Addison Mizner's
Ritz-Carlton Cloister Opens

Near the end of November 1925 T. Coleman du Pont resigned as chairman of the Mizner Development Corporation. For the small Florida real estate investor, the great wealth at du Pont's command and the financial reputation he gained as a founder of the modern DuPont corporation, seemed to guarantee the soundness of the Boca Raton venture. His departure from the company caused an immediate decline in Boca Raton sales, and according to one author, may have caused the collapse of the entire Florida land boom.

The opening of the Cloister, just two months after du Pont's resignation, took on added meaning for the Mizner company. The unquestioned beauty of the small hotel demonstrated Addison Mizner's vision for his entire development. His opening night guests from Palm Beach society, the show business world, and the British aristocracy proved a continuing interest in the development by the fashionable. Finally, the publicity gained from the opening could keep Boca Raton at the forefront of Florida promotions.

T. H. Weigall, in his 1931 book Boom in Florida, told how almost every newspaper or magazine article about Coral Cables came from the company's own publicity department. The articles in this issue of the Spanish River Papers also seem, in most cases, to be from the office of Harry Reichenbach, the publicity director of the Mizner Development Corporation. Nonetheless, they provide a vivid picture of Addison Mizner's small, but elegant Boca Raton inn.

Unfortunately, no amount of publicity would save Mizner's development. By the time the hotel opened the Florida land boom had ended. Within two years Mizner's company was forced into bankruptcy, ending his dream of building a Spanish city at Boca Raton. Clarence Geist, a Philadelphia utilities magnate and one of Mizner's original backers, took over the company's assets. He commissioned the New York architectural firm of Schultze and Weaver to design an addition to the small hotel and then reopened it as the exclusive Boca Raton Club.

Donald W. Curl
Editor
The whole country is familiar with the miracles being worked in Florida. Ponce de Leon's idea has been reversed; instead of youth, age has been produced, with the magical speed which is supposed to typify American methods.

The Old World traditions which have influenced so strongly, and so successfully, the development of an Hispanic type of architecture in California, apply with quite as much force in Florida. Climatic conditions are sufficiently like to justify a structural similarity. There are two obvious points of difference, which, without changing the general style, have certainly affected its treatment, so that while both Florida and California have caught the spirit of Old Spain to a remarkable degree, their versions are by no means identical. The contours of the land in Florida are with but little exception flat, and water plays an important part in its architectural development; the uses to which its buildings are put (save for governmental and public utility buildings) are based on a different method of living. Although California has many tourists, and tourist resorts, the great mass of building is for permanent residents, for life all the year round. Apparently the Florida coast has become a vast and lovely playground, where provisions for the housing and entertainment of guests is essential, indeed of paramount importance. Numbers of big and little estates have been established to serve as winter homes, or even for week-end or vacation resorts. The shortness of the trip (compared with that to the Pacific Coast) from the large cities of the East makes this feasible and attractive.

To neglect the possibilities of water in connection with architecture would be short-sighted. It is natural that suggestions of Venetian Gothic should creep in, and many charming and not incongruous features of these Florida buildings can be traced to this inspiration. There is much akin between the rich detail of Venetian ornament and the Spanish Plateresque or Churrigueresque, with their Moorish background.

Undoubtedly the architect whose personality is most strongly stamped on this new development of Hispanic Florida is Addison Mizner. Palm Beach owes many clubs and homes and hotels to his genius for scenic effect, his familiarity with European architecture, his expert knowledge and excellent taste in decoration and furniture. To him came the chance of which every architect has dreamed, realized by few, indeed: the designing and building of an entire city. Not one bit of construction to be started without his approval—what a soul-stirring, heart-warming opportunity!

From photographs of the work already completed or under construction in Boca Raton ("The Mouth of the Rat"—derived from an odd-shaped lake, with outlet to the ocean) [sic] and sketches for a multiplicity of buildings contemplated, it is clear that Mr. Mizner will add materially to his fame in this creation of this unique project. Granted that this is architecture which may be called theatrical or archaic—it is certainly a most superb and appropriate stage setting for the Comedie Humaine in its most pleasing aspect—an apotheosis of "Joie de Vivre."

Houses done by Mr. Mizner in Palm Beach have matured enough to indicate what may be expected of Boca Raton in its entirety, with the picturesque romanticism and the harmony of feeling which appeal so much to the traveler in the communities of Old Spain. America (including California) will owe a debt of gratitude to the creator of Boca Raton, a noteworthy example of artistic unity in design.

