

**TOWN OF
PALM BEACH, FLORIDA**

**2010
HISTORIC SITES SURVEY**



Prepared For

The Town of Palm Beach, Florida

Research Atlantica, Inc.
December 2010

TOWN OF PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 2010 HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

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Without the citizens and property owners of the Town of Palm Beach none of this survey could have been completed. They permitted photographs and site inspections, and answered questions to the best of their knowledge. An historic sites survey is a working tool and as such is never complete. Forms and recommendations should be updated as new information becomes available. It is the hope of the staff of Research Atlantica, Inc. that this survey will be the basis for future historic preservation planning in the Town of Palm Beach and will help the citizens recognize the important place their community holds in South Florida history.



The Palm Beach Hotel and St. Edward's Church, date unknown

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of Historic Preservation

Increasingly in South Florida, historic and cultural resources are threatened by destruction due to rapid growth in population and ensuing development. Resources are links with the past, they make communities unique, giving them a "sense of place," and provide a source of pride. More importantly, historic resources allow for the education of present and future generations of their place and time in the continuum of the human experience and societal development. The purpose of historic preservation is not to halt growth or change, because it is recognized that both are needed to keep a community alive. The purpose of historic preservation is to integrate the past with the present and the future.

What Are Historic Resources?

Historic resources as defined in Chapter 267 of the Florida Statutes are:

"any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, object, or other real or personal property of historical, architectural, or archaeological value. These properties or resources may include, but are not limited to, monuments, memorials, Indian habitation, ceremonial sites, abandoned settlements, sunken or abandoned ships, engineering works, treasure trove, artifacts, or other objects with intrinsic historical or archaeological value, or any part thereof, relating to the history, government, and culture of the state." (s.267.021(3), F.S. 1986)

Historic resources are the non-renewable visible remains of the past. Once they are lost, they can never be replaced. The preservation and maintenance of historic resources results in a community's sense of stewardship for present and future generations. The analysis and interpretation of historic resources are not undertaken just to understand the past, but to give a community a sense of its unique place in history.

The National Register of Historic Places and the Florida Site File Inventory

Historic resources are defined in a national context by the **National Register of Historic Places** which is maintained by the National Park Service, under the Department of the Interior. The criteria used by the National Register to determine historical significance can also be used as a guideline for local determination and listing. The criteria for listing on the National Register are:

1. A property is associated with events which have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or
2. A property is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past;
3. A property is significant if it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, for example, it represents the work of a master, or if it possesses high artistic values, or if it represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, such as a district; or
4. A property which yields, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources utilizes the national criteria but is less restrictive about what is included in the Florida Master Site File. The Florida Master Site File (FMSF) inventory is maintained by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources and is utilized as a first source information bank for local preservation planning. The general procedure for generating an inventory is to record all resources which are fifty years or older. However, a site does not necessarily have to be fifty years old if an important person or event is associated with the resource, nor does it have to be historically or architecturally significant for recording. All sites, buildings, structures and objects, no matter how insignificant they may seem, should be recorded on a FMSF form to have a comprehensive inventory of historic resources in a community.

Historic site surveys are important because they are the first step in establishing a community's historic preservation program. Surveys are conducted to develop an inventory of historic resources in a community, and are used as the foundation for preservation planning. Surveys identify styles of architecture, dates of construction, and condition of historic resources. When available, surveys identify past and present owners and their place in a community's history. Surveys, therefore, build awareness in a community of the scope and significance of their cultural resources.

Several types of historic resources can be recorded on the FMSF such as buildings, engineering structures, objects, landscapes, and archaeological sites. In the present survey of the Town of Palm Beach buildings and other architectural features such as fountains, entrance piers, and walls were recorded. Each site's physical characteristics and historic significance are recorded in a systematic way on a Florida Master Site File form. With few exceptions, a site needs to be fifty years or older to warrant recording. Each site is assigned its own identification number by the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State. The site's location is indicated on a map and a photograph is taken. The forms, maps, and photographs are then sent to the Division of Historical Resources for processing. The forms become part of a state wide informational data base and are cross referenced into the state's computerized Geographical Information System. Recording sites on the FMSF does not in any way provide protection for a site or impose any restrictions. Surveys are strictly a means by which a community can inventory their historic resources.

