



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

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PRESENTATION TO THE POMPANO BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Wilton Manors: From Farming Community to Urban Village

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Wilton Manors Historical Society

The Wilton Manors Historical Society was invited to speak at a regular monthly meeting of the Pompano Historical Society about both the history of Wilton Manors and the process of writing *Wilton Manors: From Farming Community to Urban Village*.

Good evening thank you very much for inviting me. Dan Hobby asked me to talk about not only Wilton Manors history but also the process of writing *Wilton Manors: From Farming Community to Urban Village*.

The Wilton Manors Historical Society published *Wilton Manors: From Farming Community to Urban Village* two years ago as a history of Wilton Manors. I am the author of record but had a great deal of help from fellow board members.

Dan clearly had fun with his *Pompano Beach: A History of Pioneers and Progress*.

I also had a lot of fun. We exploded some “conventional wisdom,” exposed some inconsistent behavior, and added a depth of understanding to some otherwise mundane facts.

Our book came together from a number of sources.

As part of the city's 50th anniversary in 1997, the city and Historical Society commissioned the well known author Stewart McIver to write a history of Wilton Manors. As we look back from the digital age when everything is on the Internet, we discover that not all of what McIver came up with was accurate.

When one interviews the son of a “mover and shaker,” he turns out to be George Washington. In context, he is only one of many players.

One of our founding fathers wrote a short history of Wilton Manors where he turns out to be the star player. The documentary evidence does not support this. Player, yes. Star, no.

We are putting his history in the profiles section of our website not the history section.

We looked at the usual sources. We also found a number of little histories written by longtime residents mostly for the consumption of their families.

A thirty-two page broadsheet called "*Island City Gazette*," published in 1989 as part of the Broward County Pioneer Days provided a lot of reminiscences of folks who had been in town for 30 or 40 years. These were first hand, or had been prepared by grandparents, 20 years ago. These were reminiscences of not only prominent people, but also ordinary folk.

In 2004, Cynthia Thuma, a well-known and prolific author, published an Arcadia "Images of America" book on Wilton Manors.

Wilton Manors: From Farming Community to Urban Village started off as an update to McIver's book and wound up being nearly a complete rewrite.

We went after a bunch of things which were established "conventional wisdom." The first thing I hit was "the towers" at the north end of Wilton Boulevard. They were designed in 1925 by Francis Abreu, who also built the Wahoo Lodge here in Pompano Beach. McIver had them modeled after the Casa del Salinas in Salamanca Spain. There is a reference in the 1926 Fort Lauderdale News. There is another reference in the same paper two months later that they were modeled after the 15th century Gateway to Toledo Spain. No. Googling these edifices returns pictures that look nothing like our Towers. 1926 marketing hype. In the course of writing the book I discovered that the conventional wisdom was frequently wrong but the real facts were great deal more entertaining.

I wanted the book to flow easily and be intelligible. It also needed to say something about Wilton Manors beyond a recitation of facts and events. Organization of the material was important.

Dan's book is organized chronologically which works very well. My problem was that there were a number of influential people in our small pond who were doing important things from the 1920s through the 1950s or 60s. Their personalities were as important as the events.

Perry Mickel was one of them. If I pointed out his contributions in chapters structured around decades, we lost sight of who he was. I decided that I needed to do a section focused solely on important characters in town, and put it early in the book. When you get to the actual history, you already have an understanding of the people involved.

I kept coming up with entertaining digressions. For instance how did Wilton Manors get its name. Including these in the narrative was distracting and stopped the reading flow. I was certainly not going to leave them out, so I included sidebars, little turnouts on the road, where the reader could rest, be amused, and then continue on.

I had to decide where to start the book. Prior to 1900, there was not much here and not much going on.

There were big farms in Pompano. In Wilton Manors, there were only 4 or 5, and they were smaller family farms. The interesting history of Wilton Manors is in the later residential development of various subdivisions. Mary Ulm who is now the president of the Wilton Manors Historical Society did a tremendous amount of research on what developments were built when, by whom, and some history.

