



## A Poem by The Everglades Poet

The first settlers in what is now Palm Beach County were truly jacks-of-all-trades. They had to be in order to live in an area that was rugged and difficult to reach. One settler was Allen Heyser (1857-1924) who arrived in the Lake Worth area in the 1880s. Heyser became a lawyer and then a state circuit judge. In 1888 he and his wife Mattie Spencer built a house/hotel called Oak Lawn House in what would become Riviera Beach. Among Heyser's many talents was that of poet. He wrote several poems that were published in the local newspaper, *The Tropical Sun*, under the name "The Everglades Poet." Below is one of those poems, "A Dozen Years Ago," which was published in 1892 at Juno. In this poem, Heyser weaves in the names and places of some of the pioneers and communities.

## A Dozen Years Ago

Contributed by The Everglades Poet

I heaved a sigh at the bill of fare  
On the table spread with dainties rare;  
I cast a look at the office clock  
And watched for the steamer at the dock,  
As she parted the waves of the lake below  
In a way we never used to know  
In the good old days, a dozen years ago.

No bills of fare in those good old days  
To worry our wits with their devious ways.  
No office clocks to tread the time precise  
Or mark the advent of our barreled ice.  
No tourist crop did the flying snow  
Send, scattering cash as they onward go  
In the good old days, a dozen years ago.

Then Armour, Pierced by Moore than Pease  
To Cary's acres Charters cease.  
No Garnett's then the Porters curbed  
Or Lily fair in dreams disturbed,

Nor Lyman's Ways in length'ning row  
Point out the place where Jewells grow  
In the good old days, a dozen years ago.

The Potters still their Fields retain  
But Kinzel Marsh or Dewey plain,  
While Bird Wades into real estate  
And Knowles the Bell of Roger's fate,  
Three prattling girls to Graces grow  
Nor must we slight the Grace below,  
For the good old days a dozen years ago.

No Cook to Brown until it Sears  
The Kitchen, White with Western tears  
As Gales Dye out across the Lane  
Or Wilder cries an Earnest name,  
Farwell to the good old days of long ago,  
THE SUN now reigns at fair Juno:  
And whiskey, beer and wine must go.

*See Page 28 for the names and places mentioned in this poem.*