



# WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## HISTORICAL NOTES

MARCH 2009

**DORIS E. COTNOIR**

### **BROWARD COUNTY PIONEER**

From the Broward County Historical

Commission Souvenir Booklet

Broward County Retired Educators Association

*The following was printed in the Broward County Historical Commission Souvenir Booklet for 2009. Doris was nominated by the Broward County Retired Educators Association.*

DORIS E. COTNOIR was born in 1939 to Edith and Nathan H. Rogers in New London, Connecticut. She has one brother, Wayne E. Rogers.

Ms Cotnoir's earliest memories of Fort Lauderdale began in 1949. Her parents brought the family from Connecticut to Vero Beach with the plan to settle there. They visited Fort Lauderdale that year and it was like a wonderful fairyland to a child from a very small town. The street lights, the stores, the lanes of traffic were all amazing! She remembers going to Galt Ocean Mile to a pristine beach. She and her brother would run up and down the sand dunes while her father fished in the surf. They stayed in the Gateway area on 17th Way. Pal's Restaurant was on the northeast corner where a bank is today. The motel was owned by Hulgur Christensen, who also owned the music store and a real estate office on 17th Way. Her family went to the beach every day, but the Christensen girls wouldn't join them because it was November, and "only tourists swim in the ocean. "

The family came back to vacation every few years and one of the biggest thrills for a small town child was the street lights and stores on North Federal Highway. She remembers the Mai Kai when it stood alone in its magical glory, and Porky's Nightclub. Guido's Restaurant with its neon ducks offered all the steak you could eat for \$2.99, and all the Florida lobster tails you could eat for \$3.99. Ms Cotnoir has fond memories of holding her brother's hand as they crossed Federal Highway to go to the Gateway Theater. It was new and very beautiful when compared to the dusty old theaters in her area of Connecticut. They saw "Island in the Sun," starring Harry Belafonte. He was so handsome!

Ms Cotnoir's family frequently returned to Fort Lauderdale, and because she was in her high school band, they always went to the Flying L's football games. She remembers the drum major strutting down the field with fire-lit batons!

Her last visit as a tourist to Fort Lauderdale was in 1957, and the city was quickly changing. Tall buildings began to appear downtown and the Galt Ocean Mile area was no longer the open place it had been.

In 1963, Ms Cotnoir and her husband brought their young children to vacation in Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Cotnoir was amazed. "Look at the palm trees and smell the breeze! We can pick oranges in the yard and they play softball nine months of the year!" He announced that he wanted to move to Fort Lauderdale. That was not part of Ms Cotnoir's plan. Her parents had purchased a small motel on 17th Way, and her idea was for a free vacation, not a new home.

Nine months later, they moved to Fort Lauderdale and Ms Cotnoir was very unhappy until she adjusted to a whole new way of life. It took six months for her to stop crying for the people and things she missed. It was so difficult to learn to live with the heat, the traffic and a reduced income.

In 1973, Ms Cotnoir began to work as a Teacher's Aide with the Broward County School Board. She found satisfaction working with kindergarten children and after five years, she decided to seek a degree so that she might teach. She had been out of school for 20 years, but college was exciting because of her goal. She graduated in 1979 from Nova Southeastern University and was almost immediately hired as a teacher. She later earned her Master's degree in early childhood education from Florida Atlantic University, and taught kindergarten for 25 years.

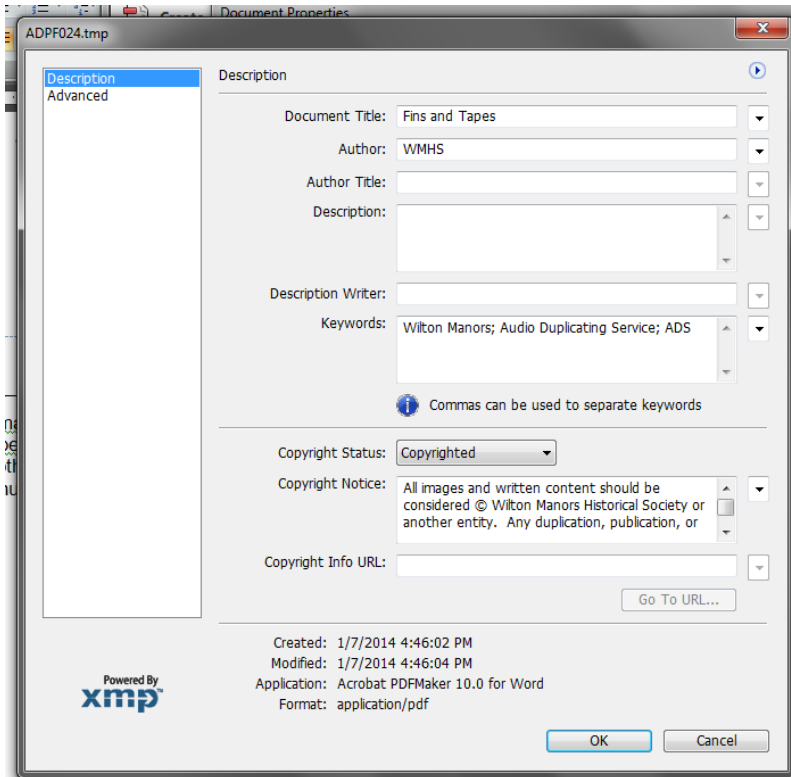
Ms Cotnoir has two children: Robert Bruce Cotnoir and Kristen Lee Bradley. She is a member of the Broward County Retired Teachers Association, Stranahan House, Wilton Manors Historical Society, Order of Eastern Star, and Wilton Manors Friends of the Library.

