

WALDO SEXTON: Pioneer with a Purpose



Some people's destiny is to begin life with a set of lofty ideals and passionate plans, only later to disappear into obscurity. Others start out with lesser aspirations and ascend to a greatness of legendary proportion. Waldo Sexton was one of the latter.

Sometime in 1914, Waldo arrived in Vero Beach from Pinhook, Indiana, intent on selling a plow. What became of that plow is unknown, but Waldo was apparently impressed enough with the sales territory to make it his new home. Vero Beach has been grateful ever since.

The raw beauty and immense potential of Vero in those early years was a powerful attraction to Waldo and the other rugged pioneers who helped

develop the area. To survive the hardships, it was necessary to possess a stubborn tenacity or a sheer love of the land. Waldo possessed both, in excesses which left historic imprints visible today.

Though most people remember Waldo for building and furnishing the Driftwood Inn, his contributions in other areas were just as significant, notably in citrus, cattle, real estate and tourism. Innovative and practical, eccentric and lovable, he gave his all to Vero Beach.

The price of becoming a legend is not without hazards. Over the years, it's been fair sport to embellish the man's past with everything from fanciful conjecture to total inaccuracy. It's possible some of this fiction might have amused Waldo, himself given to the occasional alteration of fact, but there is some he would undoubtedly challenge had he the chance.

The Driftwood, for which he is best remembered, was originally built as a beach house retreat for his family. Its foundation is rich in the imagination of a visionary man's ability to see things in flat boards and ocean-washed timbers that others could not find. He built the Driftwood entirely without plans, totally upon shouted verbal instructions that must have given the carpenters many occasions to speculate about his sanity.

The Driftwood became an inspired obsession to Waldo, and over the years he added on to it, submitting totally to his consuming passion for collecting.

The result was an incredible array of art objects, artifacts and antique furniture that turned the one-time beach house into a fantastic museum, housed in one of the world's most unique structures.

People today owe considerable gratitude to the curious visitors who passed by the amazing edifice and could not resist inquiring if it would be possible to spend the night. Always happy to oblige, Waldo opened the Driftwood as a hotel, and began to accumulate people and friends with as much ease as he collected antiques and oddities.

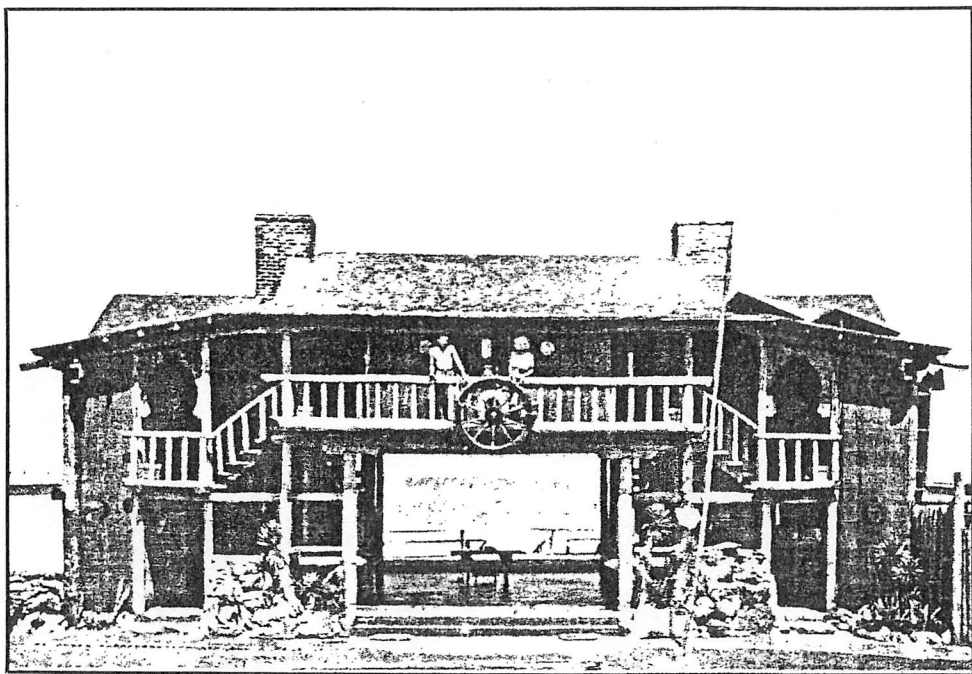
Though Waldo is gone, his legacy is very much alive at the Driftwood today, a fascinating and enduring monument to an incredible man who saw beauty in everything and was determined to preserve all he could for future generations.

