



-draft for review-

## **The Artists of the Lake Worth Library**

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While it may be difficult to imagine today, before the arrival of TV, the mall and suburbanization, the City of Lake Worth had a vibrant arts life of its own –in terms of exhibitions, concerts by local and visiting artists as well as discussion of artistic matters at a range of social groups such as the Sorisis woman’s club, the Rotary club, and other social, public affairs and arts organizations. In that context, the Lake Worth Beach Library has a long history – not just as a library itself -- but also as an art museum. Prior to the 1950 -- in the era before TV and “hi fi”, and women in the work force -- most communities of Lake Worth’s size had an active arts and cultural community with clubs, presentation, and exhibition. The newspapers carried daily announcement of local art exhibitions – featuring both local and national artists – as well as regular presentations on art and cultural topics at the wide variety of cultural and social affairs organizations. After the Depression of the 1930s, several arts organizations grew out of the major Palm Beach County museums – especially the Norton – and most cities had their own “arts league”. Lake Worth was no exception

This consciousness of the arts was reflected in 1940 at the time of the construction of the new city library when long-time seasonal residents – the Strait Brothers -- provided \$10,000 for a museum wing. For over 25 years – into the mid-1960s --the Strait Museum was the home of the Lake Worth Art League and a vibrant community of artists, activities, and exhibitions

At the same time, the interest in art spilled over into the Library itself. The city was home to several noted artists of the time who had regional – and even national -- renown. In the 1950s, the library took advantage of this fact and acquired some of their key works to be displayed in the Library --where they are visible today.

There is virtually no written material on the Strait Museum, or the history of arts activities in Lake Worth starting at the City’s foundation in 1913 until well after mid-Century. The library has brief directories of its painting and sculptures. This research tracks what is known about Lake Worth’s two most important artists of that period.

