



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Historical Notes

May 2007

RECALLING WILTON MANORS HISTORY

by Paul A. "Kuta

As Wilton Manors prepares to celebrate its 60th birthday in May 2007, let's take a quick look back at our history.

Edward John "Ned" Willingham, a land developer from Georgia, founded Wilton Manors as a northern residential subdivision of the City of Fort Lauderdale in 1925. The sales brochure promised lots of modern amenities. You can see the brochure on the Historical Society website, www.WiltonManorsHistoricalSociety.com

The hurricane of 1926 and then the national economic depression pretty much put a stop to any significant development in South Florida until after World War II, when it clearly took off. The Historical Society plans to mark the spot of Willingham's house with a sign, supported by one of the original gas light poles from Wilton Boulevard, as Wilton Drive was originally named.

In the mid-1940's, leaders from the private Wilton Manors Civic Association petitioned the Broward County Circuit Court and the State of Florida to separate Wilton Manors from Fort Lauderdale. This was granted; and on May 13, 1947, the Village of Wilton Manors was incorporated and the first Mayor and Village Council were elected. The elected officials met in the Village Meeting Hall, located on the site of our current Public Library on NE 26th Street.



To further enhance the community's legal status, the Village Council had its attorney prepare Articles of Incorporation for establishment of a city. Council President James Dean carried these legal documents to the State Legislature in Tallahassee. On June 4, 1953, Wilton Manors became a city – the 11th in Broward County.

In July 1957, the small city staff – including the Police and Volunteer Fire Departments – moved into the current city hall on NE 21st Court. The former Village Meeting Hall became the local library. Thus, in 2007 both the Wilton Manors City Hall and Public Library are celebrating their 50th anniversary.

For more on our history, read Cynthia Thuma's book, *Images of America, Wilton Manors*, published by Arcadia Publishing, and available for sale at the library.

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