Mary's write up was magnificent, complete, thorough, and she would be the first one to admit it, deadly boring. I put it at the end, but even so it was too dense for anyone to get past the third page. We have shortened it substantially and the complete version will soon be available on our website.

I gave a friend an early draft of the book. Not familiar with Wilton Manors geography, she didn't have a clue what I was talking about. There is now a map at the beginning of the book with important landmarks pointed out.

The book was published by the History Press. We looked at various alternatives for self-publishing and decided that having someone who could get us into Barnes and Noble and onto Amazon was worth it. In general this has worked.

Let me put Wilton Manors in the context of Pompano Beach. In 1950, the population of Pompano Beach was about 5,700. Wilton Manors population was in the 100's.

The 2010 census had Pompano Beach at nearly 100,000 and Wilton Manors short of 12,000.

Today, Pompano Beach is about 25 square miles. At low tide, one might argue that Wilton Manors is 2 square miles.

Pompano was incorporated in 1908 and Pompano Beach in 1947. The Village of Wilton Manors was also incorporated in 1947. In 1925, it was only a developer's ambitious dream.

Around the turn of the century, the farms in Wilton Manors seemed to be family managed. C. Willis "Uncle Billy" Johnson had a farm, with dairy cows. DMV records indicate that he owned a Chalmers' automobile. His neighbor George Lindsey (about whom we know nothing else) owned a Grant. These were expensive cars, worth more than twice a comparable Ford or Maxwell. Interesting.

Francis Abreu designed the Wahoo Lodge about 1925. This was when he built the entrance towers to Wilton Boulevard for Edward J. (Ned) Willingham.

Alden W. Turner, a Pompano farmer and businessman, was elected the first Broward County Sheriff. He was the father of our first Mayor, Dave Turner.

In the 1940's and 50's, for entertainment, Wilton Manors residents would take a ride in their cars up Dixie Highway. More than one of you took the ride down Dixie Highway to the A&W Root Beer stand at Five Points. We are connected.

But - Let's do some Wilton Manors History. I am obviously not going to tell you everything, because then you will not be compelled to buy the book.

In the first couple of decades of the 1900's, the area between what is now the Fort Lauderdale High school at NE 4th Avenue and north to Commercial Boulevard was called Colohatchee. The name is probably from the Seminoles, who named the area after William C. Collier, who had an orchard south of the North Fork of the Middle River.

While Henry Flagler was focused on building a railroad to Key West, he was also a spectacularly shrewd businessman, with multiple complex subsidiaries. The Model Land Company was one, a holding company for land granted to him by the state of Florida. Illegally, as it turns out.

Most of the land in Colohatchee was purchased from the Model Land Company.

In 1924, Ned Willingham bought "Uncle Billie's" farm, as well as other holdings to the west.

He assembled 345 acres of what he referred to in his marketing material as “wooded highland.”

He platted Unit 1 of Wilton Manors. A major feature was Wilton Boulevard which started off at what is now NE 26th Street and Dixie Highway, creating “Five Points.” The road curved west and south to the South Fork of the Middle River. Depicted on the plat drawing but not included were a hotel site and a series of canals to provide “waterfront” lots on the south.

By 1925, the housing market was going nuts. People were flipping properties so fast the paperwork could not keep up. The newspapers of the time were full of reports of new construction and sales.

Willingham's Wilton Manors was to be an expensive suburb of Fort Lauderdale, to be inhabited by the anticipated large number of rich entrepreneurs. Wilton Boulevard was to be strictly residential, with expensive homes on expensive lots, like those on Willingham's home street of College Avenue, in Macon, Georgia.

But there were problems. The Florida East Coast Railway shut down most of its freight service from the north to catch up on railroad and rolling stock maintenance. This cut off the supply of building materials from the north.

And then, the brigantine Prinz Valdemar sank in Government Cut in Miami, closing the harbor and cutting off the supply of building materials from the south.

And the spectacularly overheated economy started to cool off.