"MIZNER FURNITURE PLANT KEPT BUSY"

from the Palm Beach Post, 3 January 1926

The furniture for the Ritz-Carlton Cloister at Boca Raton will bear the same effectiveness in interior decoration that the Cloister and the Gothic arches will lend to the exterior of the building. The interior decoration scheme is being handled by Addison Mizner personally. The rooms of the Ritz-Carlton Cloister will boast some of the finest art treasures that he possesses.

The furniture factory that is one of the principal industries that West Palm Beach owns at the present time is operating overtime under Mr. Mizner's direction to produce sufficient furniture for the new hotel at Boca Raton. In the factory, Mr. Mizner is acquiring more furniture of the antique type consistent with the decorative scheme for the hotel.

In the guest rooms there will be beds of the antique type fashioned after designs that Mr. Mizner has originated. They are made in pairs with a pleasing variation that allows a very clever decorative usage. There are approximately 150 beds of this type.

There will be many interesting examples of chairs to be observed in the Ritz-Carlton Cloister. The tendency is toward the straight backed chairs with leather seats and leather backs. These chairs are made in the factory at
West Palm Beach by craftsmen who are thoroughly conversant with Spanish styles.

The tables, dressing tables, smaller stools and the various other pieces of furniture that go to provide the essence of comfort in the guest rooms of the Ritz-Carleton Cloister have been given an original characteristic finish.

In the lobby of the hotel and in the other larger downstairs public rooms there will be some of the most valuable of Mr. Mizner's collections of antiques. Tapestries, rare and exotic bits of furniture, will make the lobby of the hotel one of the most distinguished in Florida.

For three months the factory in West Palm Beach has concentrated its effort on the completion of this furniture. There is a staff of thirty craftsmen working on the furniture. They are under the immediate direction of M. Stainthorpe who has had a wide and varied range of experience in making distinctive copies of antiques.

Furniture that has been turned out in the West Palm Beach shop comprises 220 bed heads, copied after notable examples of the Spanish and 120 telephone stands have been made. There are 100 dressing tables, 110 mirrors, 100 writing tables and 110 three-drawer dressing tables.

Three hundred and fifty dining room chairs have been completed. These are of the leather seat and back type. The frames are made of walnut. For the lobby, there is a counter 13 feet long, exhibiting three antique panels. Two antique cupboards have been made for the dining room.

Besides making this quantity of furniture for the Ritz-Carleton Cloister, the factory has made all of the chairs and tables for the branch office of the Mizner organization. The Administration building at Boca Raton is furnished by the factory.

The standard of excellence of the new hotel will be thus upheld. The cost of the Cloister will run to $10,000 a room, making it one of the best appointed and most costly hotels in the state.

"MIZNER PLANS LAKE AS COMO'S RIVAL"

from the Palm Beach Post, 24 January 1926

With the bulkheading of Lake Boca Raton almost completed and the dredging progressed to a stage to allow the entrance of deep water yachts, that body of water is rapidly becoming one of the most beautiful views in the state. The praises of Lake Como in Italy have been sung to the skies. Chillon, Lucern and other well known lakes have been the object of a similar praise. Poets have described the calm beauties in glowing terms. But Lake Boca Raton will possess a quality of beauty that will recommend it to the same praise and laudatory efforts of writers.

The natural setting of the lake is one of its salient beauties. The verdant palms, the green shrubs, the tall pines form a pretty complement to the beauty that the lake shows. The sun as it rises gilds the water to a golden hue and then to a shining silver, to revert back to a molten silver-gold with the sunset.

But the natural beauty of the lake is not complete. The developers of Boca Raton, the Mizner corporation are planning to make the lake truly a beauty spot that has no equal in this country. The bulkheading will be of the

The rarely seen southern elevation of the proposed Castle Mizner. "The building of Addison Mizner's home in Lake Boca Raton will create a type of architectural beauty that has no parallel in this country." Photograph from The Historical Society of Palm Beach County.
Venetian type. Lazy gondolas will float over its surface. Water plants will throw their verdant shadows over it. Hyacinth will burst in fragile lavender bloom. Every type of improvement that may be added to nature's bountiful gift will be supplied, where nature has failed.

The lobby of the Cloister showing the 300-year-old entrance doors and "the huge lantern... casting a golden glow over all." Photograph from The Florida Architecture of Addison Mizner.