Survey Method

An historic sites survey is a systematic and detailed recording of historic resources. Surveys may be either thematic in scope or geographic. Examples of thematic surveys would record only those resources of a predetermined type (i.e. all Mediterranean Revival Architecture within a predetermined area). A geographic survey, when properly conducted is comprehensive for the area surveyed and includes all historic resources within the area. In the case of Palm Beach, Florida, a geographic survey was conducted using the town's boundaries and every effort was made to be comprehensive in respect to the built environment in that area. The survey area within the town's limits includes an irregular shaped area bordered on the west by Lake Worth and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean. The north end of the island is terminated by a man made channel, the Lake Worth Inlet. The south end of the survey area was at the Town's southern boundary.

The method of conducting an historic sites survey is logical and consists of three important steps. First the historic literature is examined to determine the period of development for the town and the pioneer families involved in this development. Past surveys are reviewed so that comparisons can be made between the past and present condition of historic resources. In the Town of Palm Beach, four past surveys were completed. In 1981, the first "Historic Survey of Palm Beach" was conducted by Landmarks Planning Incorporated. This survey recorded 861 buildings and man made landscape

features. The Historic Palm Beach County Preservation Board updated the original survey in 1988. Although the second survey only extended north to Country Club Road, the Board looked at properties that were built prior to 1947. Research Atlantica, Inc. performed the third and fourth surveys in 1997 and 2004, extending the boundaries of the survey north to the Lake Worth Inlet. The 1997 survey identified 1151 sites built before 1947. In 2004, 1129 sites were recorded that were built before 1955. Since that time updating the survey has been incorporated as a requirement in the Historic Preservation Element of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. It is hoped that an update of the survey will be made every five years.

The second step in an historic site survey is the field work. Windshield and pedestrian surveys were conducted to determine what additional structures from the history of Palm Beach were still intact. Site data was recorded, photographs were taken and confirmation of building dates was attempted by interviewing property owners and by reviewing the records available in the Town of Palm Beach Planning, Zoning & Building Department. This basic information was then recorded on Florida Master Site File forms. Maps were also gathered for every form so that all properties could be easily found by interested parties. All information was entered on the computer by Sandra Norman, Ph.D. on the required State of Florida computer program. All forms will be sent to Tallahassee in both digital and hard copies as required.

Final analysis of the properties was completed and recommendations were made for future action at a regularly scheduled Landmarks Commission meeting on December 16, 2010. The newly identified sites will be reviewed the Landmarks Commission in an effort to identify possible new local landmarks. Final reports are available to the public through the Planning, Zoning & Building Department of the Town of Palm Beach, Florida.

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN OF PALM BEACH

A CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

The topographical area which encompasses the Town of Palm Beach is known as the Atlantic Coastal Ridge. This geographical term is used to describe a narrow ridge that extends along the eastern coast of the United States from Georgia to the southern portion of Dade County. Palm Beach is located within the coastal low lands portion of the ridge where the rock formation is known as the Anastasia Formation. Formed approximately 100,000 years ago, Anastasia is porous bedrock composed of coquina and is known as a fair to good aquifer. The Atlantic Coastal Ridge, considered the youngest rock formation in the United States, is also called the rim of the Everglades.¹

Prior to the sixteenth century discovery of Florida by Spanish explorers, the area around today's Palm Beach was inhabited by Native Americans. Nomadic hunters roamed throughout Florida for 10,000 years before European settlement began. Although the specific Indian group that lived in this area is unknown it is believed that they were either the Jaega or Ais Indians.² These semi-nomadic Indians were hunters and gatherers who settled near streams, inlets and coastal areas where fish and game were plentiful. By the late 1700s all of the native population had died from either European diseases, warfare or slavery.³

Spanish exploration and settlement of Florida began in 1513 with Ponce de Leon. Other sixteenth century Spanish explorers included Panfilo de Narvaez and Hernando de Soto. While no definitive references have been made to the Palm Beach area, it is quite possible that Spanish ships returning to Spain laden with New World treasures sailed past Palm Beach where Gulf Stream currents are close to shore. Frequent hurricanes were responsible for the wrecks of numerous treasure ships which in turn have given Palm Beach County its nickname as the "Gold Coast" or "Treasure Coast".

Ownership of Florida changed frequently. Spain, Great Britain and France wrestled for control of the peninsula from the late 1500s through the early 1800s. By 1814 the United States gained control and the Adams-Otis Treaty of 1819 solidified the American position.