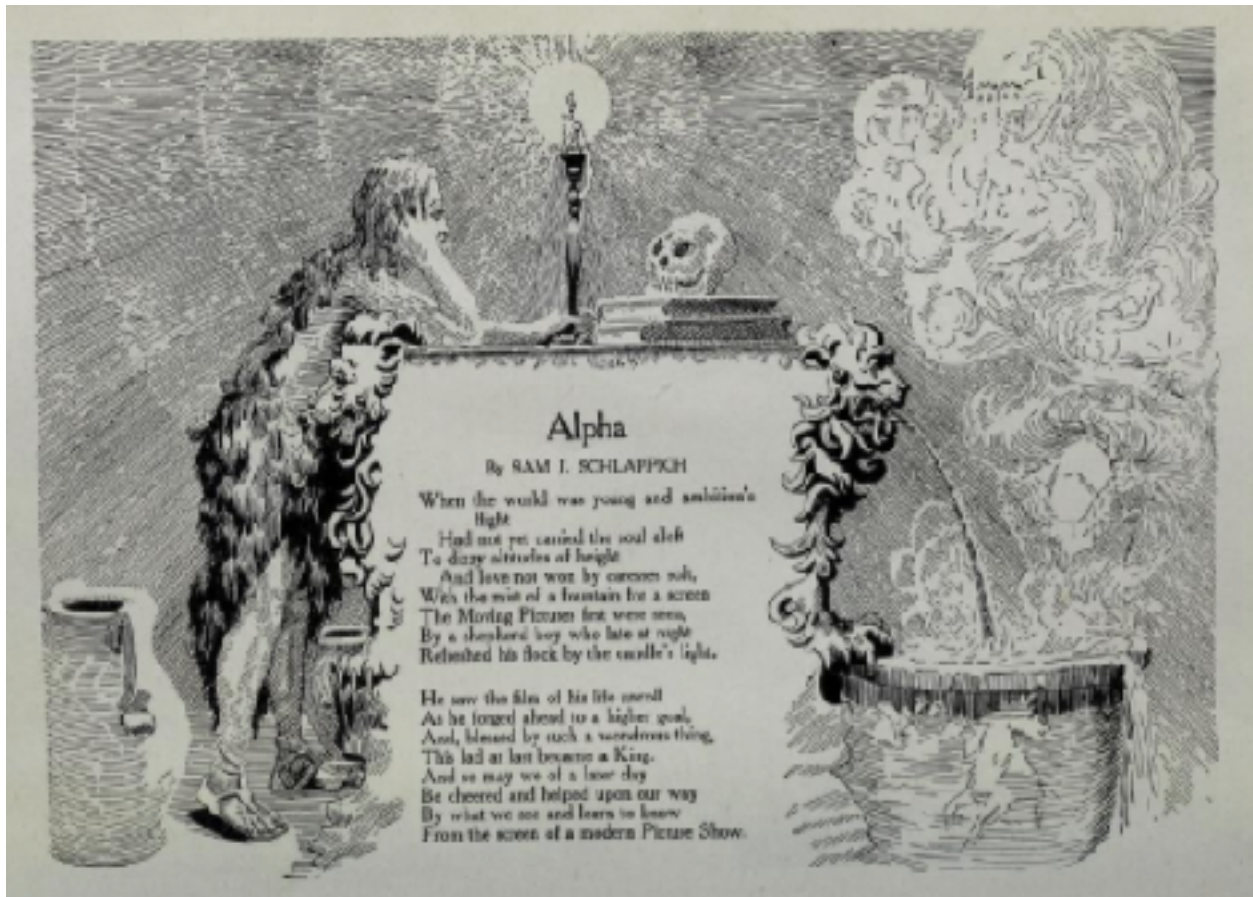
**Samuel L Schlappich**

Samuel L Schlappich was Lake Worth's most famous local artist in pre-War (WWII) Lake Worth over a 20-year career. He worked in several mediums: ceramics, drawing, poetry, and painting. Some of most famous works – in wood carving – for years hung in the Lake Worth Library and are still exhibited in the history section on the third floor which he willed to the Library before his death in 1969. Aside from a brief library note, the source material on Schlappich's life and work is entirely drawn from contemporary newspapers

Schlappich was consistently visible in the Lake Worth community (as reflected in by newspaper reporting) in the burgeoning Palm Beach County arts community, exhibiting and making presentations to community arts and social groups. His work was exhibited in the Florida section of the 1933 and 1939 World's Fairs. Reproductions of his work were widely available – and some copyrighted. He was an active officer in the Art league of Lake Worth. His poetry was quoted in the Palm Beach and Miami newspapers. He had an astronomy column in the Lake Worth Herald in the 1930s. He discovered one of the most important ancient Indian mounds and corresponded with the Smithsonian Institute.

Schlappich was born in 1878 – the son of well-known German minister and studied religion in Pittsburgh and art in Cleveland. After studying drawing in a correspondence course 20s, he developed part-time jobs as an illustrator, photographer cartoonist, and poet for variety of publications, including regular appearances in the major motion picture fan magazine of the time – all the while doing factory work

Below is an illustration from a 1950 issue of *Motion Picture Magazine* – where he worked as a staff artist for 12 years -- illustrating key features of his style including a preoccupation with fantasy, primitivism, myth, and religion.



### Example of Schlappich poetry and illustration from 1915

Source: [archive.org/details/motionpicturemaag08moti/page/n101/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/motionpicturemaag08moti/page/n101/mode/2up)

Schlappich considered himself a poet and philosopher. His “escape” to Florida in 1925 at age 47 may be related to his desire to escape the strong family religious influence and its inconsistency with his artistic orientation. But living outside of urban centers of art publication he had to find a way to make a living. As he had a crafts interest, he bought a shoe repair shop on S. J St. -- and tasked the current owner to teach him the shoe repair business. [PBP 08/26/34]. He said the bare walls of the shoe shop in combination with some of the tools used in shoe repair inspired him to try wood carving. [PBP 08/26/34]. Soon his shop acquired the designation “Shoe Shop with Carvings on South J St”. [Lake Worth Library brochure created mid-1980]

During the following 40 years, Schlappich was active in the arts community, as a founder and active member of the arts community and through his many presentations about art and art-related philosophy at the regular meetings of a range of men’s and women’s social and public affairs clubs. Around Lake Worth, Schlappich was known as “the deacon” owing to his dour countenance and the fact that he had been educated for the ministry [Miami News [15/12/35]. Although his work was exhibited widely in Florida, he apparently never sought wide recognition. Much of his notoriety was due to the fact that his wood carvings that were exhibited at the 1939 World’s Fair as part of the Florida exhibition won the Bronze Medal. He also won many prizes from the Art League as late as 1951 when his water color painting “sea grapes” won first prize at the Members Exhibition.

