivision later known as Old Floresta are completed.
- In September a major hurricane devastates south Florida.
- The City of Boca Raton asks William Alsmeyer to redesign Mizner's original city hall plans. Town Hall provides offices for city workers and a home for Old Betsy, the American LaFrance fire truck.
- 1927 The Mizner Development Corporation is bankrupt. Clarence Geist buys its assets and builds a \$3.5 million pink palace addition to the Cloister Inn which opens in January 1930 as the Boca Raton Club.
- 1930 The Florida East Coast Railway Depot is built under the direction of Clarence Geist.
- 1933 The Butts family starts a farming operation.
- 1942 The Boca Raton Army Air Field is established.
- 1944 J. Meyer Schine buys the Boca Raton Club which he opens in 1946 as the Boca Raton Hotel and Club.
- 1950 Under the patronage of Hildegard Schine, the Art Guild of Boca Raton is established.

THE PIONEER COOK IN SOUTHEAST FLORIDA

by Donald W. Curl

(excerpt from a 1975 publication of the Boca Raton Historical Society.)

By 1872 much progress had been made in settling the Great Plains. For over ten years the hardy homesteaders had left old homes, friends, and some would even say civilization, to brave the hardships of an isolated and often inhospitable land in the West. The prospect of free land, the lack of opportunities in the East, and the hope that the transcontinental railroad would soon bring the area into the mainstream of American life, all combined to pull the settlers westward.

The Great Plains (which had been shown on earlier maps as "The Great American Desert") marked a new experience in America's conquest of the continent. The rivers, streams, and springs of eastern America were missing, as was the timber for building houses, fencing fields, and heating homes. The West also fell subject to periodic droughts, pestilence such as locust and grasshoppers, and severe and long winters. Forced to grow crops in hard-to-break soil in reduced growing seasons, dependent on international fluctuations in prices, and what seemed the whims of the railroads in settling haulage rates, the life of the frontiersman alternated between an earthly purgatory and an earthly hell. In 1873 a Wall Street Panic ushered in a depression that plunged crop prices to unbelievably low levels and a familiar sight was the covered wagons moving eastward decorated with signs such as "In God we Trusted, in Kansas we Busted."

Although the Plains proved their inhospitableness to man, another area did beckon for a few adventuresome pioneers. In the years of depression, the sunny southeastern shores of Florida seemed almost like a paradise on earth. Tired of bitter northern winters, fearful of the economic situation, and seeing the growing unemployment lines in northern cities, a handful of settlers inaugurated the one hundred year process of turning a subtropical wilderness into a contemporary concrete wilderness.

While the earliest Western settlers arrived in covered wagons, or even pushed hand-carts, the south Florida pioneer came by sailboat. The journey was usually long and difficult, though on arrival the sunshine lived up to its promise and the soil was rich and fertile. The West proved a new experience to America's pioneers; south Florida seemed like a foreign land. While the West often had been inhospitable, the south Florida settler discovered a lush tropical land of great beauty and richness. The history of pioneer days in south Florida has generally been concerned with the railroad and hotel building activities of Henry M. Flagler and the early hunters or Indian traders. Rarely has the pioneer woman even been mentioned. As a group, pioneer women in south Florida probably endured as great hardships and as adverse conditions as did their western sisters. As isolated from their contemporaries as any Plains woman of the era, they had to battle bugs and mosquitoes which no other section knew, and they had to adopt a completely new lifestyle.

What made the lives of these women so doubly hard was that women in the North and West were just finding some relief from the drudgery of housekeeping. At the same time, the climate, the abundance of fish, wild game, and the ability to salvage from shipwrecks along the beaches, made the life of the pioneer man far easier than that of his northern contemporaries.

The first two women in the area around the shores of Lake Worth arrived at the beginning of the 1870s. One lived on Hypoluxo Island at the south end of the lake, the other a full day's journey away near the inlet at the north end. Thus the loneliness complained of by women confined to an all-male society on the western frontier was present for the women around the lake from the beginning. While many northern visitors and Florida boosters might talk of the tropical paradise, the early pioneer woman who had to keep house, rear her family, and provide daily meals, often had reason to doubt she lived in a paradise.

The earliest south Florida houses were constructed of timbers salvaged from the beach and roofed with palmetto fronds. Since Cedar Key and Daytona Beach had the closest saw mills, and the timbers were too large for easy transport, the fronds also usually provided the siding. While this construction made a cool dry house, the fronds became the home for many insects and sometimes even small snakes. Most houses had wood rather than sand floors, though the planks used often had deep cracks between them. For a housewife accustomed to the maintenance of a spotless northern home, her cabin in Florida meant endless frustrations.

Usually the cabin contained one room with a loft in the gable. In the largest houses there might be a partition across the second story to divide it into two bedrooms, with access almost always by ladder. The first school teacher in the area told of being assigned to live with a family of four or five boys, several girls, and two young men boarders. The one-room cabin had a bed in each corner and one in between on the two long walls. The teacher shared the bed of the twelve-year-old daughter. When the family prepared to retire on her first night she asked for some privacy. This seemed impossible, but finally the boys brought in the sail from the boat and draped it around her bed. Most of the settlers had arrived in very small sailboats and had been unable to bring any furniture. While the western woman might have a treasured family heirloom to allow her to remember better days, the south Florida woman had to be content with what her family could make. The beds would always be completed first. These might either be platforms attached to the walls or rough frames of two by fours with barrel staves. As there were few chickens, the mattresses were filled with shredded saw palmetto leaves. Boys and young men slept in the loft just on the mattresses. By necessity every bed had to be equipped with mosquito net of fine lawn or netting.

The only other furniture in the house was usually a homemade table, two benches, and some type of "safe" for keeping perishable food. The safe consisted of closed shelves designed to keep out flies but allow air to circulate around the food. The family might eat on a porch, or in some cases they might stretch a tarpaulin between trees to form an outdoor dining room.

Initially all cooking was done outside the house. At first the kitchen might be nothing more than a stone fireplace or just a pile of stones with the cooking done Indian style. When placed in the shade, the housewife's cooking tasks could be completed in more comfort than in the house, but on rainy days, the family had to endure cold meals. As soon as possible the settlers built separate kitchen shacks. These might have the advantage of being useable in all weather, but the housewife had a less comfortable job in the enclosure.

As soon as possible, stoves of various kinds were imported from the North. Many were the familiar large iron cookstoves which burned wood. Although they made satisfactory

stoves, they created many problems. They produced quantities of heat which made the cook's job most unpleasant. In addition, supplying the wood was a tedious job. The more common stoves burned kerosene. These stoves were lighter to transport and the heat could be more easily controlled. The ovens of the kerosene stoves were usually a separate unit that could be placed on one burner when needed. Unfortunately, these ovens usually did not produce the even heat needed for many dishes.

In order to keep out the flies and mosquitoes, which one traveler claimed "seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to torment humanity," netting was tacked to the wall openings when available. Otherwise empty fertilizer or flour sacks served as window screens. Neither solution did the job. Moreover, the coverings had to be replaced often. Then too, the sacks tended to block the breeze. Many families suffered without any protection and at night sat in the dark around a smudge fire in the hope of scaring the pests away. After the first years many families built open-sided frond thatched "summer houses" in Indian chickee style. As the chickees were completely open to the breeze they made a pleasant place to sit in the evening and to entertain guests.

