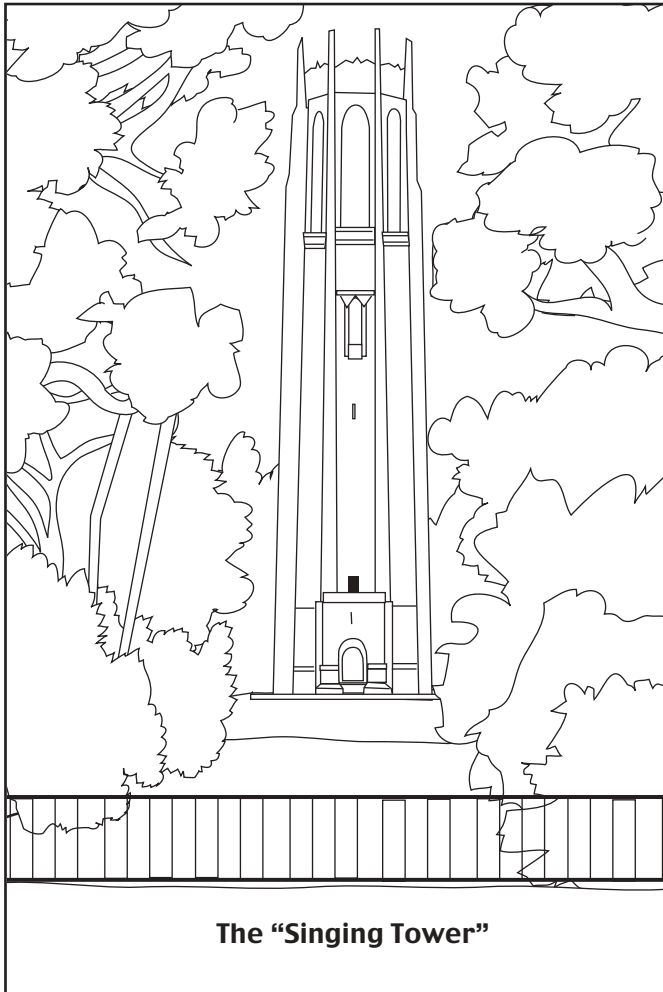


## Florida's Famous Places: Historic Bok Sanctuary

Lake Wales is home to Historic Bok Sanctuary, which stands on the highest point in the state of Florida. The historic Bok Singing Tower is 205 feet tall. Built in 1929 by Edward W. Bok, the tower was constructed of pink and gray marble from Georgia and coquina stone from St. Augustine. The tower is rich in carvings depicting the flora and fauna of Florida.

The tower houses a carillon of fifty-seven bronzed bells ranging in weight from 17 pounds to nearly 12 tons. Surrounding the tower are 157 acres of landscaped gardens. Frederick Olmsted, Jr., the son of the man who developed New York's Central Park, designed the gardens. The gardens took over five years to complete. President Coolidge dedicated them in 1929.



The tower and gardens were donated to the state by Bok, a Dutch immigrant, writer, publisher, and humanitarian. His goal was to provide a sanctuary for people and animals alike.

The Singing Tower quickly became one of Florida's most popular early tourist attractions. In 1939, the following was written at the entry: "open 8-5; picnicking prohibited; no dogs allowed; men requested to wear coats; parking 25 cents."

The bells chime throughout the day to provide a musical enhancement to the gardens and the abundant wildlife. Visitors, strolling the many pathways leading to the Tower, see seasonal blooms, friendly animals, and special events throughout the year.

The Pine Ridge Preserve offers a one-mile trail where visitors can see rare plants and animals of Florida's ancient sandhill, as well as the more common longleaf pines and turkey oaks. Window By the Pond gives a glimpse of daily life in a freshwater pond.

Originally named the "Mountain Lake Sanctuary and Singing Tower" the property was renamed Bok Tower Gardens in 1986 in honor of its creator. Bok was told by his grandmother to "Make you the world a bit better or more beautiful because you have lived in it." Bok Tower Gardens is a testimonial that he did that.

## Edward W. Bok

Bok started out as an office boy with the Western Union Telegraph Company in 1876. He continued his education at night school. He was employed by a publisher and became advertising manager.

In 1889, he became editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Under his management, this magazine became one of the most successful publications in America. It became the first magazine in the world to have one million subscribers. He remained there for thirty years.

A noted philanthropist, Bok established many awards and civic enterprises. He was a champion of social causes including education, public health, and the saving of Niagara Falls.

His autobiography, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, won the Pulitzer Prize. In addition to his autobiography, he published many other books.

One book called *American Taj Mahal* describes his desire to create a Taj Mahal\* by building his tower. His dedication to the tower's designer reads as follows: "To Milton B. Medary, for his architectural conception of a Tower with no ancient, medieval or modern precedent and of surpassing beauty, nativeness and originality...."

Mr. Bok died in 1939 at his home just a short distance from the Tower. He is buried at the foot of his beloved carillon.

\*Taj Mahal: a building in India; considered one of the most beautiful in the world



Edward W. Bok