

PALM BEACH SHORES

Past and Present

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Editorial Note: Since most of the information for this book has been compiled from old newspaper clippings, magazine features and recollection of Palm Beach Shores residents, there may be errors for which the committee bears no responsibility.

Note: This on-line document was created from a OCR scan of the original. Photos have been omitted to keep electronic file small.

EARLY HISTORY

Palm Beach Shores is located on the southern tip of Singer Island in Palm Beach County, Florida. It is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, Lake Worth on the west and Lake Worth Inlet on the south. When the first permanent settlers to the Lake Worth area began to settle around its shores, what is known as Singer Island today, was then an extension of Palm Beach. A series of inlets to Lake Worth were hand dug and maintained by these pioneer families. In 1915 the task of maintaining an inlet to Lake Worth was assumed by the United States Government and the present inlet was dredged in 1918. Lake Worth Inlet permanently separated what later became known as Singer Island from Palm Beach.

The first available record of a settlement on Singer Island dates back to 1906 with Inlet City. Inlet City was a spontaneous community of fishermen and squatters, most of whom came from Riviera Beach and the Bahamas. The settlement developed on both sides of the inlet, in use at the turn of the century. This inlet was located approximately opposite the filled area of land in Riviera Beach now known as Yacht Harbor Manor. As it was, married families settled on the north side of the inlet and single men settled on the south side. Fishermen were attracted to it as a place to dry the cotton nets that they used in those days, and for its proximity to the Gulf Stream. Because of the lack of government and local ordinances, squatters were content to build wherever and whatever they liked. Inlet City's three main streets were named Fiddler's Green, Goose Hollow, and Broadway. The community boasted of a store and a church which also served as a school. The school teacher was picked up at Currie Park, in West Palm Beach, on Monday morning and returned Friday afternoon burdened with all the fish that she could carry.

Until 1925 Singer Island was isolated from the mainland. In that year the county built the wooden "Sherman Point" bridge from Riviera Beach to Singer Island to accommodate Paris Singer's proposed Blue Heron Hotel. This bridge from Sherman Point was destroyed in the hurricane of 1928 and was not rebuilt until 1935. Singer Island remained desolate after the 1928 hurricane and the following years of depression. Fishermen continued to take advantage of the abundance of crabs, clams, and many varieties of fish about the island's shores. High school students were attracted to the island's beaches on their days off; but further attempts at development would have to wait until World War II had ended. When the second wooden bridge burned, the concrete and steel Blue Heron lift span was constructed in 1949. The eastern half of this bridge remains as a fishing pier today. Finally, because of the problems created by ever increasing automobile and boat traffic, the lift span was replaced by the present high-rise bridge in 1976.

PARIS SINGER

Singer Island owes its name to Paris Singer, heir to the sewing machine fortune. In 1920, he visited Palm Beach and met Addison Mizner. He agreed to pay the architect a \$6,000 a year retainer for life if his work was confined exclusively to the Palm Beach area.

Singer took his friends for picnics to a beautiful island north of Palm Beach which they called "Singer's Island". Singer's dream was to build two enormous hotels there. On the south end would be the Paris Singer Hotel, and on the north end, the Blue Heron Hotel with a 36 hole golf course.

The estimated price was four million dollars - a fantastic amount in those years. Mizner was to design the hotels, but it is said Singer was so eager to start, construction of the Blue Heron was begun before the drawings were started. The opening date was set for 1926. The hotel's service wing was the first and the last to be completed. Singer's original plan was to finance the building from the sale of lots throughout the island. The Florida land boom was already slowing down in 1925, and hurricanes and the stock market crash dealt a mortal blow to Singer's finances. The shell of the Blue Heron remained for 14 years, until it was demolished for scrap steel in the 1940's. Singer reportedly left Florida a poor man and spent his years in Egypt on a houseboat on the Nile River.