In the earliest days there were neither churches nor schools. Historians have concluded that both institutions are necessary in a society for their civilizing roles. The pioneer woman made up for this omission. She acted as a tutor to her children until schools could be founded in the 1880s, and she worked for the establishment of Sunday Schools to meet in the settlers' homes. The product of her ventures allowed one traveler to remark that the people in southeastern Florida seemed more "intelligently alert than Florida's inlanders."

Some regions of America have developed a distinctive cuisine. An example is the creole cookery of New Orleans. The "cuisine" of south Florida is an amalgamation of many regions and countries and its uniqueness lies in the use of products that are limited to a subtropical area. The "hogs and hominy" dishes of the South are present, but never became the standard of the region. From the beginning south Florida attracted more settlers from the North and the Midwest than from Old Dixie. The pioneer cook traded recipes with other settlers and with the Indians. The influences of Cuba, the Caribbean and the Bahamas, whose cooks had used the products of the tropics for many years, added to the diversity to be found in south Florida recipes.

In the earliest years the south Florida housewife was forced to feed her family from imported staples and what the new land provided. Some cooks retreated to a monotonous routine of fried salt pork and baking powder biscuits covered with bacon grease for breakfast and more salt pork, blackeyed peas, sweet potatoes, and grits for dinner and supper.

When they could, most housewives determined to do better for their families. This was not always easy. The nearest store was at Sand Point, today named Titusville in honor of its earliest leading citizen. Since the three hundred mile round trip combined sailing on the ocean and inland streams in small boats, many pioneer men waited as long as possible to make the journey. With postponement, basic supplies would be exhausted and a family truly would be forced to live off the land. Many cooks were extremely resourceful. One, finding her barrel nearly empty and the flour tasting musty, invented a butter biscuit which her family claimed delicious. A shipwreck had cast a keg of butter onto the beach a short time before which had been buried in the sand under a shady tree to keep it cool. As the flour became musty the cook increased the amount of butter in her biscuits, much to the delight of her family.

When there were no other sources of money to purchase supplies the ocean beach became a great treasure house on which the settler could draw. Hurricanes had wrecked many ships along the shore and beachcombing gave the pioneer a stake to trade at the general store. With copper at fifteen cents a pound and brass, tin, and lead at five, a boat loaded with four or five hundred pounds of scrapmetal paid for enough supplies to last a month or more.

Generally, the settlers limited their purchases to the basics. Dried salt pork headed the list which included flour (usually Heckler's or Jewell Brothers' selfrising), corn meal, coffee, crackers, canned condensed milk (produced by the Borden Company), and salt and pepper. They sometimes bought cut loaf sugar although it was considered a great luxury since condensed milk was already sweetened and sugar cane was grown in the area very early.

Coffee was extremely expensive and difficult to keep in stock. For those times when it ran low one south Florida woman developed a substitute. She cut sweet potatoes into small pieces and baked them until charred. She then ground the charred pieces in a coffee mill and brewed it like regular coffee. The final product looked like coffee and tasted somewhat like Postum.

One problem faced by the early cook concerned seasoning her foods in the manner she had known in the North. While spices and herbs could be purchased at Sand Point and posed no great transportation problem, they were extremely expensive. Only salt and pepper were considered necessities. The pioneer cook soon learned that the leaves of the sweet bay, which grew wild all through southeast Florida, made an excellent substitute for green herbs. The wild sweet bay leaves could be used for seasoning in soups, stews, gravies, baked chicken dressings, and in many other ways.

The early settlers wished to be self-sufficient in as many ways as possible. One continuing problem was soap. The western pioneers made their own soap using leftover beef and pork fat. The south Florida settlers only rarely imported beef from the North and they used the pork drippings for cooking. They solved their problem when they found that one large old alligator contained enough clear white fat to make enough soap to last a family for six or more months.

The soap formula called for ashes collected from the old camp fires to be placed in a flour barrel set on legs. Fresh water poured over the ashes and then drained into a bucket under the barrel produced the necessary lye water. Extreme care had to be taken to insure that the water was fresh and the ashes contained no salt. The first experiments had failed because the ashes had been salty. A large iron kettle placed over a fire was filled with lye water and alligator fat. The mixture was boiled for about a day until the soap thickened. It then could be used as a soft soap. To make bars, this mixture could be placed in shallow pans and allowed to harden. A few drops of cologne in this part of the batch gave it some resemblance to the commercial facial variety. . . .

Loneliness was a condition of any frontier existence especially for the women. Holidays thus became a time to visit neighbors and to leave the daily routines. The first recorded Christmas celebration in south Florida took place in 1872 on the shores of Lake Worth. All ten residents of the region came together for a picnic. Their ability to picnic while their friends and relatives in the North shoveled snow seemed to make all of their sacrifices a little more bearable.

For this first Christmas dinner a possum had been fattened. When the coals of the campfire glowed the possum was placed in a Dutch oven with sweet potatoes and thin strips of salt pork. The oven was then covered with coals and the meat slowly cooked. The rest of the dinner consisted of freshly made biscuits with cane syrup from Cape Canaveral and prickly pear pie for dessert. Everyone agreed that the possum was tasty, and that the pie had a gorgeous color, but still everyone felt that turkey and mince pie or plum pudding would have made a more satisfying Christmas dinner. . . .

The woman who wished to feed her family a varied and balanced diet had many problems in the early years of settlement. Her resourcefulness was shown in the ways she invented substitutions and in the ways she used the foods available to her in the area. One problem faced by the pioneer cook in southeast Florida was the scarcity of chickens, and thus the lack of eggs. While eggs could be brought into the area in the winter months, during the summer the long trips and the extreme temperatures all combined to deprive the cook of one of the basic ingredients of cookery. The resourceful pioneer cook overcame this problem in several ways. In everyday recipes, such as pancakes, muffins, or cornbread, she made the discovery that corn meal mush or hominy grits could substitute for eggs. She cooked the mush or grits until they were very thick, though not stiff, and then used two tablespoons to take the place of each egg called for in the recipe. . . .

Although the pioneer cook was deprived of hen eggs during June, July, and August, she found a substitute in one of the great delicacies of early Florida life; turtle eggs. The "loggerhead" turtle came ashore at night in summer to dig a hole that usually held two to five hundred eggs about the size of a hen's egg. The turtle eggs' shells are soft and thus could be compressed into a small nest. The hunt for turtle eggs made it possible to add a very delicious and nutritious food to the pioneers' diet. Many a night was spent watching for turtles to come ashore. A settler had a particularly good night when he came upon a turtle that had just laid its eggs. Not only did the finder have the fresh eggs, but the turtle as well.

Florida law now protects the "loggerhead" and green turtles and imposes very stiff penalties for anyone disturbing the nests. As endangered species, these laws can be easily defended, though it should be remembered that there were large numbers of turtles, and the small population of pioneer days probably did not disturb nature's balance to any great degree. . . .

By the late 1880s life in southeast Florida had changed a great deal. Settlers no longer came in small sailboats with only a few meager possessions, but hired schooners to ship their household goods and lumber to build their houses. Stores had been established in the area and the housewife could now count on having her needs supplied without the trip to Sand Point. By 1893 and the arrival of Henry M. Flagler's railroad it can be said that the pioneer period had ended.

The pioneer period in south Florida lasted less than twenty years. The pioneers had established farms, stores, and tourist hotels. They had added rooms to their original cabins and often had imported lumber to build new houses. With the installation of running water and other conveniences, the pioneer enjoyed a more comfortable life than in the earlier years. Even so, it must be remembered that the later years would not have been possible without the drudgery, dedication, and spirit of the pioneer woman. History may remember the large scale activities of a Henry Flagler, but without the pioneer woman there would have been little reason to build the railroad down the Florida East Coast.