Exploration and Early Settlement

Because of Lake Worth's remote location and the difficulty of transportation, settlement of the area today known as Palm Beach did not occur until the last half of the nineteenth century. General Worth, whose name was given to the lake camped on the island at the end of the Second Seminole War in 1841 "but left the place unknown and unnamed."⁴

¹John Edward Hoffmeister, Land from the Sea: The Geologic Story of South Florida, (Coral Gables: 1974), 21.

²Interview with Robert Carr, Dade County Archaeologist, Miami, FL, 8 April 1996.

³Joan E. Gill and Beth R. Read, eds., Born of the Sun, (Hollywood, Florida: Florida Bicentennial Commemorative Journal, Inc., 1975) 41.

⁴"Pioneer Life," Palm Beach Life, 15, March, 1932.

The first evidence of settlement on Palm Beach Island occurred under the Armed Occupation Act. This legislation offered 160 acres to settlers who would live in and defend the area in response to a still threatening Indian presence. Three men stacked claims: James H. Russell, John S. Hutchinson, and William W. Loring.⁵ Other early settlers who lived in the area include a fugitive named Lang who was murdered in 1870, William Lanehart, M. B. Lyman and H.F. Hammon.⁶

The first families to move to today's Palm Beach arrived in 1876. The original intent of the move was "to colonize and seek that flowery land where Ponce de Leon so faithfully sought the fabled spring of eternal youth"⁷ and to improve the health of the family's patriarch, Moore W. Dimick, who suffered from incipient tuberculosis. Dimick brought his wife, Parthenia, sons, Elisha "Cap" Newton and Franklin L. Dimick with their spouses, and daughter Marion (Mrs. Albert) Geer and family. The David Brown family also accompanied the group.⁸

The early settlers purchased land for \$1.00 an acre in sections that went from Lake Worth to the Atlantic Ocean. The island was a jungle of foliage with a fresh water slew in the center. The pioneers built their homes on the lake front. All did not go well, however during the first season. Marion Geer wrote:

A place was quickly cleared for our first house, which was completed in three weeks. A hurricane, soon after our arrival, scattered our goods hither and yon - table, stove, chairs and bureau were blown about and dropped far and near, which was not in accordance with our ideas of the gentle zephyrs we had been told fanned the checks of those who live in this favored region.⁹

Despite the hardships, however, the group persevered. Each family had a small sailboat. They grew bananas, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and other produce. They tried to plant sugar cane, but the harvest was too salty. Pineapples were too labor intensive. To supplement what they could grow, the men fished and hunted for venison, wild turkeys and turtles. Life was simple and the settlement was remote but this small band of settlers was determined to see the area grow and expand.¹⁰

One of the improvements that enhanced the island was the planting of coconut palms which occurred quite by accident. In 1878, the 175-ton brig Providencia, on its way from Trinidad to Spain wrecked on the reef with twenty thousand coconuts aboard. Salvaged from the wreck by Will Lanehart and H.F. Hammon, the coconuts were sold to the settlers for \$2.50 per hundred. The Dimicks bought one

⁵United State House of Representative. Document #70, "Actual Settlements in Florida, Under Armed Occupation Law." (Washington D.C.: 28th Congress, 1st Session, 1843) p. 42.

⁶"Pioneer Reminiscences," Palm Beach Life. 15 March, 1932, pp.22-23.

⁷Marion Dimick Geer, The Lake Worth Historian. 1896. n.p.

⁸Susan J. Oldfather, Elisha Newton Dimick and His Influence on the Development of Palm Beach. (Boca Raton, Florida: Florida Atlantic University, Thesis, 1989) pp. 11-15.

⁹Geer, op.cit.

¹⁰Ibid. and "Days of Early Settlement on Lake Recalled." 15 January, 1937, On file at the Historical Society of Palm Beach County.

thousand. Later Lanehart wrote, "they seemed like a Godsend to the people."¹¹ It has also been noted, however, that the Providencia also carried a cargo of "aqua dente," a Cuban rum, and the settlers had a lively party.¹²

In 1880 conditions on the shore of Lake Worth were still tenuous. Frank Dimick became discouraged and sold his land to brothers Edmund and John Brelsford before moving to North Carolina. In an effort to bring in extra income, E.N. "Cap" Dimick and his wife Ella added eight rooms to their house and took in "first class boarders" in their newly formed "Coconut Grove Hotel."¹³