Great white-winged sailboats will float over the water, obeying the impulses of erratic breezes. An occasional scarlet sail will float languidly between the white boats, recreating the beauty of Venetian canals and lagoons. Flamingos will spread their pinkish wings and raise a symphony of feathered beauty in front of the Cloister. The inlet, which is now being bulkheaded and widened will allow the azure waters of the ocean to mingle with the waters of the lake.

The building of Addison Mizner's home in Lake Boca Raton will create a type of architectural beauty that has no parallel in this country. It will rise in the northern part of the beautiful body of water creating a picture that will be reproduced the world over on canvas and by photograph. The lake front homes that have already planned will create a waterfront of unequalled charm. For instance, the home that is to be built by John McMullen, editorial writer for Vanity Fair and Vogue, will possess a charm that will be reminiscent of Old World places. Yet it will be ultra-modern in that it will boast a five-car garage and a yacht slip.

The Ritz-Carlton Cloister will be the final touch of beauty for the lake front. Now practically completed, it lends itself admirably to artistic appreciation. It has a yacht landing that leads through a series of cloistered arches to the hotel proper. A palm bedecked courtyard is observable from the lake and the sun, in an alchemy of loveliness reflects the palms in the placid water.

The inlet will be bridged by a span of medieval proportions that will complete the beautiful picture of the lake. The essential charm of its waterways is one of Florida's greatest attractions, and it is the aim of the developers of Boca Raton to recreate an entirely new concept of beauty in waterfront treatment in the new resort city on the lower East Coast of Florida.

"RITZ-CARLTON DONE: OPENING ANNOUNCED"

from the Palm Beach Post, 31 January 1926

The Ritz-Carlton Cloister at Boca Raton is finished.

This announcement from the Mizner Development corporation was reflected in the invitations to the opening dinner at this, the first completed unit of the Mizner organization and which is set for next Saturday night, February 6.
The Cloister, as it is more familiarly known, has been in the building since August 25 of last year. Less than six months has elapsed since the foundation was laid and one can hardly realize that the opening is but a few days away. No finer record of building accomplishment has been recorded in the state of Florida and certainly no greater concentration has been affected than that which has characterized Addison Mizner's effort at Boca Raton.

The Ritz-Carlton Cloister is situated on the shore of Lake Boca Raton, nestling midst a cluster of foliage, trees and shrubbery which forms the typical Spanish atmosphere so essential to the carrying out of the Mizneresque idea of Florida construction. It boasts 200 rooms, a magnificent banquet hall, dining rooms, club quarters, golf players' quarters and spacious halls, rest rooms and office space.

Addison Mizner designed the hotel embodying in its designs from the Spanish that give it a beauty at once unique, distinctive and individual. The Ritz-Carlton Cloister, essentially a small hotel, allows a range of beauty of concept that would be lost in a more spacious or ample building. At the inception of the idea, the Cloister was designed primarily for beauty and luxurious restfulness. How perfectly this has been carried out may be seen only in the completed building.

The Cloister that faces on Lake Boca Raton is such as the priests of old trod with sandalled feet. The lofty arches of the entrance to the lobby carry out the same observation of medieval beauty. The court yard, fully landscaped, presents a scene of verdant charm that defies any other example to equal it. The dining room, with ceiling soaring 40 feet above the wax tiled floor, is a room that would have paid a compliment to Isabella of Spain. The windows of the dining room are of stained glass, filtering the lights through in a gorgeous arabesque of color.

The guests' rooms carry out the same discrimination that marks the rest of the hotel. The furniture for these rooms was designed by Addison Mizner and built in his factory in West Palm Beach. They present old warm [sic] charm with ultra modern convenience and luxury. Balconies open out from some of the rooms giving views of the lake.

The Ritz-Carlton Cloister is said to be the only important hotel in the United States that was completely built without resort to outside financing. There is not one bond or mortgage on the magnificent hostelry, making it absolutely unencumbered. The Mizner Development corporation are the sole owners.
Under the management of the Ritz-Carlton hotel system it will add a distinguished member to that already aristocratic family. Gustave Tott, formerly manager of the Ritz-Carlton in Atlantic City, is now in charge of the hotel.

The new hotel is the first unit of the complete Boca Raton to present the ultimate beauty of Addison Mizner's idea to the public. It makes a splendid bid for him.