Margaret (Peg) Young at the Hillsboro Lighthouse. Peg was postmistress from 1915-16 and was known to knit during slow periods at the post office.



Catherine "Katie" Long, of Scot-Irish decent was married to Boca Raton's first appointed Mayor, George A. Long.



Harriette Gates with her children, Imogene Alice and baby Buddy.



Audrey Purdom, secretary to the Town Clerk, at Town Hall circa 1930s. Photo location is the Northwest corner of the library.

FARMING ON THE FLORIDA FRONTIER by Cindy Strasser

The first families in Boca Raton were farmers. Middle-class women came to Florida with their husbands to farm on the rich soil of the Florida frontier. Many worked side by side the men on the farms to grow, pack, and ship produce to northern markets. These women battled mosquitoes, bugs, sand, heat, and farm pests. Primarily wives and mothers, they raised and nursed children, cooked daily meals with what was available, canned local fruits and vegetables, made jellies, pickles, and catsup, washed the laundry outdoors on a rub board, ironed with heavy cast irons, and survived devastating hurricanes.

Typical houses of the pioneer period were small wood frame cottages. Electricity was considered a luxury. Most water came from a handpump in the yard, although a few houses had running water.

Leisure time was spent visiting neighbors, reading, writing letters, and going to the beach to hunt for turtle eggs or to have a family picnic. Home entertainment such as croquet was popular with the local families. Children found the open fields an ideal playground.

In addition to regular household duties made somewhat easier due to the installation of electricity and water, these wives and mothers actively engaged in running local family businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, and real estate offices. Unmarried daughters filled traditionally female occupations: teacher, clerk, and domestic servant. At the Ritz-Carlton Cloister Inn, women worked as chambermaids, lunch-time waitresses, switchboard operators, and secretaries. As journalists, postmistresses, and farm-hands, women contributed to the growth of the resort city.

Among these pioneer Boca Raton women could be found:

"Lizzie" Rickards, who left a two-story house in Ocala to join her husband, an engineer and surveyor, in the search for greater economic opportunity on the frontier and for the warm climate. Captain T.M. Rickards, Boca Raton's first citizen, built a two-story nine-room frame house for his family around 1897.

Jeanette "Nettie" Chesebro, came to Boca Raton in 1903 with her husband Frank and three children, Harry, Ruth, and Esther. A sewing machine, washing machine, organ, and phonograph were a few of the family belongings they brought from Michigan. The entire family helped on the farm growing beans, peas, beets, turnips, onions, tomatoes, and other produce which was packed and shipped North in crates. Nettie sometimes worked side by side with her husband grubbing, raking, and planting to make their farm a success. In later years, Nettie was bedridden and paralyzed from a back injury caused from lifting a heavy fertilizer sack to her husband.

Florence Purdom came to Florida with her husband Perry to help the Burt Raulerson family on their farm. When they arrived in 1905 there were five families settled in Boca Raton. Florence bore eleven children and raised the surviving eight in a typical frame farm house with kerosene lamps and a pitcher water pump in the yard. Perry did not allow Florence to work in the fields or outside the home. Because the sons were too young, the older daughters, Eula and Viola, helped with the farm work in addition to assisting their mother in the home with housework and the two babies. The family and field workers traveled to the fields west of town by wagon.

Audrey Purdom, daughter of Perry and Florence Purdom, worked as a clerk at Town Hall for twenty-five years. She was crippled by polio and drove a car with hand controls. An expert seamstress and dress-maker, she also supported herself in earlier years by sewing custom made clothes.

Annie Raulerson was known to everyone in town as "Aunt Annie." She and her husband Burt raised daughters Myrtle and Ivy in a two-story frame vernacular house on West Palmetto Park Road. The house weathered hurricanes and sheltered Army personnel during World War II and became the headquarters for WACS (Women's Army Corps).

Eula Purdom Raulerson at 15, married Charles Raulerson, 27, on the front porch of the Purdom family home. Charlie became the first police chief in Boca Raton. In the 1930s Eula drove the school bus, a job she held for thirty years. She also cooked at Boca Raton Elementary School. Like the many local residents and army wives, she volunteered at the watch tower on the beach during World War II.

Margaret "Peg" Young came to Florida from Scotland when W.C. "Bill" Young sent the money for his new bride to join him. The couple ran the small commissary at the corner of Dixie Highway and Palmetto Park Road. Peg bought two lots in Boca Raton at an auction and the Youngs purchased a pre-fabricated bungalow house with indoor plumbing and running water. Peg also became the postmistress, fourth class, a position she held for fifteen years. From 1933 to 1943 "Auntie Peg" was known to knit sweaters and socks while attending to the needs of the 250 to 300 Boca Raton residents.

During the war, a Defense Stamp Organization encouraged students and their families to buy U.S. Savings Stamps. On Thursdays, school children were escorted to the Post Office and Peg Young put the first stamp in each child's book. By January 1942, the school newspaper reported stamp sales of over \$70.00.

Harriette Gates came to Florida as a newlywed in 1915. Her husband Harley built their new home complete with indoor plumbing, running water, and a telephone. From Palmetto Park Plantation on Lake Boca Raton she would see ducks on the canal, alligators, and sea cows. Harriette was often terrified to be home alone in the woods and hid in the closet. During this time, the Ashley gang, a band of desperadoes, threatened lower East Coast residents from Miami to Indian River County.

Harley Gates, invited many prospective real estate clients to stay at Palmetto Park Plantation because there were no hotels in Boca Raton. As hostess and "innkeeper," Harriette's workload became a burden. Harley then built four guest cottages on the property which relieved her of the additional housework.

Harriette also wrote articles about local events for the Delray Beach News Journal, the Miami Herald, The Pelican (Boca Raton's first newsletter), and The Boca Raton News. After the real estate boom busted, Harley's real estate office on Federal Highway at Southeast Third Street (now demolished) became an antiques store run by Harriette.

Catherine "Katie" O'Hare Long, of Scot-Irish decent, had four children with George Ashley Long: George Ashley, Jr., Helen Mary, Harry, and F. Vinton, the first white male child born in Boca Raton, who was born when Katie was forty-five. Katie was known as a resourceful cook creating "heaven knows what cakes" with whatever ingredients were on hand. Fresh meat was not available at local stores and George hunted quail, duck, and doves for the family meals.

Eliza Townsend, with her husband William, tended the manually operated drawbridge on Palmetto Park Road. The couple lived in the bridegroom's house nearby.

Esther Chesebro has the distinction of being the only female teacher at the first Boca Raton one-room school to survive two years (1912-1914). With a temporary teaching certificate and a high school education, she taught eighteen students in grades one through eight.

Women in Yamato

by Joanne Lloyd

In December 1903, a young Japanese man named Jo Sakai visited Boca Raton. After graduation from New York University, Sakai proposed to build an agricultural community of Japanese in America. He first considered bringing Japanese farmers to the wide open spaces of Texas where they could farm rice more profitably than in their home country. Flourishing rice colonies already started by Japanese businessmen in southeastern Texas drew Sakai's interest as well as that of other young entrepreneurs in Japan. Instead of the Lone Star state, however, he chose southeastern Florida, a newly developed section of the state that eagerly sought out enterprising men such as Sakai.