The Brelsford brothers built a house and began a number of business enterprises. Realizing the need for improved transportation, they built a thirty ton schooner called the "Bessie B" that sailed between Jacksonville and Palm Beach. When the natural inlet closed between Lake Worth and the Ocean, the Brelsforfs organized a group of pioneers to solve the problem. In 1937, R.K. Brown remembered:

Once the inlet connecting Lake Worth with the Ocean was closed, hindering transportation and fishing. Thereupon the pioneers organized and dug a new inlet, about a mile north of the former inlet...Having no machinery, and but one mule, we were forced to do the work by hand. We succeeded, however, in opening a cut over four hundred feet long, eight feet wide, and nearly twenty feet deep in one part.¹⁴

By 1884 the Brelsforfs had opened a store that was advertised in The Tropical Sun as "Breslford Brothers, dealers in General Merchandise."¹⁵ It was in this store in 1887 that the first Post Office was established and Palm Beach got its name. Although the name applied for was originally "Palm City," that name was already in use so it was decided that "Palm Beach" should be used.

The 1880s also brought the beginnings of a continuous stream of winter visitors to Palm Beach and sowed the seeds for the area's first real estate boom. C.I. Cragin, a wealthy soap manufacturer from Philadelphia, was the first out-of-towner to build a house on the lake front.¹⁶ In 1886, Denver businessman Robert McCormick bought a lake-to-ocean front tract from Albert Geer for \$10,000 and built McCormick Cottage. The house was constructed in the Shingle style with building materials shipped from the north. It was reported to have cost \$30,000. Restored by the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach in 1984 and adapted to Sunday school use by the Royal Poinciana Chapel

¹¹Jan Tuckwood and Eliot Kleinberg. Pioneers in Paradise. (Marietta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1994) p. 21.

¹²Oldfather, p. 19.

¹³Ibid. 21.

¹⁴"Days of Early Settlement on Lake Recalled."

¹⁵"Business Advertisers on Lake Worth in 1891," Tropical Sun, 26 February, 1937. n.p.

¹⁶"Pioneer Reminiscences," p. 22.

in 2009, the house is the oldest standing house in Palm Beach and is now called Sea Gull Cottage.¹⁷

As visitors started to arrive in greater number, E.N. "Cap" Dimick added more rooms to the Cocoanut Grove House. Eventually he added fifty rooms in the twelve years of the hotel's operation. The two and a half story wood frame structure faced Lake Worth and had wrap-around porches. There was a cistern and outdoor plumbing. Because maid service was not provided, guests brought their own servants. Rooms including meals were \$2.00 per day or \$10.00 per week. The public was warned that "snakes, bears, alligators and wildcats lurked in the woods and swampy areas."¹⁸ Despite the warning, the hotel had 238 guest from January to March 1892 and "when the rooms filled tents were used" for the overflow.¹⁹

As the economy improved, the pioneers added the institutions that were needed to improve daily life in a growing community. In 1886, Palm Beach residents built the first public school in what was then Dade County. The county gave them \$200 for supplies and the local men provided the labor. The school opened in March with twelve students and a sixteen year old teacher named Hattie Gale.²⁰

Bethesda-by-The-Sea was the first church in Palm Beach. Organized in 1889 by the Rev. Joseph N. Mulford from Troy, New York, the first sanctuary was constructed of wood for \$600. It seated one hundred people, but because it was the only house of worship on the Lake, there was often a crowd. One contemporary wrote:

The Church was generally filled and sometimes when there was no room for everyone in the Church, part of the congregation sat on the grass outside listening to the service through the open windows. Naturally all denominations came to service. As in those days all transportation was by water...it was a beautiful sight to see the Lake dotted here and there with sails and all finally assembling at the church pier.²¹

The beginnings of the real estate boom in Palm Beach started in 1892. Charles J. Clarke who first saw the island aboard his yacht Alma originally bought two and a half acres of land for \$800. Then Henry M. Flagler, who had also visited the area by boat, received a charter from the State of Florida to build a railroad south to Miami. Rumors of Flagler's arrival caused prices to rise. In March of 1893 Clarke purchased a second property, the Dimick hotel, and twenty acres from ocean to lake for \$49,000. The Tropical Sun reported:

During the past ten days there have been the liveliest times in real estate that were ever experienced in the Palm Beach and Lake Worth region C.J. Clarke's purchase of the Cocoanut Grove hotel property from Captain E.N. Dimick gave rise to much speculation among the old guests, who are much

¹⁷ "Sea Gull Cottage, The Oldest House in Palm Beach." Brochure by the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach.