The opening dinner will feature many people who are among the socially elect of the world. Among those asked to attend the fashionable opening are some of the foremost people in Palm Beach and Miami. There have been a number of select dinner parties organized in Palm Beach to go to the Ritz-Carlton Cloister opening.

"SOCIETY GATHERS AT CLOISTER BANQUET"

from the society columns of the Palm Beach Post, 6 February 1926

The Ritz-Carlton Cloister, the new hotel just completed by the Mizner Development Corporation of Boca Raton, opens tonight with an informal dinner where many Palm Beach colonists are to entertain.

Many prominent personages are represented among those who have made reservations, including Mrs. James H. Kiöder and party of six; Mrs. E. T. Stotesbury, eight; Mrs. and Mrs. H. Seligman; Mrs. Harris Hammond; Mr. Thomas Daggert; Mr. Alexander Revell; William J. Hazerine; J. Hornblow Druitt; Mr. and Mrs. George Rasmussen; Capt. and Mrs. J. J. O'Brien; Mary Brown Warburton and party of ten; Mrs. Barclay Warburton's party of eight; Samuel Lit and party of eight; Raymond Orteig; Mr. and Mrs. Sailing Baruch; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Case; Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Odmann, Mr. Al Jolson; Lee Shubert; E. F. Albee and party; Marcus Loew and party.

Countess Salm will be the guest of Mr. Okden; Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Cosden will be the guests of Mr. Lytle Hull. Addison Mizner's party will consist of twenty people; Mr. W. Mizner's party includes Misses Eleanor and Charlotte Chase, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Reichenbach's party includes Capt. Peter Quare, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Fuge, Mr. and Mrs. Archie Raynor and William Pickford. Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Jones' party will number ten. A number of Miamians will attend.

The Ritz-Carlton Cloister, which is to be conducted under the Ritz-Carlton Company of New York with Gustav Tott, formerly of the Atlantic City Ritz-Carlton, as managing director, harks back to the earlier monastic days of the Thirteenth Century and reeks of the atmosphere of early religious orders in its simplicity. The entrance to the Cloister is spanned by a Romanesque stone arch of gigantic proportions. The entrance is through a massive Spanish door 26 feet in height brought to Boca Raton from the Salamanca University in Spain, and opens upon a lobby 40 feet square but appearing much more extensive owing to the endless expanse of snow white plastered walls running up in unbroken severity to the ceiling almost three stories above, relieved on two sides by medieval type balconies.

Worn and ancient hand rails top the balustrade going up each stairway, leading the imagination back to the dark ages. Beams throughout the entire first floor are hand-carved. The floors are red tile and waxed. A huge lantern hangs from the center of the lobby casting a golden glow over all.

The lounge leads on to the Cloister whose early Gothic arches lead toward the lake and affords a magnificent promenade with each arch affording a differently framed perspective. The columns of the arches are fantastic in design, the motif being capitals wrought with crude figures and animals mounted on slender pillars. The loggia is again Thirteenth Century with beamed roof resting on giant columns, and this opens into the great dining hall which measures 40 by 84 and is more than 35 feet high.

Mr. Mizner took as his model for the dining hall the Fifteenth Century hospital at Vich in Catalonia. Along the walls are Spanish lavabos (stationary washstands from ancient times where diners washed the fat foods from their hands after eating). The feeling of the old hospital is perpetuated in five arched bays supporting a ceiling of beams and sapling poles. Thirty feet up are little round stained windows set with green and yellow glass with rose color dominating the end windows. The floor of the dining room is of red waxed tile supporting warmth in the soft biscuit tones of the walls. Furnishings are all modern, created by Mr. Mizner at Los Manos Factories in West Palm Beach. The beds are Fifteenth Century replicas, each room of the two hundred being done in a different tone.

It is a blending of antique and medieval splendor.

Three golf courses, three batteries of tennis courts and polo fields are in close proximity of the Cloister, with entrance for yachts directly on Lake Boca Raton, which is connected with the Atlantic by Inlet and the Hillsboro Canal.
"THE CLOISTER OPENS"
from the Palm Beach Post, 8 February 1926

The formal opening of the Ritz-Carlton Cloister Inn at Boca Raton Saturday night was one of the outstanding social events of the season in Florida and marks the completion of the first step in the development of that widely heralded city on the so-called "gold-coast" of Florida.