With the assistance of Florida's most influential business and government leaders, Sakai laid the groundwork for his agricultural community. After a guided tour of the state, a meeting with Governor William Jennings, and offers of land from several northern counties, young Sakai visited Boca Raton where he selected a large parcel of land along the Hillsboro River. After informing local reporters that the colony's experimental crops would include rice, tea, and silk, Sakai returned to Japan to find the forty to fifty families who would become the first settlers for the Boca Raton colony.

Sakai had every reason to believe that his dream of building a Japanese community in Florida would work. His venture received the stamp of approval from everyone including the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Florida's Governor, Jacksonville's powerful Board of Trade, and, in particular, Florida's most dynamic business leader, Henry M. Flagler. Local residents expressed great enthusiasm for the undertaking as well. Sakai's story often made front page news in Jacksonville's Florida Times-Union, West Palm Beach's The Tropical Sun, and the Miami Metropolis. During this early stage of southeast Florida's development, the announcement of a few hundred Japanese moving into the area offered local reporters a genuine first page story.

The idea of building an ethnic community was not new to Floridians. The Model Land Company encouraged colony formation. At a time when Flagler sought to populate the land surrounding his new railway system, importing entire groups of foreign people offered a quick way to settle a large area. The city of Dania developed as a result of a colony of Danes who settled there at the turn of the century; Hallandale traces its roots to a group of Swedes. Because of remarkable agricultural strides made by experienced Japanese farmers in California, Floridians held great expectations for their Japanese colony.

Ironically, neither Sakai nor any of his first recruits knew anything about farming. As the sons of families who had once been members of the elite samurai class, several received their education at prestigious Japanese and American universities, while a few operated successful silk businesses in Japan. Even though they had no horticultural experience, these young entrepreneurs aimed to experiment with new crops and innovative farming methods.

Sakai encountered problems from the moment he returned to Japan. Because of the ongoing war with Russia, the Japanese government placed restrictions on emigration. Only businessmen and students received passports. Fortunately, Sakai had friends in high places in Japan as well as Florida. With the help of these government officials,

Sakai circumvented the passport issue by listing his recruits as students. Finding families willing to pick up and move to Florida proved to be Sakai's most difficult obstacle. Unlike thousands of Japanese men who came to America with intentions of working only one or two years before returning home, Sakai wanted to make Florida a permanent home. He realized that the key to bringing stability to the colony was families. The biggest setback to getting the colony started was Sakai's inability to persuade entire households to leave Japan. By the end of 1904 Sakai succeeded in recruiting fifteen bachelors who he hoped would one day bring wives to Florida.

Women started to come to the colony in 1906. Instead of all at once as Sakai envisioned, young wives arrived one at a time over the course of many years. When one of the bachelors decided to marry, he returned to Japan where, with the help of family, friends, and perhaps a go-between, he looked for a bride. After an exchange of photographs, a formal introduction, and family approval, wedding plans were made. Following the ceremony, the couple traveled to Yokohama where they boarded a steamer for the two week Pacific crossing. Upon arrival in the port cities of Seattle or Portland, the newlyweds bought passage for an eastbound train. After another week on the road and a few train transfers, the journey finally ended in the city of Boca Raton which at this time was not much more than a train depot surrounded by a few experimental orange groves. We can only imagine the trepidation felt by a new bride at the end of her month-long journey as she stood on the dusty platform of the train station next to her new husband in a foreign country.

Actually, the very first woman to arrive at the colony was not Japanese, but an American woman from New York who was married to a Japanese farmer. The diary of Frank Chesebro, a Boca Raton pioneer, furnishes the only information known about a Mrs. Murakami who arrived in March 1906. The diary indicates that Mrs. Murakami became a close friend of Esther Chesebro and often visited the Chesebro home. The last journal entry concerning the colony's first woman indicates that domestic life did not run smoothly for the Murakamis. On July 7, 1908, Mr. Murakami left for New York to "make up" with his wife. After this entry, Chesebro makes no other comments concerning the Murakami family. Perhaps two years of pioneer life was all that Mrs. Murakami could bear.

When Jo Sakai's wife arrived in Boca Raton in the autumn of 1906, she entered a world much different from that she left behind. A young pretty girl of nineteen, Sada Kawashima came from a former samurai family in Zeze, Shiga Prefecture, Japan. In common with many Japanese marriages, Sada's introduction to Jo took place through a formal meeting arranged by a go-between. Impressed by the young handsome Sakai, Sada willingly left behind the comfortable world she knew to venture into a life of uncertainty and physical hardship. Sada surely had doubtful moments upon her arrival in Boca Raton. The first houses in the colony were not much more than hastily built wooden shacks and food was still being prepared outdoors. How different this was for a young girl used to having a house full of servants. Nevertheless, Sada stayed and learned how to survive as a pioneer woman. Her first child, a son named Hiroshi, died in 1909. However, later that year Sada gave birth to the first of the five daughters she would have while living in Florida. When Jo Sakai died in 1924, his widow returned with her daughters to Japan. Sada lived for fifty-six more years until she died in 1980.

In 1909 Sakai's brother, Henry Tamemasu Kamiya, decided that the time had come to bring a wife to Yamato. He returned to Miyazu, the seaside village where he and Jo lived before coming to America, and married Etsu Oishi, a kindergarten teacher. When Etsu arrived, she found life a little better than Sada had three years earlier. The colony, now officially named Yamato, had its own train depot, post office, and a one-room school house. By this time at least two other Japanese wives lived in the thirty person colony. The 1910 census reveals that Clara Tahara, a French woman married to F. Tahara, lived in Yamato with two children. According to the Chesebro diary, a Mrs. Onishi also resided in Yamato.

The Kamiyas helped boost the population of the fledgling colony by having six children in ten years. While Henry stayed busy operating his grocery store on Dixie Highway, Etsu ran the busy household and used her skills as a former educator to teach her children of their Japanese heritage. On Sundays, Etsu and other Yamato wives prepared delicious picnic lunches for everyone to enjoy at the beach. The children fished for fresh lobsters, crabs, and fish and then picked wild berries that would later be churned into homemade ice cream. Life in Yamato had its pleasures; it had heartache as well. Etsu saw her first home destroyed by fire in 1914 and her second house leveled by a later hurricane. Several years after this, her oldest son, Rokuo, died in a motorcycle accident. When Etsu died in 1936, she and her husband Henry were among the last strongholds of the Yamato colony.

In 1915 when Naka Yamauchi arrived from Japan, the colony's population lingered at less than fifty. Some settlers left in discouragement after several years of bad luck. Malaria took the lives of some settlers in 1906 and a pineapple blight in 1908 nearly killed Yamato's pineapple business. Mosquitoes, torrential rain, and hot, humid summers caused others to leave. More importantly, however, stringent restrictions placed on Japanese immigration ended Sakai's dream of bringing large numbers of Japanese to America. Yet, some stout-hearted women such as Jinzo Yamauchi, continued to follow their new husbands to Yamato. In 1921 Hideo Kobayashi, who had lived in Florida since 1907, escorted his new bride, Umeko, to Yamato. The Kobayashis and their four children lived in Yamato until 1942 when the government confiscated their 500 acre farm for the building of the Boca Raton Army Air Field. In the years following the 1924-25 Florida land boom, at least two other families decided to leave the colony. Gengoro and Jun Yoshida moved to Jacksonville, while the Ashida family returned to Japan. After her marriage to Susumu Kobayashi in 1922, Suye Matsumoto Kobayashi became one of the last Yamato brides.