A 1937 Post article {18/07/37} reported that "Samuel J Schlappich of South J St. whose working wood carving has attained national recognition, has added to his already large and distinctive output, a new carving, *"The Madonna of the Jungle"* an arresting piece which has for its central figure a mother of the African Congo holding her arms a young child [this piece is in the Lake Worth Beach Library collection] Mr. Schlappich has resided in the city since 1925, and devotes much of his time to wood carving although his contributions of verse to many periodicals into the anthology *Florida poets*, as well as to a new painting *"Wind in the Palms"* to be seen in the studio, attests to his varied attainments. He works in both bass relief and alto relievo, and does the major part of his carvings in oak, one piece in his output being however a Medusa head in Chinese teak. A distinguishing feature of the work is its three dimensions. Scriptural and tropic subjects predominated in the exhibit, all showing an extraordinary sense of detail".

In a 1953 interview he recalled how he first came to loan his carvings to the street Museum "it got to the point so many came to the house to see his carvings that we could need a meal without interruption."

Among the carvings in the library is one of his most famous called *Suppressed Desires* that apparently attracted considerable positive comments and was exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair. Although by today's standards it might seem daring, but as observed in an article in the *Palm Beach Post Times* on Schlappich [08/26/34], this carving.... is an original conception, the central figure of which is a beautiful young woman. Grouped around here are the blind faces of "suppressed desires". The expressions on these carved countenances told the observer just which selfishness, appetite, lewdness, aggression. and snobbery exultation crowns the features of the woman. In her hands, lightly folded on her breast is the cross by the power of which she overcomes these desires".



**Schlappich at work**

Source: Miami New 12/05/35

Among other carvings, he was commissioned in 1932 by the George Washington Bicentennial committee of the state of Virginia to do a carving of Washington. A West Palm Beach company produced multiple

copies and it became a commercial success [LWH 3/11/32] and was sold by the American Legion throughout Florida [LWH 04/0733. This carving was copyrighted in 1947. Apparently, the shoe shop plus the proceeds of art sales provided sufficient living. In 1938 he built an apartment building at the southeast corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and L St., Later known as the Croton Lodge – which he rented out.

In addition to his carving, sculpture, and drawings, Schlappich was a published poet – both in poetry anthologies and reproduced in newspapers. A characteristic poem about his art was “The Song of the Woodcarver” [PBP 09/15/35]:

*I carve and while I carve I sing.  
Mine is no magic art, transmitting wood  
into a thing of beauty, nor have I surpassing skill or power with which I could  
force trauma to reluctance lab a cry  
At being changed., No! Locked in its heart  
It holds creation's secret in its loath  
To bear its bosom to the ruthless knife,  
The chisel, gouge and mallet, each a part  
That dig and pierce and rend the speechless sloth,  
To give the slab a tongue and with it, life.  
In patience, chip by chip, the dross is peeled;  
And lo, the perfect thought is left revealed.  
To me no credit now belongs, or ever should accrue,  
I only chip away the waste, the worthless residue.*

In addition to his artistic activities, he had a scientific bent, pursuing his interest in astronomy as a founder of the Lake Worth astronomy club in 1932[LWH 07/29/32] in his weekly column on “Amateur Astronomy” that ran for two years. He was also the finder of one of the key prehistoric indigenous Indian mounds in Lake Worth and corresponded with the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

Schlappich was married twice and had two daughters. He died at age 90 in 1969

Schlappich wood carvings that are on display in the Florida Room of the Lake Worth Public Library include:

- Madonna of the Jungle (which won the Bronze Medal at the 1939 World's fair)
- Hannu, the Incense Bringer
- The Secret Garden
- Pilot Washing His Hands
- Christ Carrying the Cross
- Eve, in the Garden
- Diana, the Huntress the Spirit of the Jungle
- Suppressed Desires(Described above)
- The Crystal Gazer
- Kasim, the Hindu Guard

Descriptions of the theme of each of these carvings are available in the “Art in the Library” brochure at the Library.

## **R. Sherman Kidd-Winton**

The most visible artist in the Lake Worth Beach Public Library is R. Sherman Winton – a notable painter and muralist of his day. Twelve of his paintings hung in the library including the vast “Sailing of the Spanish Armada”. Winton experienced a good deal of more-than-local fame during his career. But the facts of his life are vague, somewhat confused by the fact that he changed his last name from Kidd to Winton in 1926. The principal source of the details of his life and work are newspaper archives and a website created by some of his descendants devoted to uncovering records of his life and work [<https://www.facebook.com/Fans-and-Family-of-Reginald-Sherman-Kidd-also-Reginald-Sherman-Winton-106534273015418/>].