Attended by many of the most prominent personages now spending the winter in Florida, the list of names inscribed on the guest book of the Inn rivals the social registers of two continents.

The entrance to the magnificent building itself is worthy of mention.

Passing through great doors that have done duty in Spain for four centuries or more into a lofty hall with a gallery around it, illuminated with soft lights from iron fixtures with speared candle holders ready for use. A long passage to the right, an iron grille separating the office from the foyer on the left, and up a flight of steps to the great arched gallery, giving upon one side of the cloistered patio.

On the left, the entrance through more ancient doors, into the great refectory, replica of some famous monastery, high arched, with five beautiful plaster niches and softly panelled wood in green, brightened by touches of red. On one side, light falling softly through beautiful stained glass windows in tones of aquamarine and sapphire and azure. On the other, high and graceful arches, and seven great wrought iron chandeliers, with quaint iron fixtures like the old oil lamps one sees in Spain, descending from the circular rings and their indirect lighting giving an indescribably soft effect. Tables, their ancient frames concealed by satin and gleaming with glass and silver, bright with china in red and yellow Spanish coloring. Chairs of antique wood with leather seats, nail studded and sturdy, cabinets for silver and linen of ancient Spanish oak and buffets of similar import.

In such surroundings as this was the first dinner served by the Ritz-Carlton management and their force—a dinner such as one seldom if ever sees, at the opening of a new hotel. Red-coated, gold-braided servitors, responding in French and Spanish to whispered queries; delicious viands, piping hot, wonderfully seasoned and beautifully served, made this a truly Lucullan repast, which was enjoyed by nearly 500 persons.
During the course of the dinner, Thomas Chadbourne, well-known social figure of Palm Beach, expressed his appreciation of the beauty achieved in building the hotel. He characterized it as one of the finest pieces of architecture in America today. Alexander P. Moore of Pittsburgh, former ambassador to Spain, paid tribute to Addison Mizner as "the Michael Angelo of America." Mr. Mizner acknowledged the compliments with a bow.

After dinner, there was the great register or guest book, a marvel of ancient and fragrant Spanish leather, illumined like a missal with great white pages invitingly open for the guests to sign.

There were little parties inspecting the hotel, during all the evening. The long, low rambling structure with its interesting contours, its great patio like a courtyard of ancient Spain its cloistered gallery leading to terrace, whence one steps into boats and puts out upon the lake. Little balconies giving from the chambers upon the second floor, invite serenaders—and truly, there were real ones during the dinner, with the sweet song of "In Boca Raton," written by Grant Clarke, and some soft Italian love songs as well, by a band of sweet-voiced singers with guitars and mandolins.

In the great hall, leading from the high arched loggia, logs were brilliantly burning in a huge fireplace, into which a man might walk up-right. Shields placed along the walls of the great high-ceiled beamed room, held clusters of bright Spanish flags, spoils of wars untold, and arched doors give upon the terrace outside where a dancing floor and a great plaza were dimly seen in the dusk.

The quaint Spanish beds with their illumined saints and crests and emblems, the beautiful old Spanish furniture of the rooms, the modern baths of gleaming porcelain against the blue and green and black of tiled floors, the soft coloring of the hangings and the quaintly braided rugs upon the floors—all these touches make part of a perfect whole—so perfect a whole that one continues to marvel at the genius of Addison Mizner, who conceived the vast project of Boca Raton and who is carrying on until his dream city shall be finished; with its remarkable cathedral, memorial to his beloved mother; its palace rising from the sea, for his own home, the busy streets, the broad boulevards, the wonderful houses that shall arise.

