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ONCE GAY POTTER PALMER ESTATE NOW SILENT

By HAMPTON DUNN

OSPREY --- The laughter is gone. The gala parties are but memories. Even a curious public
doesn’t care anymore. The fabulous Potter Palmer estate here is quiet and lonely.

This is where the "nation's hostess and the nation's head woman servant" --- the lovely Mrs.
Potter Palmer --- used to entertain the international set and the socialites of her day. The home,
known as "The Oaks," still stands proudly but it's closed tight, the expensive furniture and
furnishings crammed inside unavailable to envious persons peering in through the large doors
and windows. The oaks and other trees are taking over the grounds. An unusual fishpond and
pergola are not cared for like they once were.

The large waterfront estate, 350 acres of erstwhile scrub palmetto land on Little Sarasota Bay,
was the creation of a former Chicago socialite. Development began in 1910. The large house
contains 31 rooms and five porches, including 12 bedrooms and nine baths, a 40 by 35 foot
living room, dining room and a huge hotel-like kitchen.

Mrs. Palmer, who had conquered Chicago social world before pioneering to Florida, lived here
about eight years prior to her death in 1918. When heirs were tabulating her goods after her
death, they found 16 sets of china in the house, 12 of which were in blue, her favorite color. She
had many pieces of art hung in the home.

The friends of Presidents and big names from every field, Mrs. Palmer was versatile. It was she
who imported 17 Bahaman bulls and crossbred them with Florida cattle, thus developing the
Santa Gertrudis breed. Huge Indian mounds surround the estate.