



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

JULY 2008

DIVING FOR BURIED TREASURE

By Benjamin Little and Paul A. Kuta
Wilton Manors Historical Society

The Historical Society has been Dumpster Diving! Looking for treasure buried under beds and in the back of closets! Mounted a marketing campaign worthy of a global corporation! State of the art research techniques! Old fashioned wearing out of shoe leather. The Wilton Manors Historical Society has employed all of these techniques in the update to Stuart McIver's History of Wilton Manors, originally published in 1997 by the City of Wilton Manors.

Several members of the Board of Directors have not seen the tops of their dining room tables for months for all the new information uncovered to update the book. The Society has been the beneficiary of extraordinary good will from our neighbors and from former neighbors who have moved far away.

Two months ago, Debra Burke of Art Frenzie at 2055 Wilton Drive and her business neighbor, Thomas Williamson of Hairbrainz at 2047 Wilton Drive, were taking out their trash one evening when Debbie spotted some discarded old newspapers that she thought might be important. While Debbie held a flashlight, Tom Williamson literally climbed into the dumpster and retrieved three boxes of documents before the trash was picked up the next morning.

Debbie, who has helped the Society with a number of projects, turned over this "treasure" to the Historical Society. It contained unique and valuable public documents, photos, and newspapers dating from 1948 to the early 1960's--true buried treasure! One item is a city directory drawn up by the Civic Association which lists the names and addresses of all residents and businesses in Wilton Manors in 1949. The local newspapers from the early 1950's reflect the period of our city's greatest growth. They reflect not only the momentous but also the mundane. We are all indebted to Ms. Burke and Mr. Williamson.

Late last year Gwen Mace King, of South Carolina, contacted Historical Society President Diane Cline after seeing a newspaper profile on her. Mrs. King and her family had lived in one of the Gateway Towers (built in 1925 at Five Points) during the late 1940's. Her grandfather, M.D. Mace, bought the towers in 1944 and remodeled the eastern section of the tower as a home for his son. Gwen provided the Society with the best pictures known to exist of what the Towers looked like in their original setting.

Nancy Sawallis, a 60 year resident of Wilton Manors provided personal reminiscences of Perry Mickel, the second Mayor of Wilton Manors, and his wife, Dorothea, who were her neighbors at “Skunk Hollow,” on NW 25th Street. Mrs. Sawallis has also provided the society with spectacular pictures of the area from the 1940’s.

Alvar Hagen’s daughter, now living in Atlanta, recently contacted the Society through the web site to offer us movies taken by her father in Wilton Manors in the late 1940’s and 1950’s. Hagen, first President of the City Council, was one of the big movers and shakers and donated the land for Hagen Park.

Ron and Mary Ulm, Co-Chairs of the Research Committee, have attacked internet resources with the skill and dedication of CIA Code Breakers! They have assembled a nearly complete inventory of all the plats, from 1910 into the 1940’s, which made up Wilton Manors, decoding who owned what. They have uncovered obscure facts about the FECRR; Willingham’s house in Macon, GA; census data on the folks who lived here in the teens and twenties; and exploded more myths than you can imagine there were.

Added to newly uncovered scrapbooks, extensive research of the online Sun-Sentinel archives, microfiche searches of newspapers dating to the 1920’s, new interviews, and new analysis, the new History of Wilton Manors promises to be a blockbuster!

If you have what may be a treasure, or maybe it is just old “junk,” contact the Historical Society through its web site, www.WiltonManorsHistoricalSociety.org.

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