A. O. EDWARDS

Mr. Edwards had built railroads in England, India and South Africa. In London, he rebuilt the famed Savoy Hotel and built the Mayfair Hotel. In 1927, he engineered and built Europe's largest hotel, the Grosvenor House in London. We know him as the founder and developer of Palm Beach Shores. To quote Mr. Edwards, "In 1947 when I first drove across the then existing rickety old wooden bridge, I was sure I was on a useless junket. This peninsula, I thought, couldn't possibly be attractive enough to compensate for that risky bridge crossing of wide Lake Worth. I was discouraged, but we drove on to have a look. One look was enough and I decided that day to purchase the 240 acres as the site for my planned development. No place else in all South Florida had I found any unexploited property that held the same promise, that offered the fine elevation above sea level, with blue water on three sides, and such a splendid beach." It is reported that he paid \$400,000 for the acreage and over a million and a half for improvements. An early prospectus for the town shows it much the same as it is today. It describes the streets with stone balustrades at the intersections, the fountain heading a beautiful parkway, a private beach for residents, and commercial buildings and apartments around the perimeter. Six hundred thirty-one lots were laid out, priced between \$1,800 and \$4,000. Two boat docks on Lake Worth were depicted in an early drawing for the use of the town residents.

In 1948, he built the Colonnades Hotel under the name "Inlet Court Hotel". The name was later changed to Colonnades. Its slogan was "where excellence is not extravagance". He died in 1960, leaving the hotel in his estate. It was sold to John MacArthur in 1963.

Mr. Edwards was Mayor of Palm Beach Shores from 1952 to 1954. He could not succeed himself in the first town election in 1954 because he did not reside in town. Henry Peerson became the first elected Mayor of the town.

JOHN MACARTHUR AND THE COLONNADES HOTEL

John MacArthur, the son of a preacher, later became one of the great financiers of his day. In 1976, Newsweek rated MacArthur as the second richest man in the United States -worth one billion dollars. His reaction, "Oh don't pay any attention to all that bull". He presided over his vast financial holdings from a table in the Colonnades Coffee Shop. The Colonnades had many famous guests, movie and television stars, politicians, musical entertainers, including the Rolling Stones and Janis Joplin. Atop the sixth floor was a penthouse named the Bob Hope Suite. It is said that one morning when Bob Hope ordered breakfast from room services, a tall, thin waiter in white jacket with cigarette dangling from his mouth, persisted in serving him coffee. It was MacArthur himself Paul Harvey's radio show was aired periodically from the hotel, as was the television game show "Treasure Isle". In later years, Burt Reynolds used the Tiki Bar for his television show "B.L. Stryker". In 1976, MacArthur suffered a stroke at the hotel and died 14 months later. The hotel was demolished in 1990.

THE LAKEFRONT

While the ocean front was the main selling point offered prospective buyers of Mr. Edwards' new development, he also included as an enticement a Yacht Club for the use of Palm Beach Shores property owners. Early sales brochures show the club house, now the Buccaneer Yacht Club and a total of 60 slips, 30 at South dock, the original Sailfish Marina dock and 30 at North dock now Cannonsport Marina.

An apparent change of plans occurred since the records show that before many homes were built in town, all three lake front properties were sold. In the 80's South dock and the adjacent second dock, one called Sailfish Marina, the other Bill's Marina, were amalgamated and a third dock built to create the present complex. North dock was operated as the Palm Beach Shores Marina for a short time, then as Doty's Marina before becoming Cannonsport in 1960. The physical property is almost the same now as it was in early years.

The dredging of the Inlet created the spoils island known as Peanut Island and up until the mid-sixties, a second island Little Peanut, also existed. It was located to the north and although much smaller it also was overgrown with Australian Pine trees. Peanut Island housed the United States Coast Guard Station between 1936 and 1995.

During the Kennedy administration a bomb shelter was built on the island to protect the President when he was vacationing at the

family's winter home in Palm Beach. Both of these structures are now part of the Maritime Museum. The announced plans to turn the island into a county park was received with a sigh of relief by our townspeople since the proposals ranging from a Cruise Ship parking lot; to an oil refinery; to high rise condos and even the home of a monstrous statue of Christopher Columbus have been talked about over the years.

The shoreline along the town's border with the lake is completely bulkheaded and the very strong tidal currents maintain a deep natural channel that is used daily by oceangoing vessels. The lakefront properties were very popular during the town's early development and the homes here reflect the best of what was built during that time period.

