



# WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## HISTORICAL NOTES

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### CRIME IN WILTON MANORS

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There is crime in Wilton Manors – nothing to make the front page of a tabloid in the supermarket check-out line, but the sorts of things typical of any community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, burglaries, vandalism, and the like. Much of it is due to our proximity to Fort Lauderdale and Oakland Park. If you follow these things, you can't help but think, "We got a KICK ASS Police Department!"

But, if you want to stop the checkout line at Publix, Wilton Manors has some history worthy of the front page of the **Enquirer**.

1950 saw a "crime wave" in our little village. It was attributable to outsiders coming to enjoy the gambling and drinking available at a "house of ill repute" located across the street from what is now the Elementary School.

In 1969, a couple who were renting a garage apartment from the Lazy Lake Police Chief were arrested for running a book making operation, which reputedly earned between \$500,000 and \$1 million a year.

In December 1971, Gerard John Schaefer, Jr. was hired by the Wilton Manors Police Department. He lasted six months before Chief Bernard Scott fired him. Hanging a drunk upside down under a bridge is not acceptable behavior. His next job, with the Martin County Sheriff ended quickly when it was discovered he had handcuffed two hitchhikers to trees and left them. The next year, he was convicted of murdering two women in Oakland Park. In all, he was suspected of 28 murders. He died in prison, in a fight over a cup of hot water. Wilton Manors Police Chief Scott wisely instituted psychological testing for all WMPD job applicants.

There is an "unlucky house." In 1973, a 14 year old child returned home to discover that his mother, two brothers, and sister had been brutally murdered. A prime suspect was identified, but no arrests were made.

Five years later, Joyce "Cookie" Summerhill, was living in the same house. She went for an evening walk down Andrews Avenue to Big Daddy's Lounge, just over the river. She never made it. Her body was found a week later, in dense underbrush about 30 feet off the street. The scene was gruesome.

How about a 1972 Chevrolet for a "perp?" JoAnn Velasco's car would not start. A neighbor helped jump start it. Once started, he got out to disconnect the jumper cables and the car dropped into gear and started driving around in circles. Efforts to regain control failed. The car knocked down a palm tree and was heading for a house. WMPD Lt. Perry Hempstead instructed sharpshooter Jay Bell to open fire. He fired four shotgun blasts into the car's open hood. The Impala stopped just short of the house. It took \$400 to fix the car. Lt. Hempstead kept a low profile for a while.

The North Fork of the Middle River at the Island City Park Preserve is regularly visited by manatees

in the winter and is popular with canoeists and bird watchers. In Prohibition days, in the 1920s and early 1930s, it is thought that moonshiners visited the north fork's two uninhabited islands, where they operated illegal whiskey stills.

In May 1980, a suspicious neighbor called the Police to report that a huge, high powered Excalibur motor boat had docked at a home in the 2400 block of NE 18<sup>th</sup> Ave in the night. In the darkness, a sizeable number of people had snuck into the house. Five WMPD officers surrounded the house and were joined by the Border Patrol. Three smugglers and 14 Columbian immigrants were arrested.

Vikki Kittles was arrested in May 1985. She had 37 dogs, three cats, and two horses in her house. And her mother. She was unhappy about letting the authorities in. The animals were unhappy with the commotion, and the animal rescue people had their hands full. She was arrested on two counts of animal cruelty.

John Francis "Jaco" Pastorius III, one of the greatest guitar players of all time, tried to get into the Bottle Club on Wilton Drive and was refused entrance one morning at 4:30 a.m. in September 1987. He was, most probably, "impaired." He apparently tried to kick the door down and was stopped by the bouncer, who was a martial arts expert. He was beaten so badly, he died of his injuries six days later.

Every city has a super star, an Academy Award Winner who knows how to tweak the City Administration to maximum effect. Ours was Wray Parr. A Canadian, he came to stay the winter with his mother in 1991. He arrived in a school bus, filled with 18 snakes, including two pythons weighing more than 100 pounds. Turns out, you can't park a school bus in a residential neighborhood. "It is a motor home," he said. Mayor Steen said, "He can register it as a luxury condo, but it's still a bus." Fines were imposed and suspended. Courts made judgments and suspended them. Tours of the snake hotel were given. Small children were entranced. He spent \$2,000 on a paint job showing a mighty python hovering over a burning City Hall with fleeing rats named after City Council members. This went on for three years until he died in Nova Scotia.

In 1982, a man was found in the trunk of a car parked in front of a house in Wilton Manors with his throat cut. The investigation went on for years, but Barry "The Bear" Hunwick, a Mafia hit man, finally pleaded "no contest" in 1999. He is thought to have been responsible for 300 contract murders.

It turns out that, in 1996, it cost \$8,300 to burn candles at a fortune teller's to cleanse your soul. An additional \$8,100 got the candle drippings shipped to Egypt for burial. The psychic probably should have foreseen her arrest for fraud.

We have come a long way since Harley Sanderson was appointed Town Marshall in 1947. In 1952, the Police Department got a used Harley Davidson motorcycle. In 1955 someone was hired to answer the phone after hours. It had been ringing at the Police Chief's home. A radio was obtained in 1955. In 1967, the Department assisted the Fort Lauderdale Police Department in dealing with the "spring break beach riots." The City budget for 2016-2017 includes nearly \$7 million for the Police Department. That is a long way from the \$70 a week paid to Chief Richard Beaney when he was appointed in 1952.

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