¹⁸Oldfather, p. 24.

¹⁹Ibid. 28.

²⁰Tuckwood and Kleinberg. p. 27.

²¹Kathryn E. Hall, M.A. "The Pictorial History of The Episcopal Church of Bethesda-By-The-Sea." (Palm Beach, Florida: 1986) p. 5.

attached to the beauties of the place. In growth and possibilities the spot has no equal, and Mr. Clarke is to be congratulated on his rare possession.²²

Flagler also bought up local sites including the McCormick Cottage with ten acres for \$75,000, and four hundred feet of lake frontage from the Brelsford brothers for \$50,000. When Flagler attended a reception given by local citizens in March his agents asked that the Palm Beachers contribute \$30,000 to bring the railroad to Palm Beach. With great enthusiasm they raised the money and the railroad was on its way.²³

The Flagler Era

With the coming of the railroad real estate had risen from \$1.00 per acre to over \$7500 per acre. Pioneer E.N. "Cap" Dimick had served a term in the Florida House of Representatives and in 1896 would be elected to the Florida State Senate. C.J. Clarke built a Mission style home on the lake after the Cocoonut Grove House burnt in a fire started by a Flagler worker. On May 1, 1893 the Dade County Bank was opened with "Cap" Dimick as President. On the same day, Flagler started construction of the Royal Poinciana Hotel.²⁴

The Royal Poinciana Hotel took nine months to complete and opened in February, 1894 two months before the railroad came through to the west side of Lake Worth. The hotel was the largest wooden structure in the world with 1150 rooms. It had six stories with two additional attic dormer floors. A contemporary guest wrote to a friend in 1903:

Really, my dear, you can't imagine anything so huge as this hotel. Mama has gotten lost two or three times in its halls, but there is always someone patrolling the corridors to see that everything is in order. At night they say these men make the rounds on bicycles!²⁵

Novelist Henry James visited the hotel at the turn of the century and wrote:

You had to be financially more or less at your ease to enjoy the privileges of the Royal Poinciana at all; enjoy them through their extended range of saloons and galleries, fields of high publicity all; pursue them from dining halls to music rooms, to ballrooms, to card rooms, to writing rooms, to a succession of places of convenience and refreshment.²⁶

Activities included bathing on the beach at the small ocean front Palm Beach Inn, golf, tea at the Cocoonut Grove and a daily concert in the hotel rotunda. Visitors traveled in wheelchairs known as "Afromobiles," pedaled by black hotel workers and enjoyed the biggest part of the year on

²²"First Real Estate Boom Here Started in Spring of 1893," Tropical Sun, 19 March, 1937.

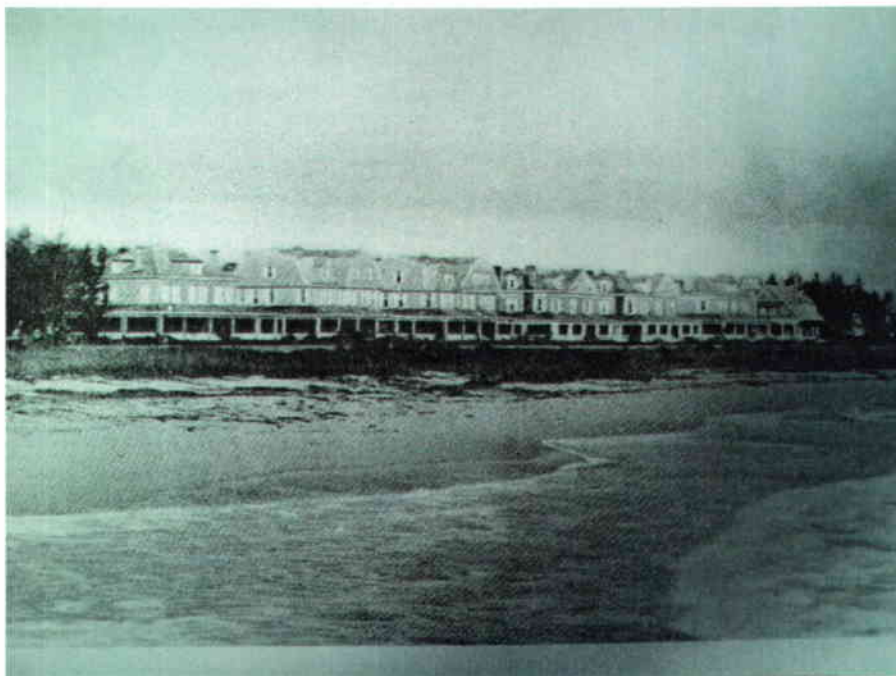
²³Oldfather, p. 45.