THE INLET

Before 1877 periodic flooding created a wide shallow channel across the lowest lying land of what is now Palm Beach and Singer Island. This area, running from Worth Avenue at the lakefront to the present location of the pump house in Palm Beach Shores varied from a usable "Inlet" for small fishing boats to non-existing, depending on weather conditions.

In 1877 local settlers decided to give up in their attempts to keep the natural channel opened and dug by hand a new channel. They determined the best location would be just south of where the coral rocks protrude on our beach, about a mile north of the present Inlet. This was a Herculean task since the sand dunes at this point were 20 feet high and over 300 feet of digging would be required. Nineteen volunteers showed up to start the job that was accomplished later in the year. This project was a great success and the flow of water deepened and widened their work, but as with our present inlet, the south side eroded while the north side filled in. By 1889 the location of the Inlet had shifted south and the depth had been lost to the point of it being unusable. The locals once again started over, at the coral rock location. Both times the infusion of large quantities of salt water destroyed the lake's equilibrium and resulted in massive fish kills, but both times the serenity leveled off and excellent lake fishing developed.

In 1915 the Lake Worth Inlet District was created and in 1918 the inlet in its present position was dredged to a depth of 4 feet and a width of 150 feet. It was later deepened to 16 feet and in 1925 the first cargo steamer arrived followed in 1926 with the first passenger steamer. Later that same year the Canadian steamer "SS New Northland" arrived and started cargo and passenger service from our port to Nassau and Havana. Starting with the 1928 Hurricane and through the '29 stock market crash and depression years that followed the Inlet, along with the area in general, lay dormant. Since the Inlet was deemed unsuited to handle war goods, it did not regain prominence again until after World War II.

In 1945 the channel was dredged to a depth of 25 feet and the start of the modern day Port expansion started. In 1946 the famous train

ferry was established by the West Indies Fruit and Steamship Company, running on a regular schedule to Havana, Cuba. This service prospered in the early development days of Palm Beach Shores and residents recall watching the ferries going in and out the Inlet. This era ended with the government's trade embargo with Cuba in 1960. In 1963 the Inlet was dredged to a controlled depth of 35 feet, the depth that is maintained today, albeit, with constant attention.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of the inlet to our town is due to mother nature herself e.g.: the hundreds of feet of new beach that we have gained since we first separated from Palm Beach as sand accumulates against the north jetty of the Lake Worth Inlet.

THE BEACH

The town's beach was deeded to the town by A. O. Edwards and has been improved and cared for by the town and residents. Besides the beach itself there is a building for storage of beach equipment. Showers, bathrooms, lanais, a playground for children, and a sheltered pavilion are other accouterments provided. Parking is provided by permit only. A lifeguard is on duty to protect swimmers and provide information on water temperature, rip tides, jellyfish and other hazards. The entire 3,000 feet of ocean frontage and beach is regularly raked and swept free of debris by contract with a professional service. There are scheduled clean-up drives for volunteers to clean the dunes which are not reached by contract service. Our beach, instead of eroding, has continued to widen. Man-made dunes have been formed, planted with sea oats and sea grapes and other types of vegetation tolerant to the climate of a barrier island. In 1993, an elevated walkway was constructed over the dunes to replace the original concrete walk through the dunes. Our beautiful beach with clean sand and the sparkling ocean is certainly one of our chief assets.

THE TURTLE PATROL

Our town has a large group of volunteers who regularly give up their morning sleep to get out on our beach before sunrise to record and mark turtle nests. Female turtles who nest here include two endangered species, the leatherback and green turtle, and one threatened species, the loggerhead. The aim is to protect the eggs and newly hatched turtles from natural and man-made hazards. Residents along the ocean front are responsible to see that lights at night do not disorient the hatchlings. The patrol has been in existence since 1981 and begins on April 1 and ends October 31.

