NEHRLING — from page 1

He was born in Wisconsin on May 9, 1853, and became a teacher. Professor E.L. Lord said in an article published in 1925, that teaching "was only an instrument by means of which he could study nature. In order to study the birds of the United States he taught school in several states, particularly in Illinois, Missouri, and Texas."

Then he became interested in Florida, and bought some land in Gotha in west Orange County. He left teaching and eventually became custodian of the Public Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Dr. Nehrling wrote articles on ornithological subjects, did some experimenting with tropical and subtropical plants while in Texas, and collected plants and seeds from many correspondents from the tropics. He grew these in a greenhouse in Milwaukee until such time as he was ready to move to Gotha.

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"Near the flatwoods we often have the poor scrublands, of white sand, running in long strips through high pine-land as well as the lowlands. They are usually only a half mile or so wide, but persist over a vast territory. The predominating tree is the Scrub or Christmas tree Pine (Pinus clausa). Wild flowers abound."

- Dr. Henry Nehrling

PRESERVING THE PAST

by Peggy Lantz

The remnant of an important turn-of-the-century Florida horticultural activity is prized and preserved in the Central Florida area. The location continues to hold interest for both botanical and architectural reasons.

This is the home and gardens of Dr. Henry Nehrling — a pioneer Florida horticulturist. The origins of the house and gardens are described in the accompanying article about Dr. Nehrling.

From 1933 until 1977, the house and property in Gotha was owned and lived on by Julian E. Nally. During this time Lake Audubon's name was changed to Lake Nally.

The house is still there, though much of the acreage has been divided up and sold off. It is now owned by Howard and Barbara Bochiardy, along with six acres of the original 40-some acres.

Howard Bochiardy is an Orlando architect, and is remodeling and living in the house. Barbara Bochiardy graciously showed me the beautiful home. The drive as I entered is shrouded with bamboo — Nehrling cultivated 150 varieties of palms and bamboo. The original pine floors and cypress walls of the house have been refinished, and the kitchen has been remodeled and the wiring brought up-to-date. But the old tin shingles are still on the roof, and the back porch and upstairs sleeping porch have the charm of lovely old Florida houses.

We walked through a tangle of bamboo and palm to the lake edge, which has been nearly dried up by the drought. Bromeliads covered the ground under the cedar, red bay, and live oaks. Barbara pointed out and named the many native plants growing there, as well as many of the imported tropical plants still surviving.

But the caladiums and amaryllis for which Nehrling is famous are gone — sold off or stolen by vandals. Barbara can find not a single specimen. She has bought copies of Nehrling’s books (My Garden in Florida, Vol. I and II, by Dr. Henry Nehrling. Edit. by A.H. Andrews. Publ. in Estero, Florida, 1944 and 1946.) and is trying to locate the native trees and plants Nehrling describes. The magnolias and cedars that he carried on his shoulders from the woods five miles away nearly 100 years ago appear to be the ones we see there now.

She says, “My husband loves the house, and I love the grounds.”