Of the guests present there were many whose names are synonymous with the greatest activities of the day in the world of society, art, and commerce. Among those who enjoyed the brilliant opening of the beautiful hotel were Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Stotesbury, Mr. and Mrs. Oswald Birley,
Mrs. James Kidder, Mr. John McMullen, Col. Owen Kenan, Miss Mary Brown Warburton, Mr. and Mrs. Felix Doubleday, Mr. Jay Carlisle, Mrs. Douglas Paige, Mr. and Mrs. Allen G. Willman, Mr. Lyle Hull, Mrs. Vincent Astor, Mrs. Joshua Cusden, Lord Knowles, Irene Castle McLaughlin, Helen Croker, Thomas Hitchcock, Jr., Rodman Wanamaker II, Alastair MacIntosh, Mr. Walter Ogden, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Carpenter, Miss Marjorie Oelrichs, the Misses Isabel and Eleanor Chase, Myron C. Taylor, Mrs. Standord C. White, Mr. and Mrs. Shelden Whitehouse of the American embassy in Paris; Mr. Paul Moore, Mr. Edward Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Chadbourn, Miss Dorothy Biglow, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Somers Roche, Mr. Charles Norris, famous novelist, and Kathleen Norris, likewise famous literary personage; Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Fuge, Captain Peter Quale, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Neichenbach and Wilson Mizner.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson T. Herd entertained a party of 24, among whom there were Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Pettit, Mr. and Mrs. A. Stanley Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Bartholomew, Commodore and Mrs. Vincent Ward, Miss Eddythe Northrup, Miss Fanny Ward. Miami had a splendid representation with Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Blits, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Rush, Mrs. Frances Tatum Fleer, Mr. E. R. Lawshe and others. Britton Busch entertained Lady Mary Walton and Nina Wilcox Putnam. Alexander Moore, former ambassador to Spain, was presented, while Philip Vollner entertained Addison Mizner, Miss Marie Dressler, Mr. Du Blas and others. Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Reveil were the hosts to another large party. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Seligman entertained a party of eight. Miss Muriel McCormick was entertained at one of the smaller tables. Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Orteig entertained a party of eight, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Spiegel entertained four. Jay Hornblow Dewitt entertained five, while Col. Sam Lit entertained a party of nine. Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Odman entertained a party of five. Mr. and Mrs. Harris Hammond entertained a party of eight. Mr. Alert Keller and E.W. Kerr, principal executives of the Ritz-Carlton Co. in New York, entertained 10 guests while Gustave Tott, managing director of the Cloister, entertained Mr. Prince and a small party.

Miss Marie Dressler, Grant Clark and Addison Mizner, motored to Miami on Saturday where, on Saturday evening, before the offices of the Mizner Development corporation, a delightful program was given. Miss Dressler in her own inimitable fashion, entertained the gathering of some 600 people for twenty minutes and Mr. Addison Mizner also gave them a talk while Mr. Clarke, official lyricist of Boca Raton, also contributed to the program. They returned here on Saturday evening. Miss Dressler is stopping in Palm Beach at an apartment in Via Mizner.

Grant Clarke, noted composer of many favorites in the song world, is official lyricist of Boca Raton and his new lyric, a tango entitled "Boca Raton," is shortly to be published in New York by the Clarke & Leslie Co., publishers of Music, on Broadway. Mr. Clarke is composer of "Get Out and Get Under," "Secondhand Rose," "A Little Bit of Bad in Every Good Little Girl," and "Everything is Peaches Down in Georgia." Besides having these and many others to his credit, he is author of Dixie to Broadway, and the Plantation Revue, now running to crowded houses in New York.

**"IN BOCA RATON"**

by Grant Clarke, official lyricist of Boca Raton

Think of an evening in June
Under a crystal-like moon
Think of an old Spanish tune
You're in Boca Raton.

Closing your eyes for awhile
Dream of a tropical isle
Studded with flowers that smile
You're in Boca Raton.

Millions of Stars up above—
shine bright
Strolling with someone you love
each night.

Think about old Captain Kidd
Think of a chest that he hid
Dream that you've opened the lid
You're in Boca Raton.
Great Modern Hotels: the Ritz-Carlton Cloister of Boca Raton

Boca Raton already spells magic to the lovers of gorgeous beauty of seacoast Florida. And when we say Boca Raton today we think of a stretch of tropical land touching an emerald and amethyst sea, almost surrounded with blue waterways, intersected with wide lagoons which are bordered by palms, palmettos and vivid gardens. Through these gardens secluded pathways will run, and beyond will be magnificent Gothic doorways and old Romanesque arched entrances to some of the most picturesque homes in the world. Both the wide highways and the paths through the gardens are flanked with giant shrubs which bloom for months at a time in gorgeous shades of orange and scarlet, deep crimson, canary color and mauve. No modernist painter could bring together on his palette more brilliant hues than the blooms of the hibiscus shrubs, bending at dawn and twilight to the sweet sea winds. The pergolas and arbors will glow under the canary yellow alemanda vine and the bougainvilleas blooms in a profusion never seen elsewhere, I think, save in an East Indian jungle.