²⁴Ibid. 45-48.

²⁵"Letters From an Old Scrapbook,": The Palm Beach Sun, 2 March, 1951.

²⁶James R. Knott, Palm Beach Revisited. (Palm Beach, 1987) pp. 16-17.

Washington's Birthday. By 1901, Flagler expanded the Palm Beach Inn to nearly double its size and renamed it the Breakers.²⁷



The Cottage Colony, north of the Breakers Hotel, unknown date

Also in 1901 Henry M. Flagler built a private residence in Palm Beach for his own use. Called "Whitehall" the house was a wedding present to Flagler's third wife, Mary Lily Kenan. The architects for the house were John M. Carrere and Thomas Hastings, who also designed buildings for Flagler in St. Augustine and later designed the New York Public Library. Situated on a six acre lake front site, the NeoClassical mansion cost \$2,500,00 to build and \$1,500,000 to furnish. On March 30, 1902, the New York Herald published a picture of the house and called it the "Taj Mahal of North America."²⁸

In 1895, George Lainhart and "Cap" Dimick supervised the building of the Royal Poinciana Chapel, a nondenominational church that served the guests of the hotel. The Florida East Coast Hotel Co. supported E.B. Webb as the seasonal pastor. Belle Dimick's marriage to Thomas Reese was the first wedding in the chapel.²⁹

Another early institution that contributed to the growth and glamour of Palm Beach was Bradley's Beach Club. The stage was set for this type of establishment in 1894 when "Cap" Dimick helped Flagler push through the county commission a law that allowed the sale of liquor. Then in 1895,

²⁷Ibid. 16-19 and 40-43.

²⁸"Whitehall, The Henry Morrison Flagler Museum," (Palm Beach: 1988).

²⁹Oldfather, p. 51. and Whitehall, The Henry Morrison Flagler Museum.

Edward R. and John Bradley arrived in Palm Beach aboard a commercial schooner. The brothers already ran a casino in St. Augustine called the Bacchus Club and in 1899 opened a similar establishment in Palm Beach. At first there was strong opposition, but Bradley's operated as a private club and Florida residents were not allowed in. E.R. Bradley's honesty, political favors and charitable donations also helped keep the casino open. The club was located on the present site of Bradley Park on Lake Trail just north of the original railroad bridge. Despite the fact that gambling was illegal Bradley's Beach Club remained open until 1946. When Bradley died in 1946, Joseph Kennedy remarked, "Palm Beach has lost its zipperoo."³⁰

The political atmosphere was also changing in Palm Beach. Palm Beach County was created out of massive Dade County in July, 1909 with West Palm Beach as the county seat. The Town of Palm Beach incorporated in 1911 with thirty-four of the thirty-five eligible voters voting in favor. E.N. "Cap" Dimick was elected Mayor and the first Town Council included William Fremd, Dr. John W. Doe, Enoch Root, and J.B. Donnelly. John P. McKenna was chosen as Town Clerk.³¹

The early real estate development of Palm Beach consisted of the subdivision of jungles and agricultural property for the sale of lots and home sites to winter visitors. J.R. and E.R. Bradley's "Floral Park" was the first. Bradley announced plans for his development in 1910. The project consisted of 230 fifty foot lots laid out along Sunset Avenue from the lake to the ocean. Bradley filled in the marsh in the center of the island and cleared out what remained of the "Styx," the neighborhood of black hotel workers and their families. He hired a Mexican born realtor from California, Lewis Henry Green, to promote the project and auction off the lots. Green offered prizes for potential buyers like rugs, pianos and china and sold out the project within a few hours on February 19, 1912.³²

At first "Cap" Dimick wasn't as lucky with his "Royal Park" development, which he marketed through his newly formed Palm Beach Improvement Company. Dimick's land consisted of 150 acres from just north of today's Royal Palm Boulevard south to today's Worth Avenue. It spanned the island from lake to ocean. The problem, however, with the "Royal Park" tract was it's remote location. Flagler's railroad bridge was the only means to transport materials and customers across the lake and it was well to the north. Swamp, alligators and tropical jungle all had to be eliminated. The southwest section of the land was so swampy that a dredge had to dig a half million yards of fill from Lake Worth. Besides the physical obstacles, the competition from Bradley's "Floral Park" also slowed sales.