Kidd-Winton was apparently born in Mansfield Ohio in 1877, attended Chicago’s Art Institute and moved to Paris in when he was 18 to study art at the Académie Julienne for five years where he won several prizes, after which he went on to London for two more years of study. He then returned to the US and studied with the then-famous historical book illustrator Howard Pyle –possibly in Philadelphia and the settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, working with the Robert F. Fenno Publishing Co, of New York, doing book covers and illustrations. He then moved to Boston where he married and executed several portraits that may be in private collections

Like Pyle, he considered his art to be educational as well as artistic – and reviews often mentioned the accurate historical content of his paintings based on studies of models and portraits.

His first Florida mention is via a Miami newspaper [*Miami Metropolis* 09/15/20] where it is reported that Winton – “an artist as well is a teacher... whose illustrations appear regularly in the Saturday evening Post” and his wife have moved from Boston to “the Dudley College on O St. and he was to take a faculty position at West Palm Beach High School”.

Not long after he moved to Lake Worth, he had a large painting on display in the First National Bank called “A Commerce Destroyer of the Seventeenth Century” – depicting the piratical days of the Spanish Main. Three years later is [*PBP* 11/07/23] he is mentioned again as having recently completed series of pictures for the Joshua Cosden home in Palm Beach. This house later called Playa Riente, was Mizner’s largest and most elaborately decorated home in Palm Beach, built in 1923 for Cosdon, an Oklahoma oilman. The paper reported that the canvas was in 18-foot lengths to be placed to make a continuous 111-foot picture in the dining room -- depicting the story of De Soto and his expedition to Florida in the sequence of episodes in the history. The house was razed in 1957 and the murals were lost. Winton apparently did other work for Mizner in decorating houses and reported that he illustrated the Mizner brochures for the Boca Raton development.

Between 1923 in 1925, he and his wife spent two years in Europe visiting six countries and “working in many museums and collections in his research that lay behind this historical and marine paintings [*PBP* 03/05/25. Kidd was always interested in maritime subjects and his wife studied marine architecture. He took great pride will accuracy his paintings – the thought of many of them is important history lessons At one point in his career, he submitted a proposal to develop a marine museum.

Much of this trip was spent in Seville, Spain where the Kidds lived in an old Franciscan convent. Kidd used the American ambassador to Spain – a personal friend of the King -- to get access to museum libraries and rare documents to ensure that his pictures were strictly authentic.

Two years later Kidd was back in Florida displaying paintings he had created in Spain at a show put on by the Palm Beach County Art club including a 20-foot canvas painted by Mr. Kidd residing in Spain called “The Sailing of the Great Spanish Armada” that now hangs in the Lake Worth Library.

In 1925 [LWH 11/1726] the front page of the Lake Worth Herald announced: “Kidd Isn’t Kidd Anymore; He Does a Quiet Fadeout; Well-Known Local Artist Changes Name Through Circuit Court Order”. The story reported that R. Sherman Kidd was changing his name to R. Sherman Winton “Mr. Winton says the idea of changing his name came to him while.... living in Spain last year through the Spanish painter Velasquez who used his mother’s name on all his canvasses. Mr. Winton will change his signature on his paintings and mural decorations in the palatial homes of some of Miami and Palm Beach’s wealthy residents”. Winton was 49 years old at the time.

Three years [PBP 02/19/29] later Winton status in their community is reflected by the fact that as Vice-President of the Palm Beach Art league, he was elected delegate to the second annual exhibition of the Florida Federation of Art in Tampa.

