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Edison Florida home first pre-fab house

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



EDISON FLORIDA HOME FIRST PRE-FAB HOUSE

By: HAMPTON DUNN

FORT MYERS --- Thomas A. Edison discovered Fort Myers while searching for a filament for the incandescent lamp which he perfected later. He also found a spot to spend his Winters --- and to regain his health.

In March, 1885, the great inventor and a friend came upriver from Punta Rassa to see the tropical bamboo which thrived here. Within 24 hours, the "Yankee visitor" was a property owner here and for nearly 50 years, until his death in 1931, he spent his winters in a lovely home. Incidentally, he didn't use bamboo filament in the lamp.

Edison went back north and drew plans for his dream home down in Florida. He had the home and breezeway-connected guest house built in sections in Fairfield, Maine. The next year he shipped them to Fort Myers via four schooners. They actually were the first pre-fabricated houses in history!

The inventor's widow deeded the house, gardens and laboratories to the City of Fort Myers in 1947 to be maintained as a monument in his honor. They're open to the public.

A wide veranda goes around the main part of the houses to keep out rain. No windows but only doors are in the lower part of the houses. The home is divided into two houses because Edison did not like the smell of food or the heat of cooking and the kitchen and dining area were made separate.

On the fabulous estate, Edison constructed the first swimming pool built in Florida, reinforcing it with bamboo instead of steel. It has never had a crack or a leak. A rare botanical garden with more than 300 species of shrubs and trees, imported from all over the world, greet visitors. Edison's next door neighbor was Henry Ford.