In this stretch of eighteen thousand acres which is called Boca Raton, there is practically no "Inland," for on both sides of the tract are canals, in the very heart of the living district are lakes, and beautiful waterways flow from ocean to lake, through canals to the lagoon. If it were not so old-fashioned, one would say that here indeed had a new Venice been born, created by an artist who realized that for all final loveliness there must be inlets and waterways about the home, a combination of land and sea, or land and rivers. So wide is the main lagoon in Boca Raton that houseboats can steam in from the lake, and all kinds of craft find their way from ocean to boat houses. Picture at twilight coming in from deep-sea fishing or from canoe riding over the crest of the breakers, or from a yacht race on one of the lakes with red Venetian sails billowing in the wind to find a harbor in this palm-bordered waterway. Lovely Spanish homes half-hidden in the fragrant gardens are reached by flowering pathways, then on to a tea party in a cloister or out on a lawn and later dinner parties, music or dancing out-of-doors or in the hotel cloisters or on the open terraces in the wide gardens, with the fragrance of orange blossoms drenching the soft night winds—the most exquisite opportunity for sheer, beautiful, healthful, fascinating play that could be imagined.
Besides the water sports, Boca Raton will have tennis courts protected from the sun but open to the wind, three fine golf courses, sloping gently to the sea, with fairways carpeted by emerald turf, a smooth tableland for the polo players, as well as a flying field where one may hear the hum of planes hopping off for Miami, Nassau, Havana or out to sea. The roadways are wide and smoothly paved, palm arcaded and flower bordered. And through the very heart of Boca Raton runs the Dixie Highway which takes you north and south on one of the most beautiful highways in the country.

It would seem as though all the beauty that had ever been dreamed of in Andalusia, Mallorca, old Sienna, or ancient Rome, the wonders of the South American jungle, the bird beauty of India, the splashing forest colors of South Africa, as well as the architecture which the Moors brought to Spain, and which Spain brought to California and Florida will be combined in Boca Raton with the last word of convenience, comfort and luxurious living, for which America holds the palm today.

It is interesting to realize that this entire development of Old World beauty, of tropical splendor and modern comfort, was the idea of one man, Addison Mizner. For one never can forget that one of the first men who saw Florida as the American Riviera was Mr. Mizner.

Such architecture as the Ritz-Carlton Cloister at Boca Raton makes one wonder what is in a man's spirit that could make a building he has designed an architectural personality, that could make forms of wood, or stone, or stucco so beautiful that they trouble the imagination, that could bring back into new homes a mysterious old beauty that has enriched other worlds for centuries. Why should one expensive building be bleak and formal, without hospitality or warmth, while another, perhaps the same type and period of architecture, seems alive, kindling the spirit, possessing a lure that brings one swiftly over the threshold, stimulates interest, suggests romance, liberates the fancy?

Why? Indeed! Who can tell? Yet we who love architecture and gardens, and the splendor of tropic color and form, realize that there are buildings, and gardens too, that have this magic, that pique the curiosity and touch the affection. It is not wholly a matter of beauty, although we recognize beauty as a potent and tangible thing; it is not wholly a matter of architectural sincerity, although that, too, is a wise and necessary force. It is rather, somehow, knowing beauty profoundly and worshipfully, and having the gift to infuse into one's work the emotion which beauty has awakened. If one has appreciation of present-day accomplishment and the splendid
achievements of olden day, then something of the charm of these memories should pour through the making of new homes and gardens. And this sense of understanding beauty eventually finds its way into the stucco walls, the rose tiled roofs, and slender twisted iron balconies, the delicately carved niches in the deep walls, the Gothic rails around the garden terraces, the grouped Moorish windows, the great cloisters that surround the patios, the sumptuous stairways that trip down to the sea. Mere building materials are not sufficient to create magic beauty even in the hands of the best contractors and craftsmen. And the wonders that will make Boca Raton a place for beauty lovers to live, are first born on one man's imagination, and the picturesque homes are realized by the architect before the first line is drawn, the first blue print is made.

The first public building erected in Boca Raton is called the Ritz-Carlton Cloister, and the pictures of this building, inside and out, illustrate this article. The Ritz-Carlton Cloister is on Lake Boca Raton. It is a beautiful small hotel of two hundred rooms, an embodiment of Addison Mizner's appreciation and adaptation of Spanish architecture to Florida's landscape and climate. Although it has every modern comfort and convenience, it is mediaeval in its inspiration and picturesque beauty. It is a low, friendly, roaming building that rests at the edge of the lake, as the old cloisters do in remote Spanish towns, or in deep-hidden Italian gardens. It is as mellow as the ancient palaces of Seville, which is the part of Spain which inspired Mr. Mizner to build this particular Spanish gem.