The January 30, 1926 *Fort Lauderdale Sunday News* had a four column headline announcing the launch of Wilton Manors. But, by March, it was evident that the market had changed substantially and Wilton Manors was being marketed to more conservative buyers.

The hurricane on September 18, 1926 finished off Wilton Manors, and a lot of other similar developments.

The conventional wisdom is that Ned Willingham, having lost three million 1926 dollars, returned north and died. A sad story.

In fact, Willingham was 66 years old when he died, not young. At age 21, he had started a furniture manufacturing business in Macon, Georgia. He had huge, and very profitable fruit orchards. Both of his parents were college educated, as were all of their **13** children. His wife Eula was an honors graduate of Wesleyan College. They actively supported a number of worthwhile charities. In Macon, he served on the City Council and was, apparently, urged to run for mayor. He was a deacon in the church, as were most of his brothers and uncles.

Why did he come to Florida? New challenges? He started buying property in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea and Pompano as early as 1920. It looks like he took up residence here in 1923. He was all over the place, the sub-division of Idlewyde off Las Olas Blvd, beachfront in Fort Lauderdale and Oakland Park.

He served on the first Planning and Zoning Board in Fort Lauderdale with Ivy Stranahan. The three million dollar number is “conventional wisdom.” My take is that he was too smart to lose that much.

Wilton Manors was to be “a high class residential suburb” with parks, green space, and a nursery for residents to obtain orange and grapefruit trees at no charge.

There were “deed restrictions” to re-enforce his vision. They required that houses had to be two stories high, built of fireproof materials, with generous setbacks from the street. Commercial development was restricted to the east side of Dixie Highway. There were TWO clauses covering required arrangements for sewerage. And then, the complete exclusion of anyone other than “of the Caucasian race” from owning or renting property.”

Some have made a big deal of this. I found no references to any racial issues in any research.

Willingham's son, Edward J. Willingham, Junior, had been managing his father's affairs locally for some time. After Willingham senior died, Junior re-platted, in 1928, removing the individual house lots, leaving entire blocks, easier for subsequent developers to acquire.

Willingham's advertising material boasted of many sales. At the end of the day, the only house in town that the Historical Society can identify as being from the Willingham development is the house Carl Hiaasen built on what is now NE 21st Court. There were other houses from the late 1920's, which did not conform to the “deed restrictions.”

The housing market crashed in 1926, and we waited for the rest of the country to catch up in 1929. Pompano had its farming industry and a number of important folks working to keep the city going. There wasn't much going on in Wilton Manors.

This brings us to the “movers and shakers” in town, starting with Perry and Dorothea Mickel. They arrived in Fort Lauderdale in 1924. Mickel had a farm with cows. He continued to deliver milk to families in Progresso, across the river, during the depression, even when there was little expectation he would be paid. Dorothea established the School Nurse Association of Broward County. One day, Perry set the cows off across Wilton Drive (Willingham Junior had renamed it from Wilton Boulevard) to graze one foggy morning in 1932. They came charging back, spooked by two **elephants** strolling down the Drive, their driver asleep. They had been taken off an overloaded trailer in West Palm Beach and were on their way to a circus in Miami. Mickel developed much of Wilton Manors west of Andrews Avenue.

George Richardson, Senior, bought about 40 acres at the south end of town from the Willingham estate in 1938. He was a golf course builder, including the Fort Lauderdale Country Club in the mid-1920's. He designed a golf course and then left his wife and son to build it, as he went back north to work on a paying contract.

Richardson's son, George Junior, returned from the Army after World War II and got his law degree. He opened his office at the golf course. George Junior served on the City Council and as City Attorney. He was appointed to the Circuit Court bench. In 2004, he sold the property (minus the golf fairways which were now the site of Manor Grove condominiums) to the city at a very favorable price. The Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve is now our most versatile and accessible park.

Alvar (Al) Hagen, retired at age 41, moved Florida about 1940. He got into the development business with Clayton Leaver, a builder. Hagen bought large tracts of land east of Wilton Drive, which he and Leaver developed after the war. Hagen donated the land on which Hagen Park is now located and was the first president of the Village Council when Wilton Manors was incorporated in 1947. Hagen organized the Village incorporation from his office on Wilton Drive.