For each of these women, the choice of marrying a Yamato man was a difficult decision. Thousands of women left their homes in Japan to become the "picture brides" of Japanese men who had settled on the Pacific Coast. Assimilation was easier for these brides because they found support from the hundreds of other Japanese women already there. The first brides coming to Florida were true pioneers who lived in primitive conditions with only the aid of their new husbands and perhaps one or two other women.

Actually, life may have been better for the women who chose to leave their country for Yamato as the social position of women in Japan has only recently begun to approach equality. The stereotype of a quiet Japanese woman walking ten paces behind her husband stems from centuries of women doing just that. Wives stayed at home while their husbands enjoyed a social life that included dining out as well as stops at local nightclubs. Even clothing styles dictated that women stay behind the times.

While Japanese men exchanged traditional attire for western clothing at the turn of the century, women continued to wear kimonos until the mid-1920s. For Yamato women, westernization came sooner.

On the Florida farm, the Yamato women worked side by side with their husbands. Although they did not labor in the fields, they helped by preparing food for the field hands. Wives often accompanied their husbands on trips to Miami or West Palm Beach. Young brides exchanged their silk kimonos for western clothing as soon as they reached Florida. Susumu Kobayashi warned his new bride, Suye, not to pack kimonos since they would be useless where she was going.

When looking at photographs of the Yamato wives we see the soft, smiling faces of pretty, young women dressed in the latest fashions proudly standing or sitting next to their husbands. What we can not see is the loneliness, hardship, and despair that these young girls felt at the difficult times. Malaria, mosquitoes, and hurricanes scared away more than a few of the colony's bachelors. Yet, the wives stayed with their families in Florida. Perhaps what best describes the women of Yamato is a passage from Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto's 1926 book, *A Daughter of the Samurai*. Her beloved grandmother is described as being "soft as silk floss, and quite as strong." Sakai was correct in believing that he needed women to give his colony strength and stability. Even though Yamato never fulfilled Sakai's dreams, it continued for many years beyond the time when discouragement would have caused its lonely young men to pull up stakes.



Henry Etsu Kamiya with child.
Photo courtesy of the Morikami Museum and
Japanese Gardens.



Umeko Kobayashi's Japanese passport photo.
Photo courtesy of the Morikami Museum and
Japanese Gardens.

THE 1920s - GROWTH AND COMMUNITY

by Cindy Strasser

The lure of cheap land, the warm climate, post World War I prosperity, and the popularity of the automobile brought many settlers to Boca Raton. Architect Addison Mizner transformed the town into an exclusive winter resort through the Mizner Development Corporation. The opening of the Cloister Inn in 1926 and the land boom had an enormous impact on the economy of the agricultural community. With the creation of new jobs, buildings, and permanent residents, Boca Raton grew to a population of around 600. The town incorporated, built Town Hall (1927) and elected its first Mayor. While the land boom and Addison Mizner put the city on the map, women were the anchor of the community.

Women's cultural, social, and educational activities flourished in the growing community. The Woman's Club, formed in the late 1910s, promoted "general philanthropic work, along practical and educational lines." Monthly meetings at Town Hall gave women the opportunity to socialize. By the mid-1920s, a *Palm Beach Post* article boasted twenty-eight club members. The group sponsored plays, dances, art and literary lectures, musical performances, craft bazaars, and a tree planting campaign. It also organized the first library upstairs at Town Hall.

Boca Raton had an organized League of Women Voters by the mid-twenties with three goals: general social reform; the elimination of state laws that discriminated against women; and the education of women to their responsibilities as citizens. Voter lists indicate that the newly franchised women in Boca Raton exercised their right to vote.

The flapper, with cropped hair, short straight skirt, lean torso, and cigarette in her hand, became the symbol of the new woman of the 1920s. Rejecting Victorian culture and its strict sexual taboos, the flapper epitomized youth, adventure, and healthy sex. In 1920 the first Miss America was crowned in Atlantic City. The beauty contest became enshrined as an American institution. The contest winners became symbols of what the American woman should be: soft, pliant, and radiantly healthy.

Advertising doubled in the 1920s and found a major market in women who were responsible for the dispersal of the family income. Glamorized advertisements depicted women in the home as model consumers for an array of products. Even Addison Mizner tried to tap into the "women's market" by directing real estate advertisements to "Mrs. Florida."

Freedom from heavy, constricting clothing was one of the new freedoms women enjoyed. The new breed of American Woman in the 1920s had the right to economic independence, individual choice, and the combination of marriage and career.

Floy Mitchell and her husband J.C. lived in a house when they first arrived in Boca Raton equipped with a two-burner oil stove, a small ice box, a hand pump in the sink and a little out-house in the back with a half-moon cut out in the door. They took baths in a zinc tub with water heated on the stove. Laundry was done outside in the yard with a tub and rub board. Another tub filled with boiling water was used for rinsing. Ice was brought in daily by Tony Brenks, the only grocery store in town.

Floy Mitchell attended college in Birmingham, Alabama. She was the first woman in that state to run a bank at a branch in Cooks Springs. In 1926 J.C. Mitchell built the Mitchell Arcade, the first large commercial building in Boca Raton, and the family lived in an apartment above with electricity and bathrooms. Floy's experience in bookkeeping and finance helped her husband run their real estate and insurance agency while raising their young sons, John and William.

In the years of the Depression, the Mitchells lived on five dollars a week. Floy Mitchell made dresses out of material that cost ten cents a yard. With trims and buttons added, the total cost of the dress was fifty cents. Floy used the dress scraps to make articles for the annual church bazaar.

Floy Mitchell was the first woman on the Boca Raton City Council when she was appointed to complete the unexpired term of a council member. She helped establish the first Baptist congregation in Boca Raton and was a pioneer in organizing what later became Bibletown.

Clementine Peterson Brown earned money waiting tables at her boarding house and teaching while working on her Bachelor of Science degree from Florida Southern College in Lakeland. In 1915, she married John Brown who became the first Mayor of Boca Raton. She had one daughter, Martha E. "Betty," and a son, John, Jr.

Clementine taught at the one-room school house in Boca Raton, the Yamato School, and the Boca Raton Elementary School. Teaching was interrupted to raise a family until 1933. Because her husband was unable to find employment, Clementine went back to teaching. An argument between her husband and Clarence Geist, owner of the Boca Raton Club, prevented Clementine from obtaining a teaching position in Boca Raton. She commuted to cities around Palm Beach County rising at 5 a.m. and returning late in the evening or sometimes staying away all week and returning on the weekend. Her income supported the family and paid for the taxes on the farm.



Mrs. Floy Mitchell and son Billy in front of the Mitchell Arcade circa 1933.
The family had an apartment on the second floor.



Clementine Brown and John G. Brown and baby Betty, 1928.

THE 1930s - RAISING A FAMILY IN THE DEPRESSION

by Cindy Strasser

The end of the land boom in Florida in 1926, the 1926 and 1928 hurricanes, and the stock market crash of 1929, all combined to make life difficult. Throughout the nation, the economy was the focus of attention. Women were called upon to help their country through the Depression by becoming frugal housewives. Boca Raton women provided food for their families during these lean years with their own vegetable gardens and the bounty of local farms. Canning fruits and vegetables, sewing the family clothing, and bartering for what they lacked in either goods or services, women created stability within the family.