THE BEAUTIFUL PARKWAY

An early drawing projecting Palm Beach Shores shows a palm-lined parkway through the town from Bamboo Lane to the inlet. A.O. Edwards provided the land, but the men and women of Palm Beach Shores made it happen. Concrete walks were laid and in time plants and trees were collected and bought with donations; then carefully installed. What we consider the pride of our town, this beautiful arboretum, has become known throughout the area. Many people stroll the shady walk and enjoy noting the labels on trees and shrubs. In 1992, a butterfly garden was begun at the corner of Bravado Lane on the northwest side of the parkway. Larval and nectar plants have been provided to attract and please butterflies.

Lethal yellowing, a disease that caused the demise of the tall Jamaican coconut palms, began its invasion of Palm Beach County in the 1970's. The Beautification Committee worked hard to inform residents of the danger, and to encourage the inoculation of affected trees with the antibiotic, Terramycin.

The town bought 500 Malayan palm coconuts and offered the nuts, including the plastic pots and planting instructions, to the residents. A "Pot Party Sale" was held behind town hall. These sprouted nuts would then be planted to replace the dead Jamaican palms. Many lovely trees along the parkway and in private yards succumbed to the disease, but not without a valiant effort to save them by many people. Many Queen palms have also now been planted along our streets.

Palm Beach Shores has been named a Tree City, U.S.A., and now celebrates Arbor Day each March, with a ceremony during which a tree or shrub is planted in the parkway.

PALM BEACH SHORES GOVERNMENT

The Town of Palm Beach Shores was formally organized in 1947, and in 1951 began its corporate existence with A.O. Edwards as Mayor. In the interim period, the town was informally run by the property owners with Mr. Edwards as controlling stockholder.

The Town has a Town Commission form of government whose major function is to provide services and facilities for the townspeople.

The Mayor, Vice Mayor and Commissioners are elected by the registered voters of the Town, and serve without compensation. The town also has a full time Town Administrator.

All branches of the government, administrative, legal, police and fire, are located in the Town Hall complex on Edwards Lane. The Town Hall, once a warehouse, was purchased from A.O. Edwards in 1952 and converted into the building it is today, plus an addition dedicated on February 5, 1990.

In addition to the governing group of Palm Beach Shores, there are two other bodies: the Planning and Zoning Board and the Code Enforcement Board, whose functions are to make recommendations to the Mayor and Commissioners.

THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Our police department includes a police chief, seven full-time officers and two part-time patrol officers. Two officers are certified bicycle patrol officers. Police vehicles include three radio equipped squad cars and one emergency utility vehicle. Officers patrol the streets 24 hours a day to protect citizens and property. The police chief is also the Emergency Management Director.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Palm Beach Shores Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. was incorporated on November 19, 1963. The first fire engine was an American LaFrance purchased January 1964, for \$14,141.80. There are now 2 Mack Engines, a 1978 and 1990, both 1000 GPM pumpers. The roster includes a part-time Chief, Assistant Chief, Captain, 2 Lieutenants, 16 firefighters, 6 Associate Firefighters and 3 Fire Police for traffic control. The Headquarters are next to Town Hall. A siren and pagers are used to alert volunteers when needed. The fire siren is also used to alert citizens to evacuate the island in case of a hurricane. The fire department is part of the Northern Area Mutual Aid Consortium.

THE LADIES AUXILIARY

The Ladies Auxiliary of Palm Beach Shores Volunteer Fire Department was organized on October 12, 1977. Its' aim is to assist the firemen during fires by providing water and juice to the men. A monthly card party luncheon raises funds to buy needed equipment. Some purchases include a Hewlett Packard printer, smoke eater for Town Hall, uniform patches, jumpsuits, pal alert devices, caps, etc. A Christmas party is held for volunteers. The Auxiliary also works at fund raising picnics.

POPULATION AND GROWTH OF PALM BEACH SHORES

The population of the Town in the census of 1960 was 855 residents. In the latest census of 1990, the population was 1,030. These figures represent permanent residents only. It is estimated that the population more than doubles during the winter months due to returning residents and tourists.

Originally, the town plat extended from the inlet on the south to about 300 feet north of Blue Heron Boulevard. Before the town was charted, Mr. Edwards disposed of a considerable area on the north end. The town now extends from between Beach Road and Bamboo Lane to the inlet, from the lake to the ocean.