This was the 1950's and, of course, wives sat at home baking cookies, or whatever.

Newspapers reported the formation of numerous committees to plan things like Christmas festivities. Members of these committees were a laundry list of all the men movers and shakers in town. Then, we got to the formation of the “auxiliary committee,” Mrs. Hagen, Mrs. Leavor, et cetera. It was pretty clear who was doing all the work. While I could find no real evidence of this, I suspect that in more than one case, the money in the family came from the distaff side.

Louoma “Lou” Leaver, wife of Clayton Leaver, had her hand in most of the civic organizations. She managed her husband's real estate holdings for years after his death. When she died in 2007, the Historical Society got word that her office on Wilton Drive had been emptied into the trash behind the building. Dumpster Diving Time! We saved large numbers of contemporary newspapers, unavailable anywhere else.

Dave (not David) Turner was the son of your Aden Waterman Turner. He bought 283 lots from the Willingham estate and, with other acquisitions, became one of the largest private landowners in Florida. His commitment to public service was impressive. He was Wilton Manors' first mayor. He donated the land for the first city hall and the elementary school. He was appointed to numerous important county and state boards.

James Dean was an insurance salesman and entrepreneur. In 1953, he had big plans for Manor Gate on NE 26th Street. It included a bank, a 10 story office building, a movie theater, and 23 shops on 15 acres.

By his own account, he was a big deal, although Manor Gate was not actually built.

At this point, I will have to admit that our “big fish” were operating in a small pond here in Wilton Manors. Dean, Turner, and a Fort Lauderdale developer, C. Robert Clark, ventured to the west coast of Florida, just south of Tampa, to create “Tampa Beach,” which was to be the prototypical Florida city. It was 6,000 acres. It was more than they could manage and they wound up giving the land back to the original owner. What really hurts is that we found a history of what is now Apollo Beach, referring to “three bumpkins from New York.” The “bumpkin” reference seems to have been deleted from the internet. We have not corrected the reference to “New York.”

Frank Starling had a 1,000 acre farm in Pompano Beach and was the younger partner of Lamar Braddy in Wilton Manors' first supermarket, Manor Market. Turner had given the land to build Manor Market to Braddy.

Turner was selling house lots, and the new owners needed a place to buy food. Starling moved on to become a City Council man, and then Mayor. He served as City Administrator from 1960 to 1981. There are interesting stories, here.

William G. Miller, Jr. became the city attorney in 1952, two years after being admitted to the bar. This is not a flashy position. He did not develop land and was never elected to anything. But he was the one who created the legal infrastructure to establish Wilton Manors as a viable entity. He served as City Attorney for 30 years, before he was fired during one of our messier “transitions.” He apparently held fantastic Christmas parties. Again, Mary Ulm was instrumental in his “rehabilitation” and restoration in our pantheon of stars.

Marcia Stafford was not a shrinking violet. She drove the Broward School Board to distraction about building a school in Wilton Manors. When Dave Turner donated land to build a school, she went to him, and he sold her a lot at a substantial discount because she

and her husband were going to build a house on it immediately.

She was elected Village Clerk in 1952 and the village and the city were literally run out of her kitchen, there being no real city hall, until 1960. She was elected to the City Council in 1961 and served until 1975, when she stepped down in favor of her son, Tracy Stafford. That would be 23 years of service.

For all the important folks who contributed and cooperated to make Wilton Manors a city, there would have to be one who did not fit the mold. John P. Pedersen was it. He had been a builder in Racine, Wisconsin. In the early 1940's, he had injured his back and he started to winter in Wilton Manors with his family. To enroll their two children in school here, they had to register their car in Florida - \$15. Nope. The kids spent the school day at the beach.

Pedersen bought tax delinquent properties on the Fort Lauderdale courthouse steps, for \$8 or \$10 a lot. He could not get building materials to build residences during the war, but he could build chicken coops. After the war, he threw out the chickens, installed kitchens and bathrooms, and sold the now homes to returning service men.