Dimick, however, solved these problems and eventually made "Royal Park" a success. The Lake Worth Bridge Company was formed in 1910, secured a permit from the county and completed the Royal Park Bridge on October 1, 1911. This allowed out of town buyers to drive to the site. Next, because of "Floral Park's" success, Dimick hired Lewis Green, the auctioneer, to sell his project as well. Again Green offered prizes and set up an auction at the foot of the new bridge in 1913. Hundreds of people attended and lots sold for \$375. Among the buyers was Paris Singer, of the Singer sewing fortune. Dimick also improved the area with landscaping, roads, street lamps, water mains, sewers, electricity and telephone lines. A place was set aside for a shopping area in the center of the development but this eventually became the location of Town Hall. By 1918, Royal Park was

³⁰ Knott, pp.75-87 and Oldfather, p. 51-52.

³¹Oldfather, 69.

³²Oldfather, 74-75.

completed.³³

As the United States headed into World War I the euphoria of the early development of Palm Beach slowed but did not stop. A local headline read, "Building Goes Forward in Palm Beach Past Season Despite War."³⁴ The article went on to say:

The war brought people of great wealth to Palm Beach who had never been here before. The common comment among them is, "I did not know America had a place of so wonderful a climate. It surpasses the Mediterranean Riviera. You say they will go abroad after the war. But they are the very ones who have built the magnificent homes in Palm Beach."³⁵

Another more middle class type of buyer was also interested in Palm Beach and Oscar A. Jose, an Indianapolis developer, catered to this market. Jose's City Builders Realty Co. set up an office in West Palm Beach, offered free boat rides to the island and promoted "Poinciana Park.." Advertised as "most ideally located," Poinciana Park's developer encouraged buyers not just to speculate on their land purchases but to build and spend the winter. Brochures promised a location close to the hotels, a private bathing beach and a private school so that families could bring the children south for the season. City Builders Realty Co. also promised:

No business property will be permitted in the addition and no cheap structures will be permitted on any lot in the addition. Every house will have to set back a certain distance from the street line.³⁶

For those who needed to finance their purchase terms were available: "10% down, 10% on signing contract. Balance monthly, quarterly or semi-annually."³⁷ If you did not want to buy, homes were also available for lease, "furnished complete from lace curtains to kitchen utensils, brand new."³⁸

Even with the increased housing starts visitors still came to the hotels during the season but attention turned to the war. Palm Beach Life reported that "the great war in Europe which has occasioned the sacrifice of so many lives and so much suffering, has been the basic cause for most of the charity functions."³⁹ Funds were raised for The American Ambulance Fund and soldiers blinded in battle.⁴⁰

³³Ibid. 71-77.

³⁴"Building Goes Forward in Palm Beach Past Season Despite War," Palm Beach Post, 19 January, 1919.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶"Take a Free Boat Ride to the Real Estate Auction at Poinciana Park," Tropical Sun, 20 February, 1915.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸"Poinciana Park, Palm Beach," Tropical Sun, 24 January, 1916.

³⁹Cora E. Morlan, "Among the Palms," Palm Beach Life, 20 March, 1917.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Addison Mizner and The Florida Land Boom

In 1918 before the end of World War I, Addison Mizner, an established New York architect who was born in California and studied in Spain, accepted an invitation from Paris Singer to recuperate from a leg injury in Palm Beach. Singer, who had bought a lot in Dimick's "Royal Park" had built a small bungalow on Peruvian Avenue. As Mizner's health improved his boredom turned into creativity and he transformed Singer's bungalow into a Chinese villa. The conversion was a success but Singer looked forward to a larger project. Having already established two hospitals in France, Paris Singer decided to build a convalescent home in Palm Beach for service men returning from the war. The buildings were completed but before the opening of the club house in January, 1919, the "Touchstone Convalescent Club" had been transformed into the exclusive "Everglades Club."⁴¹