In 1985 sewers were installed on the perimeter streets. In 1996, the town's sewer system was finally completed with the addition of sewers to interior streets.

The town now has several modern hotels and condominiums. On the shore of the intracoastal are found marinas and fine restaurants.

THE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

The Property Owners Association was organized in 1950 and incorporated in 1953 "for the general purpose of advancing the civic, cultural and educational interest of the community". Officers are elected yearly and general meetings are held the first Monday evening, October through May. It is composed of an Environmental Committee and subcommittees of Property, Landscaping, Beach, and Work. The Environmental Committee is concerned with the aesthetics of the town-landscaping of streets and parkway, condition of the beach and the environment.

Monthly, October through May, "TROPICAL TOPICS" is published and mailed to all members and annually, the Palm Beach Shores Membership Directory is provided. Some activities sponsored are an annual Christmas party, Christmas tree lighting and carol sing at the beach pavilion, holiday home decoration contest, Easter egg hunt and Halloween party for children, Spring Fling, men's weekly card games, blood pressure clinic and field trips.

TOP OF THE HILL GANG

The Top of the Hill Gang is a group of Palm Beach Shores residents who willingly volunteer their time on a variety of projects which enhance the beauty and safety of the town. Typically these jobs are: palm fertilizing, painting balustrades, street signs and striping crosswalks, painting town buildings, work at the beach and pruning, planting or weeding in the parkway. Both men and women serve in this capacity and the town saves considerable funds because of these dedicated volunteers and their gratis labors.

THE SEASIDERS

The Seasideers began in 1951 as a group of five women getting together for lunch and to socialize. The Seasideers goal was 'to provide the spirit of service and friendship among its members and to stimulate interest in the community". That goal was reached and continues today. It is a non-political, non-profit organization consisting of four groups: Community Service, Four Arts, Garden & Beautification, and Social. A monthly luncheon meeting with program is held October through May. The Community Service Group meets every Thursday year round. Each February a bazaar is held at the Town Hall and proceeds are donated to several charities. The Seasideers are also responsible for the Christmas Creche in the town parking lot during the holiday season. Much of the social activity in the town as well as early community projects was created by the women of the Seasideers.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

The first Sebring style car race event took place here in 1950. Sixty-two cars took part. The finish line was at the Colonnades.

The first structure for the Nativity scene was made from scrap wood found on the beach.

The largest catch brought into the Sailfish Marina was a tiger shark weighing 738 lbs. on May 12, 1990.

A municipal court, Judge Witt presiding in robes, was held once a month at Town Hall in the 1970's, to hear cases involving Palm Beach Shores.

John MacArthur once played Santa Claus for a Palm Beach Shores Christmas party. One resident remarked, "You can say that we have the richest Santa Claus in the world".

In 1954, Property Owners had a family picnic to dedicate the new palm frond shelter. The notice read, "Burgers and Wienies at six p.m.- free to members".

In September 1958, the police chief had to step in and restore order when a verbal brawl broke out at a Palm Beach Shores council meeting.

At early Seaside meetings in members' homes, the ladies dined on their own Seaside china- Johnson Brothers Rose Chintz.

In October 1952, a three bedroom, two bath, home with refrigerator, range, and water heater could be bought for \$23,000.

Paris Singer hoped to build a high-rise bridge to link Singer Island to Palm Beach or perhaps dig a tunnel under the inlet.

In July 1967, the "Keva Ideal" with 15,000 tons of cement went aground at the mouth of the inlet. In May 1978, the "Esso Brisbane" with 5.6 million gallons of oil ran aground but no oil was spilled.

In November 1953, mail delivery was begun to Palm Beach Shores. All 'mail boxes had to be uniform with names on the side. Some residents objected, preferring not to let people know where they lived.

In April 1967, a 658 pound bear, 7 feet tall, lumbered up to the front door to the Colonnades. The bear was "Gentle Ben" of the TV series.

The warm waters of the Gulf Stream are closer to land on Singer Island than any other place in North America.

Residents once needed a metal identification disc to use the town beach.