Ginger L. Pedersen, Pedersen's granddaughter and noted Palm Beach historian, contacted us a couple years ago. Did we want to meet with Pedersen's daughter and son-in-law, Shirley and George Schneider, now both in their 80's?

It does not get any better than this! We arranged lunch for them in Pedersen's last house in Wilton Manors. They were thrilled! Shirley pointed out the one way mirror which allowed John to watch what was going on in the living room from the master bedroom closet. There had been a secret room behind the fireplace where Pedersen had concealed cash and probably commodities rationed or in short supply because of the war. He also buried cash in an atrium out to the back yard. Pedersen went on to create Africa USA, an animal park in Boca, with animals he had imported from Africa.

By the spring of 1946, the adult population of Wilton Manors had grown to about 125, and was continuing to grow. The Wilton Manors Civic Association was formed to address growth problems, water, garbage pickup, and electrical service, as well as bus service and street maintenance. By fall, there was concern that Fort Lauderdale would annex the area to increase their tax base.

Something needed to be done. "The Big Meeting" was scheduled for April 4, 1947, at Al Hagen's office to deal with the threat. Annexation by Oakland Park was also mentioned as a threat. Two subdivisions were specifically excluded, because they didn't want any part of a new village. John Pedersen also wanted his property to be excluded. There was a lot of "heated discussion." Parliamentary games were played. At one point, the moderator asked Pedersen if he was threatening the meeting. Pedersen ultimately lost. When we asked his daughter how she thought he had voted, she said he probably didn't. He didn't believe in elections.

That May 13, 1947 we were officially declared the Village of Wilton Manors, legally separated from Fort Lauderdale. The population at this point was about 350. The rainy season came early in 1947. The wet spring was followed by an even wetter summer. In the fall, within 25 days, two hurricanes and a tropical disturbance dropped so much rain on the area that much of southeastern Florida lay under water for weeks. Fort Lauderdale and Pompano Beach were flooded, and Davie was covered with an inland sea for months. Most of Wilton

Manors remained convincingly above water. We are located on a western jog in the Eastern Coastal Ridge, which makes us higher above sea level than most of south Florida. It also makes our soil less attractive for farming.

I had fun with newspapers of the time. On February 26, 1953, the *Wilton Oakland Sun* newspaper headlined, full page width, "Grab Wilton Manors? Not Today, Council Vows." Columnist Carter Holmes wrote, "It appears that the entire political structure of Wilton Manors may be altered by the revelation that Fort Lauderdale would like to reach out and take Wilton Manors and Oakland Park into its sand pile for its hungry little politicians to dig into." On June 4, 1953, Wilton Manors officially became the eleventh city in Broward County. Checkmate? The population had grown to about 1,500.

That fall, the *Wilton Oakland Sun* went at it again. Again, a full page width headline "New Wilton Manors Council Split Wide Open." Dean and Turner had given land to the city for a new city hall in their proposed Manor Gate shopping center. There were rumors of "secret clauses" in the lease agreement. There were meetings of the city council which made a joke of the later Sunshine Laws, including meetings where specific council members were not included. The council meeting ended in chaos, with a President being appointed on a technicality.

It goes on. If one depends on newspapers for absolute facts and accomplished deeds, they changed from week to week. This is a problem historians have in general with newspapers. Context is frequently missing. In spite of the photo of the ground breaking ceremony, the Dean/Turner city hall was never built.

I have given you the names and histories of a lot of folks you will not find showing up on the History Channel on TV. In our small pond, these were big fish. You will park your car at Hagen Park, or Richardson Park and remember "Didn't Ben say something about these folks?" They were key in establishing our culture, interesting folks, and, sometimes, a little odd. Their ghosts probably float around City Hall at night.

Was Wilton Manors a utopia in the 1950's? In spite of some political shenanigans, there is evidence that this was true.

In the 1960's and 1970's we continued to grow. Notable Mayors and Police Chiefs came and went. We passed a bond issue to create a city wide sewer system. We built a new fire station. Fort Lauderdale was eying us again.