Apparently, Winton decamped to New York City --- and perhaps other cities - in 1930 to complete several commissions for portraits of “prominent society women” and returned in the fall to their home at 502 S. M St. Several of his portraits and other paintings have been found in private collections. [ <https://cherielynnsherstory.com/2019/08/30/%D1%8Fsk-r-sherman-kidd-sherman-kidd-rsk-reginald-k-winton-who/>]





**1924 Passport photo**

Source: [ [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90020916/reginald-sherman-kidd\\_winton](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90020916/reginald-sherman-kidd_winton)]

In 1931 a *Post* story [03/04/31] reports that Winton had been commissioned by St. Andrews Church in Lake Worth to create three Gilded and polychrome altar pieces,



**St. Andrew Church Alter, 1931**

Source: <https://marionettastrungout.wordpress.com/2019/01/01/seeking-sherman-marionetta-strung-out-gets-first-dibs/comment-page-1/>

That same year, Winton exhibited several of his historical paintings at a Palm Beach Art League show focused on historical settings including "An Elopement in Old Barcelona" and "his great painting, The Sailing of the Spanish Armada". At the time he was the "Acting President" of the Palm Beach Art League, which also showed some of his portraits in a 1932 show, and his role helping with costumes at a St Andrews Church play and visiting friends in Orlando and club showing of his paintings (his presence not noted).

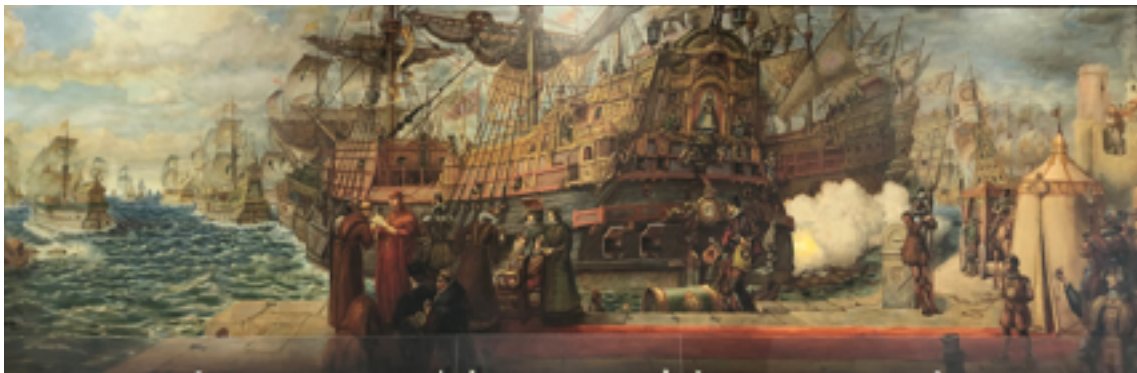
For the next several years, there is no mention of Winton, although his wife was prominent socially in Lake Worth appears regularly as a hostess and participant in range of community activities

On sept 9, 1937 -- at age 60 -- Winton was assessed as suffering from paranoia and committed to the Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, where he spent the last 15 years of his life and was buried there in 1952 [ <https://www.facebook.com/Fans-and-Family-of-Reginald-Sherman-Kidd-also-Reginald-Sherman-Winton-106534273015418/>]. His wife moved away from Lake Worth to Orlando shortly after.

One newspaper story included an announcement that "paintings done in Brittany before the last war" were now hanging in the northeast corner of the South Reading Room" purchased for the permanent

collection by Mrs. Julia Simmons" [PBP 08/27/44]. In 1946 [PBP 05/26/46] there was a formal unveiling of Winton's masterpiece "The Sailing of the Spanish Armada" (under the auspices of the "Lake Worth Unit of the Palm Beach Art League"). The story identifies Winton as an "former resident of Lake Worth and that his wife is a resident of New York and that "Mr. Winton will be unable to attend the unveiling to a long illness".

In 1953 --a year after Winton's death -- during a period when his own woodcarvings were on exhibition in the Lake Worth Library, Schlappich, his friend, fellow artist, and Lake Worth Art league colleague, discussed Winton, who he identified as an "unknown, but strangely gifted artist". [Newspapers.com/clip/26475832/kidd-winton-slappich-1953-article/]. He related how Sherman carelessly stored away his possible masterpiece now hanging in the library and how he — Sam — had restored the huge mural "The Sailing of the Armada". "There were 22 holes...in the mural... some big enough you could put a broom through... and it was very thin the cheesecloth... special fabric he apparently obtained in Seville where the painting had been created". He noted that several other smaller paintings by Winton which now adorn the walls of the library — including a self-portrait — also required restoration.



### **The Sailing of the Spanish Armada**

Oil on Canvas, 1924-25, 8ft. by 19 ft. 5 in.

He pointed out Winton's idealized interpretations were out of fashion in the contemporary era of realism -- and that Winton suffered from dreamy idealism — "an inability to adjust to the world in which he lived.