The return to traditional femininity was evident in the popular fashions. New corsetry appeared and emphasized small waistlines and well-defined bosoms. Free-flowing, long, "lady-like" dresses defined the well-groomed woman of the 1930s.

Homemaking, husband and family, and the attainment of beauty were reinforced in the Depression and New Deal years. Eleanor Roosevelt became the primary spokesperson for women and minorities. Her radio broadcasts, newspaper columns, books, and speeches supported the popular belief that a woman's first responsibility was to her family. Many women remained at home, heeding society's dictate that married women ought not to work. For those who could find jobs, as throughout the Twentieth century, the majority were in the clerical field.

In Boca Raton, there were two main employers in the community: The Boca Raton Club and the Butts Farms.

The Butts Farms operation began in western Boca Raton in 1933. The farm, specializing in growing beans, included a general store, worker housing, and a school. The majority of the 400 workers (up to 900 during harvest season) were migratory African-Americans and Hispanics. Many Pearl City residents depended on the Butts Farms for employment in the 1930s and 1940s.

Pearl City was founded by Boca Raton pioneer George Long in 1915 when he set aside fifteen acres of land to serve as a housing section for the African-American field hands who worked in sharecropping arrangements with white farmers. The settlement was coined "Pearl City" from a type of pineapple which was shipped from a nearby packinghouse. In the 1920s and 1930s many African-American families migrated to Boca Raton to take advantage of higher farm wages and the opportunity to make a better living.

In addition to farm labor, Pearl City women found employment as laundresses, domestic servants, and cooks—performing low status labor for local white families and seasonal tourists. The Butts Farm, a major employer of African-American field hands in the 1930s, provided shotgun housing, a general store, and a church for the workers. Trucks came in the morning to pick up entire families to work in the fields clearing, planting, and picking vegetables. With the coming of the Army Base in 1942, African-Americans found many jobs in restaurants as dishwashers and cooks' helpers. In white soldiers' homes in the Floresta neighborhood, women worked as cooks and maids.

Pearl City residents built the Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1920 and the Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1921. Women played key roles in the church and organized church socials, cooked for gatherings and fund-raisers, and taught Sunday School.

Lola Zimmerman came to Boca Raton in 1925 with her husband Louie and nine-year-old daughter Lucille. Louis started the Boca Raton Construction Company, but the real estate collapse prevented him from finding regular employment. Lola opened a restaurant, the Palms Cafe, on one side of his office building. The cook used a kerosene stove and pumped water from the back yard. At night the cafe was lighted with kerosene lamps. The dishwashing seemed "endless." Lola raised ducks, geese, turkeys, and chickens for the restaurant. A waitress, dishwasher, and cook helped out, but Lola often worked long hours running the restaurant alone.

In 1935 Zim's Restaurant was opened in a two-story building on Federal Highway. A bar, the first in Boca Raton, was added. When Louie went to Tennessee to work during World War II, Lola Zimmerman operated Zim's, a favorite spot for locals, military personnel, and tourists.

Margaret Olsson and her husband Johnny raised six children during the Depression. Margaret helped start a Cub Scout troop and was a leader for seventeen years. She served for over ten years as a Sunday School teacher and was the first person in Boca Raton to receive a lifetime membership in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). A frugal housewife, Margaret sewed clothes for herself and the children and budgeted seven dollars a month for the grocery bill to feed her large family. During the 1940s and 1950s, Margaret ran the swimming program for the City of Boca Raton. During the war, Margaret was a Director for the Woman's Civil Defense. In 1955, she became the first editor of the Boca Raton News.

Nettie Hutkin helped her husband run Hutkin's Grocery Store which opened in 1937. She worked twelve hour days for four years. The store operated on credit and billed customers twice a month. Most were African-American and white maintenance workers at the Boca Raton Club. When families had a baby, the Hutkin's would help them out and wait until they could pay their bill. The standard price for a baby delivery was ten dollars.

Florence Brown sold homemade sandwiches in Brown's Sundries, a drug and sundries store with a soda fountain, which opened in 1931. With hours from 6:30 in the morning until six in the evening, the store was open seven days a week. Florence later opened a lunchroom in Palm Beach to help the family make ends meet. Known as "Mom" Brown, her clientele increased and business expanded into a restaurant. After the repeal of prohibition in 1934, the Browns added a package liquor store and a bar. Brown's became a favorite local hang-out for musicians and tourists.

Natalie Swanson Butts, of Mount Dora, Florida, married August Butts when she was twenty-years-old. While her husband ran the farming operation, Natalie raised four children: Jeanette, Harold (H.L.), Clarence (C.E.), and Myrtle. She maintained the household in Fort Lauderdale and was a member of the Park Temple Methodist Church and the Fort Lauderdale Garden Club. Natalie was a constant source of support and inspiration to her husband and family.

Lillian Race Williams, perhaps Boca Raton's most notorious citizen, was born an only child into a prestigious, religious family in Granville, New York. Stubborn and strong-willed, she followed her parents to Florida shortly after her marriage to Arthur Williams. A graduate of the Troy Conference Academy, Lillian was a talented soprano with aspirations of becoming a concert performer. Although this dream was never realized, in part due to her protective parents, Lillian sang throughout her life as entertainment for guests and in the church choir.

The separation and eventual divorce from her husband caused her emotional anguish as well as a financial burden. She was supported by her parents until 1934 when they lost their money through illness, poor financial management, and the Depression. With no financial support from Arthur and the death of her father, Lillian and her mother were forced to sell wedding gifts to make ends meet.

By 1939 Lillian Race Williams was taking in roomers to support herself and her ill mother at the home she named "Singing Pines" for the sound of the wind passing through the Australian pine trees on her property. With the outbreak of World War II, and the building of the Boca Raton Air Field, Lillian had a full house of wives and girlfriends of servicemen. The demand for rooms was so great, Lillian put up cardboard partitions throughout the small house and even allowed one soldier to build an 8x12 cabin on the property and rented it for five dollars a month. In 1943 Lillian had seventeen boarders and she slept outside on a corner of the porch.

Lillian did all of the work of running a boarding house by herself: washing clothes in the back yard in a wash tub, cooking meals on a kerosene stove, chopping wood, maintaining the lawn, and house repairs as well as general housekeeping. After the war, the number of boarders dwindled to occasional winter tourists and workers. Lillian's financial difficulties returned with the reduced income. Her diaries, poetry, scrapbooks, and letters reveal the importance of friendships in her life, her deep faith in God, and the sorrow she felt because she could not financially afford to maintain her "Singing Pines."



Lillian Race Williams' wedding photograph.



Lillian Race Williams in her roadster in the 1930s. She was known to drive around town in her car singing at the top of her operatic voice with her dog barking out the back window.



Lola Zimmerman and her waitress in the Palms Cafe.



Estelle Glades, daughter of Stella Glades and granddaughter of Sallie and Jasper Dolphus.



Belle Demery (seated), the first black child born in Boca Raton, and Sarah Demery Colden.



Lillian Race Williams rented rooms in her home "Singing Pines" to Army wives and girlfriends. Housing was so scarce in Boca Raton during World War II, she put up cardboard partitions throughout the small house to supplement her income.

1940s - THE WAR YEARS

by Cindy Strasser

During World War II (1941-1945) more than six million women went to work for the first time around the country. To persuade women out of their homes to fill jobs vacated by men, newspapers, magazines, radio, and movies created "Rosie the Riveter." Glamorizing women temporarily at work, a steady stream of propaganda in the media encouraged women to participate in the war effort. This national heroine, assured women that working in the defense industry did not jeopardize their traditional femininity. Whereas a decade earlier women were made to feel guilty for working and taking a job away from a man, now a woman felt guilty if she did not at least raise a victory garden.