But then came the 1980's! We had expected a population of 15,000 in 1980, but fell very short. There was an "Old Guard" in power, and a couple examples of questionable behavior by elected officials. A "New Guard" of "concerned citizens" emerged. I go into this in some detail in the book. It is confusing, with a lot of people, in retrospect, behaving inconsistently. With the election of 1982, there was a complete power turnaround on the City Council, with high profile firings.

In 1984, the mayoral candidate with the most votes was declared ineligible to run because he had not resigned his official position in another municipality prior to running.

A question on the April 1984 ballot to change the City Charter failed. The "Old Guard" and "New Guard" both did 180 degree turns on what the new charter should look like, and there were two proposals on the ballot that fall, the "Charter Amendment" and "The People's Proposal." This was not "pick one or the other," it was "yes or no on each of them." Both could have been approved. County Supervisor of Elections, Jane Carroll, had no idea what

would happen if both passed and she sounded worried.

The People's Proposal passed and the "Charter Amendment" failed. In retrospect, the better proposal won and we now have a strong Mayor/City Manager form of government.

The newspapers had a field day.

I am sure Pompano Beach has done silly things in the past. In our little pond, these things seem to stand out more, which just provides the historian with more fun. In the 1980's, we "fixed Wilton Drive" to make it more welcoming and friendly to shoppers and pedestrians. There were five iterations of the plan. The differences in the plans were in how loudly merchants yelled and screamed. It was finally completed in 1985, with left turn lanes, improved drainage, better lighting, and about 160 new trees. Then, in 1998, the state spent an estimated \$1.1 million dollars on a number of improvements, including ripping out all 160 trees. In 2002, the merchant and city supported Wilton Manors Main Street organization started off trying to get the street narrowed and the trees back.

Economically, Wilton Manors was not doing well in the 1980's and the troubles continued into the 1990's. The Highland Estates neighborhood was designated as economically depressed in the 1990 and 2000 censuses. Property values were relatively low. But there were city officials and residents who had vision. It took until the mid 1990's to get a new foot hold, and we started to take off.

To digress a minute, every once and a while, a character emerges you have to love. Wray Parr and his mother bought a house in the west end of town in 1991. That fall, Wray arrived from Nova Scotia to stay for the winter, arriving in a converted school bus with about 18 snakes, including two pythons, each weighing more than 100 pounds. And he parked the bus in his mother's yard. The neighbors and the city went nuts! Parr was a genius at pushing buttons to annoy the establishment. He spent \$2,000 on a paint job for the bus in which "A mighty python hovers over a burning Wilton Manors City Hall as rats named after City Council members scurry from the building." This went on for several years with court injunctions, fines levied and waived and city officials flipping out. It only ended when Wray died in Nova Scotia in the fall of 1994 at age 44.

I have recently come across two academic works which have examined the tremendous transformation Wilton Manors has undergone in the last 20 years, and the VERY interesting social impact. The story is more complex than I described in the book. The first work takes an economic view. The second, a sociological view.

Sean Manning Udell's Senior Thesis from Columbia University in New York, looks at the transformation from an economic perspective.¹

The population had peaked in 1980 and was declining. The crime rate was escalating significantly, much of it targeted at women. New construction had diminished to nearly nothing. The existing housing stock was getting older and consisted of small houses, needing repairs. Property values and rental prices were declining.

In the 1980's and 1990's, Victoria Park in Fort Lauderdale thrived with an influx of gays, lining up to buy the older bungalows.

The inevitable result was that it became very expensive. Real estate agents started billing

¹ It is titled "Gaytrification: Financial Incentives and the Making of a Gay Social Enclave in Wilton Manors, Florida, 1990-2000."

Wilton Manors as “the next Victoria Park.” The homes in Wilton Manors were larger than those in Victoria Park, and substantially less expensive. And, Wilton Manors had its own “down town,” which Victoria Park lacked.

Unlike other gay enclaves, like Key West or Provincetown, gays were not attracted to Wilton Manors because it was a gay enclave, but because it was a good deal.