For Palm Beach the building of the Everglades Club was an important milestone. The Club itself moved the social scene away from Flagler's Hotels and Bradley's casino into an exclusive private realm. The Mediterranean Revival style architecture introduced by Addison Mizner with the Everglades Club was "the first major building in South Florida in the Spanish style"⁴² and it changed South Florida architecture forever. Commissions for Mizner to build private homes in this style poured in. On a technical level the Everglades Club also proved that even without skilled European craftsmen, the style could be built with hollow clay tile construction, stucco and cast cement details. Mizner even opened a business, called Mizner Industries, to manufacture the tiles needed for the Spanish style roofs and to produce instant antiques to furnish the huge Mediterranean Revival style mansions.⁴³

At the end of World War I, only two architects had offices in Palm Beach, Addison Mizner and August Geiger. Geiger, however, closed his Palm Beach office in 1920 and moved to Boca Raton.

During the 1920s other great twentieth century architects settled in Palm Beach to take advantage of the building boom. Maurice Fatio, who was born in Geneva, Switzerland, formed a partnership with William A. Treanor in New York in 1921. Fatio moved to Florida in 1925, established a Palm Beach office in Phipps Plaza and practiced in the Town until his death in 1943.

In 1925, Austrian born John L. Volk came to Palm Beach by way of Key West and Miami. Volk had made some money speculating with Miami's "Boom and Binder Boys" (the real estate community) and stated, "All seemed too good and easy and could not last, I took my profits and left for Palm Beach."⁴⁴ Volk formed the partnership of Craig, Stevens and Volk, and successfully built five houses in the Northwood Subdivision of West Palm Beach. With an office in the Daily News Building, Volk was full of optimism but this proved to be short lived. In June of 1926 the Palm Beach Bank

⁴¹Donald Curl, Mizner's Florida, American Resort Architecture. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1984) pp. 38-60.

⁴²Ibid. p. 60. It should be noted that although the Everglades Club was the first large building complex in South Florida to be built in the Mediterranean Revival style, a private residence in a similar style was built for James Deering in Miami in 1914. "Vizcaya" was designed by F. Burrall Hoffman and concentrated on Italian details. Carrere & Hastings had also used a Spanish theme in the Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴John L. Volk, "Questions, how to start my book," Notes in the private collection of Jane Volk, Palm Beach, Florida.

and Trust closed causing a run on area banks. After a banking moratorium eleven Palm Beach County banks went under. Volk noted, "I had money in three banks, all closed. No Money. Had \$5.00. Gave Bill Gray (his contractor) \$3.00 and \$2.00 for a bottle of gin."⁴⁵ Despite the slow start, however, John Volk survived the recession and established a career that changed the face of Palm Beach. By completing over one thousand commissions before his death in 1984, Volk was the most prolific of the great Palm Beach architects. His longevity attested to his ability to adapt to both fashion and economics without sacrificing style.

One of the great houses of Palm Beach and the nation was built in 1925 for Marjorie Merriweather Post and her husband Edward F. Hutton. Called "Mar-A-Lago" because of its sea to lake site, the house was started by Marion Sims Wyeth (who later denied responsibility for it) and completed by Joseph Urban, a Viennese architect who had worked for Florenz Ziegfeld designing stage sets. Urban took the prevailing Mediterranean Revival style of the Town and added Moorish details with a theatrical flair to the overall design. Both the exterior and interior of the house were elaborate with rows of Egyptian rams' heads under the eaves, a two story living room with a gold leaf ceiling and a dining room that was adapted from the Chigi Palace in Rome to name just some of the appointments. But Mar-A-Lago was more than a grand house. It "gave added prominence to Mrs. Post and helped produce the island's grandest grand dame."⁴⁶



The Bath and Tennis Club with Mar-a-Lago to the North

In 1926, Urban received a commission to design the Bath and Tennis Club south of Mar-A-Lago. Organized by Anthony Biddle, the Club would protect the Hutton's house from unwanted private development in the area. Similar in feel to Mar-A-Lago the Bath and Tennis Club opened to the beach and became one of Palm Beach's most exclusive clubs. After the 1949 hurricane, John L. Volk rebuilt much of the structure.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Donald W. Curl. "Joseph Urban's Palm Beach Architecture," The Florida Historical Quarterly, Volume LXXI, Number 4, April 1993, pp. 445-445. Quote page 457.

⁴⁷Ibid.