



The Driftwood Inn and Resort

A Brief History of the Driftwood Resort

With only a sheer love for the unusual and an impassioned desire to collect and enjoy the same, an Indiana plow salesman created what has become renowned as “the damndest place you ever saw” --- the Driftwood Resort. When Waldo Sexton wandered into Vero Beach in 1914, intent on selling a plow or two, he was so inspired and impressed with the area’s raw beauty that he decided to make it his new home. The residents couldn’t have been more pleased, in the course of his eccentric and unstructured life he contributed time and innovation to such industries as citrus, cattle, real estate and tourism.

His first love and most consuming project was the oceanfront retreat he built for his family. As a true scavenger, he built with whatever lumber was available: scraps from a demolished barn, discarded planks along the roadside, ocean-washed timbers that appeared to be worthless to anyone else. Waldo had help in the building, but not from a master plan of any sort. Rather, he shouted instructions to the fellow holding the two by four while he eyeballed its squareness from the ground. Unorthodox perhaps, but a more dramatic result you’ll never find . . . the most parallel, just about square, and close-to-level effect of the wooden melange that is the Driftwood.

Probably even more important to Waldo than the building of the structure itself was the “fixin-up.” His new retreat was a showroom, both inside and out, for all the art, artifacts, antiques and just plain junk that he collected. Waldo had a special fondness for bells and accumulated them in all shapes, sizes and materials and they’re still abundantly apparent at the resort today. Over the years, what started as an occasional overnighiter for curious passers-by turned into a hotel operation for the Sexton family. That suited Waldo just perfectly, since it gave him the opportunity to add people and friends to his long list of collectibles.

Of course, Waldo Sexton was too notorious and influential a character not to have the effects of his eccentricity felt by the rest of the town. The beachfront Ocean Grill, originally run by Waldo as a hamburger stand, is today one of the Treasure Coast’s finest dining establishments. The Tiffany lamps and nautical artifacts that decorate the place are, once again, the acquisitions of Waldo Sexton. Similarly, the Patio Restaurant in downtown Vero is adorned with paneling and tiles from an old estate in Palm Beach, courtesy of you know who!!!

Even though Waldo is gone, his carefree spirit and appreciation for the unique is still what the Driftwood Resort is all about. He wanted to preserve and enjoy his fascinating and incredible collection . . . we at the Driftwood are dedicated to maintaining that legacy as well.

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