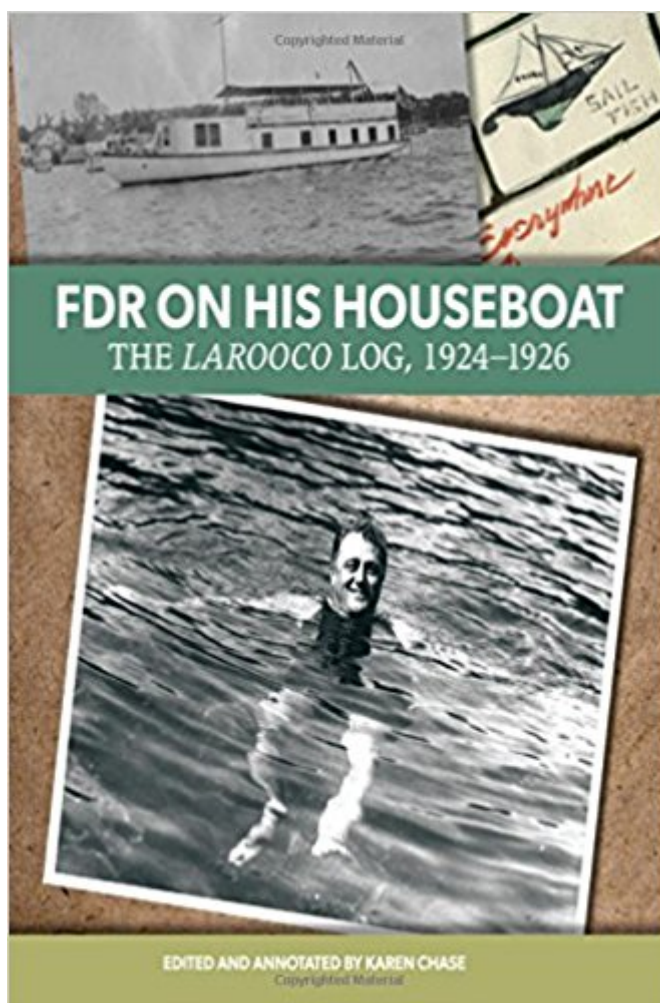


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# FDR On His Houseboat: The Larooco Log, 1924-1926



## Synopsis

In the midst of the Jazz Age, while Americans were making merry, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was stricken by polio and withdrew from public life. From 1924 to 1926, believing that warm water and warm air would help him walk again, he spent the winter months on his new houseboat, the "Larooco," sailing the Florida Keys, fishing, swimming, playing Parcheesi, entertaining guests, and tending to engine mishaps. During his time on the boat, he kept a nautical log describing each day's events, including rare visits by his wife, Eleanor, who was busy carving out her own place in the world. Missy LeHand, his personal assistant, served as hostess aboard the "Larooco." While FDR was sailing the Keys, the larger world was glittering. Chaplin, Gershwin, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, Gertrude Stein, Frida Kahlo, Martha Graham all were flourishing in the Roaring Twenties, but so were Stalin, Al Capone, and Hitler. The world went on as Roosevelt fished for mangrove snapper and drank martinis. Karen Chase presents FDR's log entries, interspersed with photographs from the tumultuous outer world, to form a kind of timeline between two arenas -- one man's small private life full of struggle and fun, juxtaposed with the large public sphere. Chase gives us a side of FDR seldom seen before, revealing his wit, his penchant for practical jokes, and his zest for each day's ordinary concerns in the context of his painful struggle to regain the use of his legs. The book also includes a facsimile of the original "Larooco" log. For many decades FDR's log was virtually unknown to the public, appearing only once, in 1949, in his son Elliott's four-volume collection of Roosevelt's personal letters.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Karen Chase has put together an absolutely fascinating edition of the log describing Franklin Roosevelt's winter cruises along the Florida coast in 1924-26. Wonderfully illustrated and edited, this is a book that will appeal to historians, FDR aficionados, Floridians, fishermen, and boaters of all kinds. Highly recommended. ----Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *In the Heart of the Sea*, *Mayflower*, and *Bunker Hill* The *Larooco Log* is a wonderfully powerful chronicle of perhaps the most difficult period in FDR's personal life: the aftermath of the onset of his bout with polio and his enduring struggle to find remedy. In his own words, the log demonstrates his wit and charm, his embrace of life and friends, his frustrations with his slow progress toward restoration of his legs, and the pain he endures on an almost daily basis. With personal understanding and feeling, Karen Chase has performed a masterful edit of this revealing journal. A fantastic read! ---- David B. Roosevelt, FDR's grandson What a good idea! The little-known record of one of the least understood periods in the life of Franklin Roosevelt, filled with all the grit and gallantry and good humor with which he faced the disease that would have defeated a less resilient man. ----Geoffrey C. Ward, co-author (with Ken Burns) of *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History* and author of *A First-Class Temperament: The Emergence of Franklin Roosevelt, 1905-1928* What a beautiful book this is! I know it will be a valuable contribution to the Roosevelt canon. -- Robert Clark, Director of Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center

Karen Chase is the author of "Polio Boulevard: A Memoir," *"Land of Stone: Breaking Silence through Poetry,"* as well as three volumes of poetry, "Kazimierz Square," "BEAR," and "Jamali-Kamali: A Tale of Passion in Mughal India."

Excellent, evocative and brave. Many thanks to Karen Chase for this amazing piece of history.

A very charming addition to the collection of an FDR enthusiast. This book showcases transcribed journal entries from FDR's time on his houseboat, The *Larooco*, in the mid-1920s. Nicely interspersed with images from the FDR archive, including some of his own sketches of the boat and photos of guests, it provides an unusual glimpse into FDR in one of his preferred settings, at leisure and at sea. This is not so much a history book as it is a lightly annotated set of primary sources, which also intersperses some other history of events going on at the time. That being said, it's a

good choice for someone who is really interested in FDR and has read a book or two about him but is looking for more in FDR's own words or a chance to gain some insight into him at his most relaxed, which has been a challenge for biographers of this notably unknowable president. This book would also make an interesting companion piece to Douglas Brinkley's *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America*, which is an in-depth study of FDR as a conservationist who was shaped by his relationship to his land in Hyde Park and his lifelong passion for sailing.

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