When you visit the Driftwood, you may want to ring a bell or two for one of Vero's best-loved pioneers. He'll probably hear you and enjoy it immensely.

THE MIZNER CONNECTION

Addison Mizner achieved both notoriety and fame as the architect who designed and built some of Florida's most beautiful mansions and hotels. The Spanish flavor that dominates old Palm Beach is largely due to his hand. Unfortunately, though, many of his most outstanding creations fell to the wrecker's ball when their owners fell upon hard times during the Great Depression.

Enter Waldo Sexton, for it is to his credit that some of the finest pieces from these torn-down buildings are still in existence for us to enjoy today. From Mizner's vast gleanings of European treasures—some of immense value and smuggled illegally into the country—Sexton salvaged everything from tile and stained glass to religious statuary and wrought iron gates. In fact, for many years, people referred to the Driftwood as the Mizner Museum. Once again, Waldo's love of the unusual and collector's passion resulted in a valuable legacy.



A WALK THROUGH TIME...

700 YEARS OF ART AND ARTIFACTS AT THE DRIFTWOOD INN.

Waldo Sexton's passion for collecting left the Driftwood with one of the most interesting and unique collections of antiques, art and artifacts assembled anywhere. To give a complete background on every item would fill volumes, so only the best-known pieces are given a brief history here.

POINTS & ITEMS OF INTEREST

1) **BELLS:** All sizes, all shapes, Waldo collected bells from cathedrals, ships, locomotives and even sleighs.

Flagpole: 20" X 20" square, 51 feet tall, washed ashore in a 1939 storm, and was once the mast of a ship.

2) **BREEZEWAY BUILDING:** This was the first building constructed at the

Driftwood. It began as four rooms and was added on to over the years.

Map of Florida: Years ago, points of interest were marked by silver dollars embedded into the cement. Note the Florida "keys."

Tiles: Found everywhere at the Driftwood, some of these tiles are centuries old. The majority are from Spain and Italy.

Mahogany Table: This table and one you will see in the Sexton Room are two of the largest single slabs of mahogany in the world.

Cannons: Waldo Sexton dug these up from the beach directly in front of the Driftwood. They once armored a 16th century Spanish galleon.

3) **WALDO'S BUILDING:** This was the second building constructed, to house more visitors and a new kitchen. Advertising of this addition noted that the new

rooms had locks on the doors. This disturbed many of the regular visitors, who felt this feature detracted from the character of the Driftwood.

Boiler Heads: Now doing duty as tables on the patio, these solid bronze boiler heads were originally in use at the old Fellsmere sugar mill.

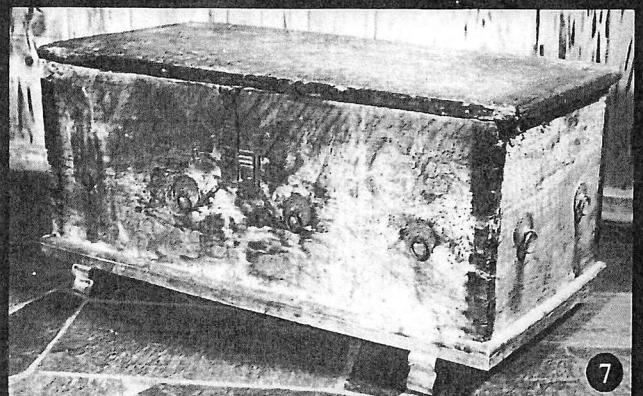
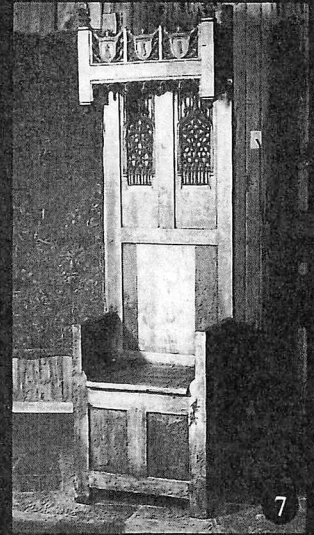
Stained Glass: Everywhere you turn a corner at the Driftwood, you'll come across beautiful stained glass, much of which was reclaimed from the Royal Poinciana Hotel and Bradley Casino in Palm Beach, when these buildings were torn down during the Depression.