Women in the Community

Civilians worked for the army in all offices and departments required by the academic and quartermaster departments and the post engineers. Local residents became dependent on the Air Base for employment with the Army Air Corps or at local businesses which provided goods and services to army personnel and their families. In addition, many used the recreational and medical facilities on the base. First rate shows in the area by Big Band entertainers stationed in town were a treat for all.

Boca Raton residents interacted with military personnel and families at local bars and stores and through volunteer work with the Red Cross and Civil Defense. Local women and army wives volunteered as spotters at the beach watchtower for three hour shifts searching the shipping lanes for enemy submarines, spies and aircraft.

From the beginning of the war, women's activities were suffused with a nationalistic fervor. Domestic tasks were organized around the needs of the economy for scarce materials. Food supplies were stretched with "victory gardens," supplies of meat, sugar, and gasoline were rationed, metal toothpaste tubes and tin cans were saved and recycled, war bonds were bought and sold by women, consumer purchases were postponed, and lights in the home were conserved. Most importantly, women entered the labor force in record numbers.

Women in Uniform

From the first days of World War II, women served their country in the military. Labor shortages in the military demanded that women be allowed to serve. Women proudly wore a military uniform—the traditional symbol of masculinity—as members of the armed service organizations: Women's Reserve of the U.S. Naval Reserve a.k.a. Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard Reserve (SPARS), U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve, Women's Army Corps (WACS), Army Hostess and Librarian Service, the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, Women's Reserve of the U.S. Coast Guard, and Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASPS).

In November 1942 some of the first military personnel stationed at the Boca Raton Air Field were nurses. Many families came to Boca Raton. Uprooted by national mobilization, women moved across the United States into unfamiliar places.

Volunteer War Work

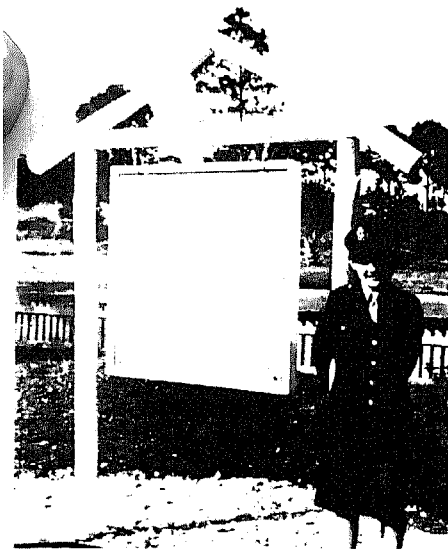
The Red Cross trained women volunteers in first aid, home nursing, and emergency preparedness. Knitting sessions sponsored by the organization were held at Town Hall. Under the direction of Mrs. Harold Butts and Mrs. T.M. Giles, a Red Cross sewing room was opened in the Mitchell Arcade for National Defense volunteer work. In Boca Raton a Junior Red Cross was organized for girls to participate in the war effort. They sponsored dinners and made stuffed toys that were shipped to a British hospital.

Pauline Aylward worked from 1939 to 1940 at The Breakers in Palm Beach. She was the first woman to run the elevator and trained other women to do the job. Employees boarded at the hotel during the season and wages were twenty dollars a month. Many women were employed as waitresses in the Cathedral Dining Room of the Boca Raton Club.

Helen Howard organized the first Girl Scout troop and was active in the Methodist Church. She was awarded a Certificate of Honorable Service by the Air Force for volunteering to keep watch at the tower on the beach.

Diane Benedetto, nee **Imogene Alice Gates**, born into a family living on the Florida frontier, went to local schools until the age of eleven. She attended boarding school in Orlando until graduation from high school. Afterwards, she went to Miami to pursue her dream of a theatrical career. From 1939 to the 1950s she worked in show business as an entertainer in nightclubs around the country.

Edith Mize Lewis served as a Field Nurse for seven months at the Boca Raton Air Base Station Hospital. She went on to become a Flight Nurse, flying in more than fifty combat missions and earning the Air Medal, the American Theater Service Medal, and the European African Eastern Service Medal.



Edith Mize Lewis in Boca Raton circa 1942.



Beauty Queen Dorothy Steiner.
In the Post War years, the cake became the
symbol of domesticity.

Post War - Back to the Home

Immediately after the war, the emphasis was on domesticity. "Rosie the Riveter" was replaced by the homemaker as the national feminine model. When the men returned, women were asked to leave their factory jobs and were sent home to lead private lives. Even women who needed their job to support themselves were laid off. The war years improved the economy, built up consumer demand, and increased the expectation that every American could enjoy a middle class standard of living.

Popular television shows glamorized housewives in shows such as "Donna Reed," "I Love Lucy," and "Father Knows Best." With four and five children the norm, the Baby Boom generation was created. By the 1950s, the joys of motherhood, romantic love, and marriage were exalted. The suburban housewife behind the wheel of a station wagon became the symbol of the American female ideal.

The masculine look worn during the war years was quickly replaced by the feminine "baby doll" look introduced by Christian Dior in 1947. Dresses featured bouffant skirts with crinoline petticoats, a full, emphasized bosom, a cinched waist, and high heels with pointed toes.

Hildegard Schine invited the town residents to a party to see the hotel building after the Schines bought the Boca Raton Club in 1948. She became friends with local women and joined a group who aspired to open a library. The second floor of Town Hall was turned into a small library. When the space was found inadequate, the group organized the Art Guild to raise funds for a library building. Art shows, musicals, card parties, teas, and various benefits generated the funds for the library building.

The Art Guild became the Boca Raton Museum of Art. With her friend Laverne Mouw, she headed a fundraising campaign of musicals to benefit the Methodist Church building fund. After the money was raised the friends discovered that neither one was a Methodist.

Myrtle Butts Fleming, daughter of August and Natalie Butts, contributed her time, effort, and skills to numerous local clubs and organizations: The Boca Raton Toy Clinic, The Art Guild, The Music Guild, The Boca Raton Garden Club, The Florida Atlantic University Volunteer League, Debbie Rand, and the Presbyterian Church. She volunteered at the first library upstairs at Town Hall, fund-raised for the Heart Fund, and was a spotter at the watch-tower on the beach during WWII. The **Myrtle Butts Fleming Award** is presented annually by the Boca Raton Historical Society to an outstanding volunteer.

Dorothy Steiner won almost every beauty contest imaginable, capturing the titles of Florida Citrus Queen, Bicycle Queen, and Miss Florida. She went on to the Miss America finals.



Myrtle Butts Fleming, daughter of August and Natalie Butts, Old Floresta, 1945.



Among the volunteers to fund and build both a library and art guild were (left to right) Helen Mann, Hildegard Schine, and Eleanor Bebout.



Line up of nurses at the Nurses Station Hospital, Boca Raton Air Field, 1-10-43.



Boca Raton Girl Scout Troop at the pavillion at the end of Palmetto Park Road.



Diane Benedetto



Station Hospital in Boca Raton. Lt. Louise Findley, Glendora Pullin, Lt. Carolyn Fergus O'Connor, Anne R. Maguire, and Dorothy Hlucky.



