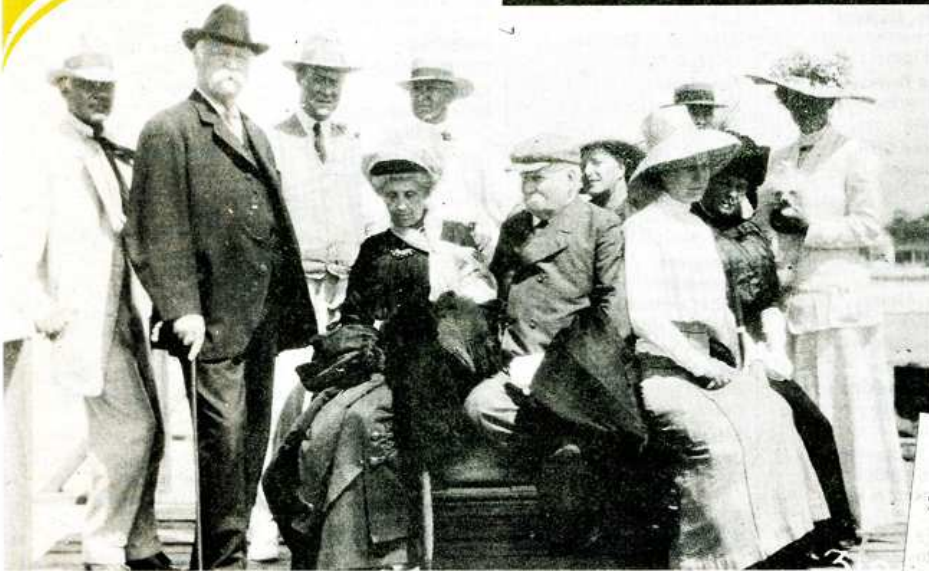


History

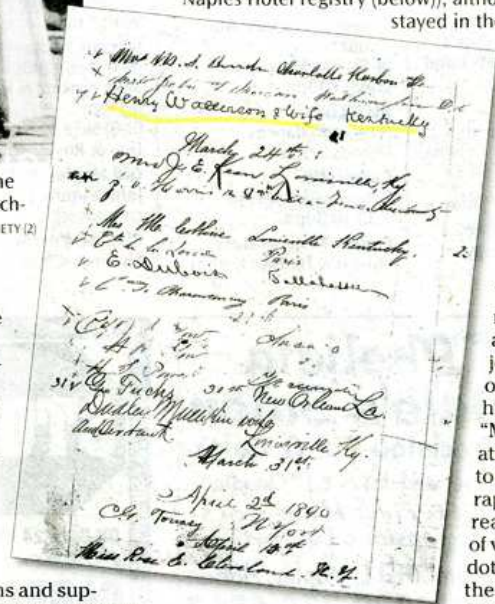
Henry Watterson,

a notable man in Naples history



Henry Watterson with others waiting for a boat to take them to Ft. Myers in March 1912. Some of the people photographed include David Gilles, left standing, Bruce Haldeman, George Hendrie, Jack Hachmeister and Henry Watterson, seated in front. Others are not identified. COURTESY OF THE NAPLES HISTORICAL SOCIETY (2)

On March 24, 1890, Henry Watterson signed the Naples Hotel registry (below), although he normally stayed in the house which served as overflow for the hotel. That house is now named Palm Cottage.



It seems Watterson had much to say on a myriad of subjects, as a perusal of the chapters in his autobiography, "Marse Henry," attests. In addition to his autobiography, which is really a collection of vividly told anecdotes concerning the people he met during his career,

By **Bonnie Jean Cousineau**
DOCENT, NAPLES HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Visitors to Palm Cottage are sometimes reminded that such luminaries as film stars Hedy Lamarr and Gary Cooper were at one time guests. Indeed, their celebrity is part of the reason Palm Cottage is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One far more illustrious guest, however, was Henry Watterson, whose portrait hangs in the Palm Cottage library.

Watterson was a friend of newspaper publisher Walter Haldeman (who built the cottage in 1895), that he won a Pulitzer Prize, and stayed at Palm Cottage for several winters. What most visitors probably do not know is that Watterson

was a man of many parts and a nationally known figure. He was, in the words of one observer, "One of the most eminent journalists ever produced in the United States." Although his views were not always consistent, he was always an engaging, deliberate and insightful observer of what was happening in America, from the mid-19th century through the early 20th century. Not surprisingly, his opinions carried considerable weight.

Watterson was born in the nation's capital in 1840, so we can safely say he was at the center of political activity at a very early age. He served with the Confederate Army, despite his objections to slavery and secession, and later became a reporter for newspapers in Tennessee, Alabama and Ohio.

In 1868, he became the editor of the Louisville

Journal (Kentucky), which he subsequently merged with Haldeman's Louisville Courier, creating one of the most influential newspapers of the time. Jeffersonian in his outlook, Watterson argued in his editorials for a return of home rule in the South, and for the civil rights of African-Americans. Interestingly, in the next century, he was not as tolerant of women's rights, and barely acknowledged their right to vote.

Watterson served in Congress, albeit for only one year, when he completed the term of Edward Parsons and supported Samuel J. Tilden for president. He also received, in 1882, a smattering of votes for the vice-presidential nomination. An indication of how close he was to the seat of power all through his life is that he met, knew, or was an advisor to almost every president from John Quincy Adams to Woodrow Wilson.

Adams, whom Watterson met when he was only a child, was considered a "little old bald-headed gentleman, who was good to (Watterson)." He attended the inauguration of Lincoln, lobbied against a third term for Grant, and was offered an appointment by Theodore Roosevelt. Watterson was quite critical of the last president he knew, Woodrow Wilson, for he was strongly opposed to Wilson's proposed League of Nations. Earlier, in 1918, his series of editorials urging the United States to declare war with Germany earned him the Pulitzer Prize.

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Watterson published "History of the Spanish-American War" in 1899 and "The Compromises of Life" in 1902. Given these dates, we can surmise that he might have worked on these while he wintered at Palm Cottage.

Palm Cottage house museum is a 3,500-square-foot historic house museum, located downtown in the heart of Naples' historic district. Take time now to learn more about Naples history and heritage through one of our docent-guided tours. In addition to a tour of the house museum, one may stroll through The Norris Gardens or take a walking tour of the Third Street Historic District. Information: 239-261-8164, or visit www.napleshistorical.com.

Source Material:

Ballotpedia, March 2008; Biographical Directory of the United States Congress; Columbia Encyclopedia; "Marse Henry" by Henry Watterson 1919; The New York Times, July 15, 1917; NNDB ("Tracking the Entire World"); review by Robert Reid, 1956.