In planning the Ritz-Carlton Cloister Mr. Mizner has deviated from the luxurious trappings of the tropical hotels of the Pacific coast and the Riviera. The old Romanesque building which furnished Mr. Mizner his inspiration for the Ritz-Carlton Cloister was a Spanish convent built in the eleventh century, and later the Gothic crest and Gothic refectory were added. As a result it exhales an atmosphere of beautiful, austere simplicity in outline and arrangement. One enters through a wide portal spanned by a Romanesque stone arch of gigantic proportion, one passes through the great Spanish door into a lobby forty feet square. Here the plaster walls run up in unbroken severity to the ceiling two stories relieved on two sides by a balcony around the second floor. The ancient handrail on the balustrade carries the imagination back to those mediaeval days when handrails were hewn out of slender logs. In the center of the lobby an old Spanish lantern casts a golden glow on the carved beams and the red tiled floor.

One of the loveliest rooms is the lounge which projects over the lake giving one a sensation of being in a boat which is actually resting on the blue and green tropical waters, whose marvelous colors are repeated in the stained glass Romanesque windows.

From the lounge one steps into the cloisters, through early Gothic arches, and the columns of the cloisters are finished with fantastic capitals, wrought with crude figures and animals, the whole supporting a low-swung arched ceiling. The wooden beams of this ceiling as well as the carved brackets over the top of the columns were originally a part of the University of Seville. Almost the loveliest spot in the hotel is the dining room with its magnificent ceiling supported on five great Gothic arches of solid masonry. The huge beams of this ceiling are wood, colored with bright vermilion and green, and the lighting of the room is through yellow glass in the daytime.
The ballroom is done in the manner of an old baronial hall brilliantly decorated with battle flags formerly presented to convents and monasteries. The bedrooms throughout have intentionally been kept very simple, with something of the old quality of the severe beauty to be found in convents and monasteries. The walls are creamy whitewash and the shutters, doors, as well as the spreads on the beds are of a curious tomato color. The beds are old polychrome in many colors and so are the dressing tables, mirror frames and rugs. Brown terrazzo makes the floors and the smaller pieces of furniture are antique walnut.

But while there is an architectural austerity in the building and sometimes a curious fine simplicity in the furnishing of the Ritz-Carlton Cloister there is every known comfort and convenience from one end of the beautiful building to the other.

In speaking with such interest of "The Cloister" at Boca Raton one should not forget the much larger hotel which is being built by the same company on the ocean front, the Ritz-Carlton. This will not be opened, because of the enormous amount of work to be done in the building, fitting and furnishing, before the season of 1927, and for this an army of workers, engineers, contractors, the best in the world will be kept busy for a year.

Boca Raton is so conveniently placed that it seems as though the country about had been planned to augment its beauty and convenience. It is only twenty-seven miles south of Palm Beach and forty-three miles north of Miami. The Gulf Stream which contributes so much to the joy of the Florida climate here comes close to the shore and the result is an azure sky, a blue and emerald sea and a yellow beach shining in the sunlight most of the days of the year. Every street in Boca Raton will be from eighty to two hundred and twenty feet wide and all will be paved. On each side of the beautiful roadways and highways will appear in time a deluge of palms, flowers and shrubbery, which will be transplanted bodily from forest and jungle when the time comes for garden making in this tropical paradise.

Already magnificent estates are being designed for the ocean front and along the shore of the lake, and beautiful gardens will be created to surround these picturesque homes. The harbor for Boca Raton is a beautiful spot and here will land sea-going yachts and the famous house boats which play so great a part in the life of Florida. The beach at Boca Raton, one of the finest bathing beaches in the country, stretches for two miles along the sea and from there beyond the breakers, are splendid opportunities for the men who love deep-sea fishing.

There seems to be an ever-growing interest in Florida as the playground for American. It is so near at hand, the climate is so equitable, the country so beautiful and the opportunities for sport of every description so unique, that where formerly the winter season took us abroad over the world for sunlight and tropic bathing, today instinctively we think of Florida with her gorgeous homes, her opportunity for really delightful social intercourse, for exciting sport and for, in many ways, the most picturesque and interesting hotel life that has ever been afforded any country.