Esther Chesebro



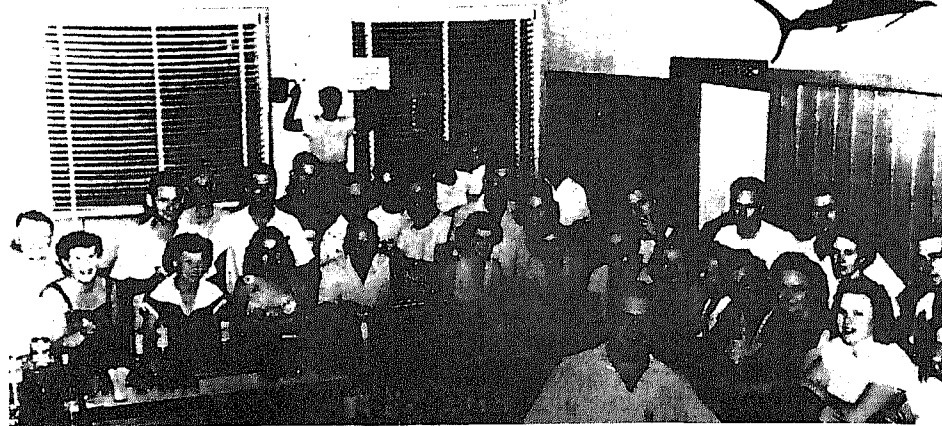
Peg Young



Church Bazaar, circa 1920s



Cloister Inn circa 1920s
Helen Howard and Harriette Gates



Zim's Bar a popular spot for the military, locals and northern tourists, was run by Lola Zimmerman

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boca Raton History

- Benedetto, Diane. "Childhood Memories." The Spanish River Papers (October 1975). Boca Raton Historical Society Archives, Town Hall, Boca Raton.
- Britt, Lora Sinks. My Gold Coast: South Florida in Earlier Years. Palatka, Florida: Brittany House, 1984.
- Curl, Donald W. and John P. Johnson. Boca Raton, A Pictorial History. Virginia Beach, Virginia: The Donning Company/Publishers, 1990.
- Curl, Donald W. Mizner's Florida: American Resort Architecture. New York and Cambridge: The Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1984.
- Palm Beach County: An Illustrated History. Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, 1986.
- "Boca Raton's First 'Citizens.'" Brown Wrapper Supplement, Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel, August 10, 1980.
- "Boca Raton's Singing Pines Museum." Brown Wrapper Supplement, Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel, January 20, 1980.
- "The Butts Farms of Boca Raton." Brown Wrapper Supplement, Fort Lauderdale News-Sun Sentinel, September 14, 1980.
- "Floy and J.C. Mitchell." Brown Wrapper Supplement, Fort Lauderdale News-Sun Sentinel, May 10, 1981.
- The Pioneer Cook in Southeast Florida. Boca Raton: Boca Raton Historical Society, 1975.
- Davis, Karen. Public Face-Private Lives: Women in South Florida—1870-1910s. Miami: Pickering Press, 1990.
- Holst, Ella Elizabeth. "The Life of a Boca Raton Woman." The Spanish River Papers (Spring 1986).
- Johnson, Stanley. Once Upon A Time: The Story of Boca Raton. Miami: Arvida Corporation, 1979.
- Knott, James R. "Backward Glances of a Pioneer." Brown Wrapper Supplement, Palm Beach Post-Times, August 12, 1984.
- "The Story of a Pioneer Woman." Brown Wrapper Supplement, Palm Beach Post-Times, April 5, 1981.
- Nichols, James Hartley. "Ethel Sims Pierce." Brown Wrapper Supplement, Palm Beach Post-Times, January 11, 1981.
- Pierce, Charles W. Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida. Edited by Donald W. Curl. Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970.
- Pratt, Theodore. The Story of Boca Raton. St. Petersburg: Great Outdoor Publishing Co., 1969.
- Waldek, Jackie Ashton. Boca Raton: A Romance of the Past. Boca Raton: The Bicentennial Committee of Boca Raton, 1981.
- Boca Raton: From Pioneer Days to the Fabulous Twenties. Boca Raton: Dedication Press, 1979.
- "How Boca Helped Win the War." Boca Raton Magazine (March/April 1982).
- Wells, Sharon. "Pearl City: An Analysis of the Folk History." The Spanish River Papers (1986-87).



Margaret Olson, the first editor of the Boca Raton News



Clementine Brown receiving the Freedom Award

Further Readings in Women's History

- Anthony, Carl Sferrazza. First Ladies. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990.
- Armitage, Susan, and Elizabeth Jameson. The Women's West. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987.
- Banner, Lois W. Women in Modern America: A Brief History. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
- American Beauty. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983.
- Blashfield, Jean F. Hellraisers, Heroines, and Holy Women. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.
- Brown, Dee. Women of the Wild West. London and Sydney: Pan Books, 1972.
- Chafe, William H. The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Drago, Harry. Notorious Ladies of the Frontier. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1969.
- Dubberman, Martin, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds. Hidden from History. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.
- Fischer, Christiane. Let Them Speak for Themselves: Women in the American West 1840-1900. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977.
- Forbes, Malcolm, and Jeff Bloch. Women Who Made A Difference. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.
- Fowler, William. Woman on the American Frontier. Hartford: S.S. Scranton and Company, 1879.
- Fox, Mary Virginia. The Women Who Shaped the West. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1991.
- Griffin, Lynne, and Kelly McCann. The Book of Women: 300 Notable Women History Passed By. Holbrook, Massachusetts: Bob Adams, Inc., 1992.
- Jeffrey, Julie Roy. Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880. New York: Hill and Wang, 1979.
- Moffat, Mary Jane, and Charlotte Painter, eds. Revelations: Diaries of Women. New York: Random House, 1974.
- Norton, Mary Beth. Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experiences of American Women, 1750-1800. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980.
- Richie, Elinor. Eminent Women of the West. Berkeley: Howell North Books, 1975.
- Sargent, Shirley. Pioneers in Petticoats: Yosemite's Early Women, 1856-1900. Los Angeles: Trans-Anglo Books, 1966.
- Scott, Anne Firor. The Southern Lady From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Spruill, Julia Cherry. Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1972.
- Stewart, Elinore Pruitt. Letters of a Woman Homesteader. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914.
- Stratton, Joanna L. Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981.
- Stephens, Autumn. Wild Women: crusaders, curmudgeons and completely corsetless ladies in the otherwise Victorian era. Berkeley: Conari Press, 1992.
- Zahniser, J.D., ed. And Then She Said . . . Vols 1 and 2. St. Paul, Minnesota: Caillech Press, 1989.

Boca Raton Historical Society

The Boca Raton Historical Society is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1972 by a group of citizens interested in protecting the rich heritage of Boca Raton. Their goals, to collect and preserve information and artifacts relevant to the history of Boca Raton and to share them with the community residents and visitors, remain the primary focus of the Historical Society today.

Two award winning restorations exemplify the Historical Society dedication to historic preservation. Town Hall, originally designed by Addison Mizner, was restored in 1983 and serves the community of Boca Raton as a Heritage Center, housing the offices and library of the Historical Society. In 1985 the Historical Society purchased the FEC Railway Station and spearheaded a second major restoration. Both sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historical Society maintains archives and presents exhibits at Town Hall for public education. Schools and civic groups benefit from outreach programs by Historical Society staff and volunteers. Volunteers also conduct tours of the Boca Raton Resort & Club and other historic sites.

Boca Raton Historical Society
71 N. Federal Hwy
Boca Raton, FL 33432-3319

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 118
Boca Raton, FL