The re-developer of The Shoppes of Wilton Manors laid the groundwork with the City for serious concessions about parking requirements and how close bars could be to each other. The implementation of an “Arts and Entertainment” district changed zoning rules to encourage gay businesses. This opened the way for Georgie's Alibi.

Georgie's Alibi is a gay bar. It was significant because it had a big sign out front, and you could admit that you not only had heard of it, knew where it was, but had been in. (Note to your political campaign manager, straight candidates for City Commission all have announcement parties at Georgie's.)

While Udell's economic explanation for the transformation is important, the **sociological** impact of a large influx of gays in Wilton Manors is remarkable. Emma Ergon-Rowe's PhD dissertation, from 2011 offers an explanation. Her dissertation has an impossible title.² I will confess that I was nearly 20 pages into it before having a clue what she was talking about. Such is the nature of PhD dissertations.

A high degree of civic involvement has always distinguished Wilton Manors. This continues today with active neighborhood associations covering the entire city, a Library Advisory Board and a Friends of the Library organization. Both the Wilton Manors Business Association and the Wilton Manors Development Alliance promote and support local businesses, there are seven Commission appointed advisory boards. Local businesses are very generous contributors to good causes.

Wilton Manors is small (about 2 square miles) and clearly defined by the North and South Forks of the Middle River. It is easy to grasp the concept. It is fairly homogeneous with a liberal “world view” of accepting others and wanting to contribute to the greater good.

Ergon goes into detail about what happened to the existing population. She carefully studied the 13 taped interviews the Historical Society provided her from the 1970's and conducted an additional 21 interviews of both long term and newer residents.

Generally speaking, Ergon concludes that the prevailing “world view” (expectations, acceptance of others, and general perspective on life) was fairly consistent and liberal. No one seemed particularly threatened by people with different values moving into the neighborhood. This has continued from the 1950's to date.

Layered on top of this are the concepts of “exchange value” versus “use value.” The “exchange value” is “how much money can I make if I sell my house.” The “use value” is “What is the psychic value of my house?” Does it fit my needs? Do I like my neighbors? Are there convenient things located nearby? Is my house worth staying in?

Use value” has been consistently winning this battle, even with the heated up housing market in the first part of the 2000's. Lots of houses were flipped, lots of granite

² The dissertation is titled “The River, the Railroad Tracks, and the Towers: How Residents' Worldview and Use Value Transformed Wilton Manors into a Diverse, Gay-Friendly, Urban Village.”

countertops were installed, but significant numbers of long time residents were not displaced. Not how this normally works.

So, “*Wilton Manors: From Farming Community to Urban Village*” is just that. Our history is interesting, occasionally contradictory, and certainly not dull. But, from the 1940's, we have been a focused community, fortunate in both our elected and appointed officials, and our volunteers.

I would be remiss if I did not do an advertisement for the Wilton Manors Historical Society. We are chartered to preserve, protect, and communicate our past to our residents and the world at large. In our eyes, just as important, we are there to be a booster of our City and help guide our elected and appointed officials moving into the future. Our current big project is to renovate and repurpose the Willingham Carriage House at Richardson Park, making the park an even more attractive rental venue. We have, to date, contributed a substantial amount of cash to make this happen, as well as thousands of dollars worth of consulting expertise, which would otherwise be unavailable to the City.

In the greater scheme of things, why does either Pompano Beach or Wilton Manors need a historical society? There weren't any Revolutionary War or Civil War battles fought here.

We provide a sense of place and perspective. If someone asks “What's a Kester?” you can explain what William Kester did for your city. If a school child notes that there is no place in the kitchen of a Kester Cottage for a microwave oven, this opens up the possibility that things were not always as they are today, and in the future, will not be as they are now.

Important ideas.

As you drive to Fort Lauderdale on Dixie Highway or Powerline Road, I hope that you have a better appreciation of Wilton Manors as you drive through. The A&W Root Beer stand is gone, but Georgie's Alibi and Rosie's Bar and Grill consistently finish at the top of Broward County's “best burger” competitions. Stop by.

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