4) **RELIGIOUS STATUARY:** The Driftwood has these beautiful pieces as a result of Waldo Sexton's close ties with Addison Mizner. The four pieces here bear a marked resemblance to several produced in the 15th century by

SAND IN YOUR SHOES

The legend says if you go home with sand in your shoes, you'll return to Florida again. Fact or fancy, millions of people come back to the Sunshine State every year. Florida is irresistible to most; its unparalleled beauty and spectacular climate, its wealth of recreational offerings, make it a virtual paradise.

When you walk Vero's beaches on the last day of your visit, let the sand get in your shoes--just to be sure.....



a famous family of Florence sculptors, the Della Robbias.

5) RESTAURANT BUILDING: The most recent building constructed.

Paintings: Approximately 200 years old, these paintings in the foyer and lounge are typical of the neo-classic revival of that time.

Sideboard: This beautifully hand-crafted piece is probably 17th century Flemish.

King's Chair: Undoubtedly one of the Driftwood's finest pieces, this meticulously hand-carved 16th century Spanish chair at one time had a matching queen's chair. Not thrones, these ornate chairs were located in cathedrals for use by members of the royal family.

6) SHIPWRECK: The Treasure Coast's reefs have been claiming victims since the first Spanish galleons visited centuries ago. The black object which appears above the waterline is actually the boiler of a ship which sank in a 1890's storm.

7) THE SEXTON ROOM:

Angel Candelabra: These beautiful angels once graced an Italian cathedral

altar. They are similar to works produced by the Della Robbias, mentioned earlier.

Cervantes: This hand-carved statue is from 18th century Spain.

Sideboard/Chest: This hand-carved, 17th century Spanish chest shows the strong Moorish influence prevalent during that period.

Tunisian Sheik's Harem Tent Curtain: It is not difficult to imagine the work that must have gone into making this piece, hard to believe it was one of many.

Dutch Shutters: Early 19th century, this Dutch barge style was popular in English cottage furnishings.

Bishop's Chair: At least a century old, hand-carved, of British origin.

Mirror: This ornate Italian rococo design, though not especially attractive today, was popular in the 18th century.

Persian Chest: Probably the oldest piece at the Driftwood, this 700 year old chest once had ivory inlay, vestiges of which can still be seen.

Religious Relief: Cast from an 18th century bronze.

Wooden Relief #1 (small): Spanish

or Italian, "Rinaldo Avenging the Honor of his Mother." Probably 17th century, when this kind of activity was rather commonplace.

Wooden Relief #2 (large): 17th century Italian baroque, this piece was originally part of some wealthy nobleman's sideboard, with its rich use of a cornucopia of abundance theme and reliance on fertility symbols such as pineapples and pinecones.

Spanish Altar Piece: From 16th century Spain, the paintings on either side are reminiscent of the style of El Greco.

Mahogany Table: This was once the main dining table for guests.

8) Every year in the Driftwood bears marks of past visitors. Waldo used to encourage his guests to contribute, often accepting the finished work as a method of payment.

Information about these pieces is based on original inventories of the Driftwood's holdings and recent examinations of several pieces done by professionals in the art world. The Driftwood staff welcomes your questions.