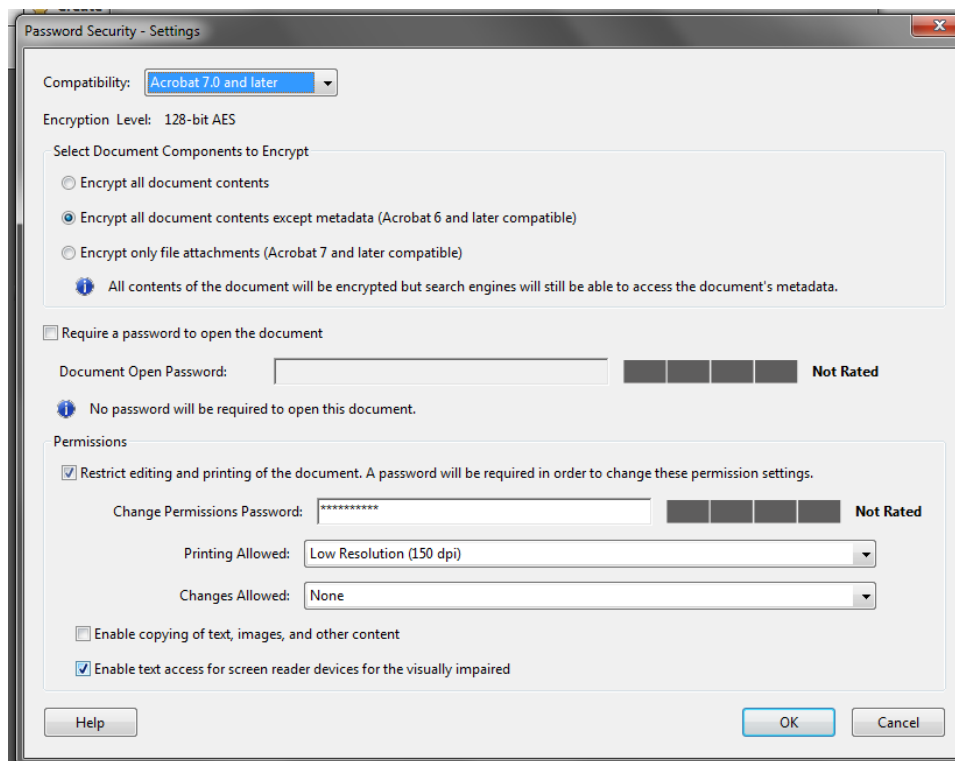
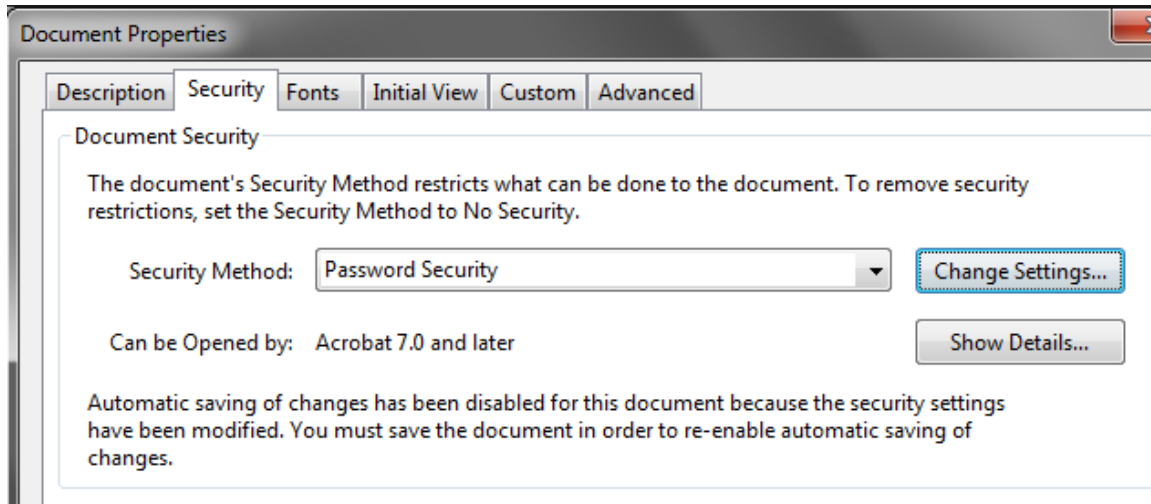
Ms Cotnoir has been retired for four years and now spends much of her free time volunteering for several organizations. She also enjoys traveling, history, theater and crafts.

After 45 years she considers Fort Lauderdale to be home, and she plans to stay for the rest of her life.

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