Winton paintings hanging in the Lake Worth Public Library include:

- The Sailing of the Spanish Armada
- China Clipper
- Osceola, Seminole Chief Fisherman's
- Wife (or The Bride)
- Noble Midshipman Prisoner
- Lucretia the Poisoner
- Juan Ponce De Leon Landing at St. Augustine
- Self-Portrait (pastel, 1900)

- Early Spanish Mission at New Smyrna
- Fernande Desoto Landing in Florida
- Lady Godiva
- Meeting of Anthony and Cleopatra on the Nile

Several other paintings are in Library storage. A Library catalogue describes the content of each painting

### **Ella Weeks Menoher**

Also displayed in the Library are two works by Ella Weeks Menoher, a noted local nature artist. Like Schlappich and Winton, she began her artistic career before moving to Lake Worth Beach. Born in Kansas, Ella Weeks studied entomology at the University of Kansas, graduated in 1901 as a talented “scientific illustrator”. As a professional illustrator over an almost 20-year career she created scientific drawings for a variety of technical publications and research institutions focused on insects, plants, and fish. Known as one of the few “artists drawn to science”, she also taught industrial drawing and design. She and her husband George Menoher moved to New York in 1918 [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264093>] and to Lake Worth Beach shortly after, where she lived for 41 years until her death in 1957

In Lake Worth Beach, Menoher shifted focused her nature-oriented illustrator talent on watercolors, pen and ink drawings, and oil painting on both canvas and silk, including large canvas wall hangings. – Known for her illustration of specific plants and insects as well as everglades landscapes, she started exhibiting locally in the early 1930s and became an officer in both the Palm Beach Arts League and the Lake Worth Arts League.

Subjects she painted during the 1940s included “an oil panel of a graceful castor bean”, “Traveler Palm”, “flatwoods” (Caribbean pines), “Crotons” and “Bamboo” In 1942, she won the Palm Beach Art League prizes for the “best Florida subject by a Florida artist.”



## **Poinsettia tree**

Oil on canvass

Her subject matter, technical detail and style were so distinctive that a *Lake Worth Herald* article discussed her subject material and background noting that “as Mrs. W.E. Menoher, she has added materially to the culture of this community by her own artwork and has been tireless in fostering the talents of others”. She was quoted as saying that “it was as much fun doing these careful and detailed studies under the direction of scientists as it has been to make the large wall hangings in oil of tropical pines and palmettos and bamboo or the watercolor studies of Florida flowers” [LWH 08/23/45]

In March of 1945 her work was the subject of a joint exhibition at the Strait Museum of the Library and she continued to show and participate in Art League activities up until her death in 1957

The Menoher works hanging in the Museum include:

- Poinsettia tree
- Spanish Castle ruins (?)

### **A Note on the Strait Museum of the Lake Worth Beach Public Library**

The importance of the arts in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Lake Worth was exemplified by the creation (as well as the abandonment) of the Strait Museum.

The original city library of donated books was consolidated into 1912 and moved from private houses into the Auditorium and then in 1920 into Old City Hall (converted from the school, now the Annex). It then moved into the new City Hall in 1928 and was there in 1940 when a fund drive was started for the new library (which was opened in 1942).

In 1940, at the time of the creation of the new Lake Worth Library, long time seasonal residents – the Strait brothers (James D, and W.S – Ohio farmers) provided \$10,000 to the City for the construction of a museum, independent of – but built into-- the new library building – complete with open reading courtyard and museum space and with a separate entrance. The Aside from the Strait brothers gift, the community raised additional funds to furnish the museum. (The Strait brothers did not survive long enough to see much of their museum in action, they died in 19453 and 1944 respectively) Apparently the Museum was aspirational – that is, it was provided not so much to house an existing collection but with the presumption that it would provide the venue for exhibitions. shows, lectures and other art related activities. The development of the new Museum coincided with the decentralization of the Palm Beach Arts League to local units, and it became the; home of the Lake Worth Art League in 1941 which - for more than 20 years -- created exhibits, held arts related activities in the museum – that were regularly advertised in the local and regional newspapers. The Museum was converted into a children’s reading room in 1967, as attendance as the level of arts activity in the City waned. The Lake Worth Arts League still maintains an active program of shows, exhibitions, and social activities from its Gallery and Boutique at 604 Lucerne Avenue in downtown Lake Worth Beach.