

Preservation News

A Publication of the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

• Fall 2007 •

Phone (239) 344-8851

Mound House Update

The Florida Historic Preservation Commission met September 24th - 27th. The purpose of the the meeting was to review and rank Special Category grant application. Special Category grants are applications for state funding exceeding \$50,000.00 for historic preservation projects. Mound House director, Theresa Schober and volunteer Bill Grace attended the meeting to defend the application for funding for the Mound House. The Mound House is the oldest existing structure on Fort Myers Beach and sits atop a Calusa Indian mound. The house is being restored to it's circa 1921 configuration and an archaeological exhibit is being constructed where a 1950s swimming pool was dug into the mound. This year's grant application was for funding for the restoration of the interior and design and construction of museum exhibits. When completed the site will interpret the the human habitation of the site from the Calusa Indians thru early European occupation.

Of the 133 applications the Mound House was ranked 6th in priority. In the Spring the legislature will determine how many projects will be funded. Last year the Mound House application was ranked 1st and of the 43 projects the Preservation Commission recommended be funded only 11 were funded by the legislature. Presently the archaeological exhibit is under construction and the restoration of the exterior of the house has begun. The archaeological exhibit will be completed in 2008. If funding is made available the house will open in 2009.



**"Preservation...
the ultimate recycling."**

**Quoted from Mr. Richard Moe,
*President for the National Trust
for Historic Preservation***



LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

The mission of Lee Trust is to preserve the sites and buildings of historical, archaeological and architectural significance to Lee County through both advocacy and acquisition.

Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

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2007

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Lee Trust for Historic Preservation, Inc.
was founded in 1993
and is dedicated to preserving
and developing
the heritage of Lee County
and its municipalities.

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Lee Trust publishes its newsletter,
Preservation News,
in April and October.

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Lee Trust is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit
corporation and all gifts made to Lee Trust are
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A copy of the official registration and financial
information may be obtained from the Division
of Consumer Services by calling tollfree
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Art Hall

The Art Hall's interior is stunning. The finials are in and they are all nearly installed. They surely give the Art Hall a distinctive look. The walls, flooring, and trim surely display the buildings splendor. The product we are receiving from White Construction has been superior. The interior work will wrap up next week and this will bring the project to a close. Some additional flooring had to be procured to finish the flooring and Mr. White felt like the decking of the floor would be complete today. The treating and preserving of the floor will commence and we will address issues that may concern the Park next week.



Gill House by William H. Marquardt, Ph.D.

Work has begun to restore a venerable structure of the Pineland community. Owned by Lee County and leased in 2001 to the Randell Research Center for use as its headquarters, the Ruby Gill House was severely damaged by Hurricane Charley in 2004. Re-roofing of both the house and the post office next door were funded by the Florida Museum shortly after the storm. In 2007, Lee County historical-preservation funds and private donations of money and services have helped us stabilize both buildings and begin the restoration process. Additional funds must now be found to pay for architectural and engineering plans, external structural work, and interior restoration.

Historically the Gill House and the Pineland Post Office are closely connected. In 1922, Ruby Vance Gill, then age 35, moved to Pineland with her husband Percy. The Gills bought several acres of groves and built the two-story house. In 1924, Ms. Gill succeeded James Wheeler as postmaster. Soon after, a storm swept away the tiny post office, which was then on the waterfront. Ms. Gill built a new post office next to her home, where it still stands today. Here, she was postmaster until 1957, serving 33 years. Early on, she operated a small store in the same building. She also served on the county electric board and was instrumental in bringing electricity to Pineland in 1941. In 2005, the Gill House was listed as a Lee County historic resource. When the rehabilitation of the Gill House is completed, it will be open for public visitation during business hours.



Update on Parking Lot Planned For Edison Park Historic District

Fort Myers City Council met August 28th at Harborside Events Center. The issue was to support or reverse the decision of the Historic Preservation Commission whereby the Commission denied approval of the First Presbyterian Church's request to expand its parking lot into the Edison Park Historic District. Lee Trust was very concerned. Our thinking was that should the request be approved by Council it would open the door to the complete demise of the historic integrity of the Edison Park District. We knew the Church was going to pack the hall and were afraid the Council would be intimidated by so large a crowd. We hired an attorney out of Naples to represent the Trust and argue against allowing the parking expansion. He made a very impressive case. After many hours of hearing the Council voted to uphold the Preservation Commission and deny the Church's expansion plans.

All This Belongs to Me by Ad Hudler, 2006, Ballantine Books

If you haven't read Ad Hudler's *All This Belongs to Me*, please dash to your nearest bookstore or library and have a gander. I know the Lee Trust is a historic preservation organization dedicated to historical accuracy, and some will say you should only be concerned with hard fact. But, sometimes it's fun to go over to the dark side and imagine with an author who will make you think outside the history primer.

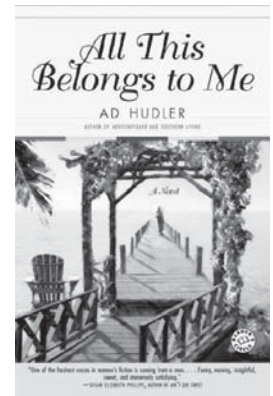
All This Belongs to Me is a fictional—yes, I'm saying it again—story about two disparate personalities, Geena, a free spirit with a load of personal baggage, and Ellis, an obsessed Edison Estates tour guide. While their relationship fuels the plot, it is also a delicious exploration of old Florida—and old Fort Myers—culture.

As a former curator of the Edison and Ford Winter Estates, I am amazed at Hudler's ability to capture the endurance, passion and zeal for historical accuracy inherent in the Edison guides. I mean absolutely no disrespect. The men and women I worked with were mostly over 65. They were paid little, worked in scalding sun and pouring rain, and made major crowd control look effortless. On top of

that, they relentlessly pursued and presented the facts and still always had a smile for each visitor. None—that I know of—channeled Mina Edison as Ellis does, but that's where the fiction comes in.

Because I had heard from a number of people who believed they were the inspiration of some of his characters, I sought out Ad Hudler and asked him about the similarities. He was flustered. He said he had toured the Estates and checked out the bookstore, but all the characters were fictionalized. Maybe they are. Maybe not. Then again, maybe he's channeling someone himself...

Michele Wehrwein Albion was curator at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates from 1992 to 1997. Her first book, *Thomas Edison Takes a Holiday, the Inventor in Florida* will be published by University of Florida Press this spring.



Lee County Historic Preservation Grant

Owners of older buildings in unincorporated Lee County have a chance to obtain funds to fix up their old historic structures under the Lee County Historic Preservation Grant Assistance Program. This year the program makes available \$50,000 in grant funds.

To qualify for participation a building must be about 50 years old and designated or qualified for designation under the Lee County Land Development Code Chapter 22, Historic Preservation.

Building located in the city limits of Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, and Sanibel do not qualify.

All applications are due by 4 pm December 7, 2007 at the Lee County Planning Division.

To obtain an application contact the Lee County Planning Division at 239.533.8118

The Lee County Planning Division is located on the second floor of the Lee County Community Development And Public Works Building at 1500 Monroe Street in downtown Fort Myers.



Looking to the future with an eye to the past...

LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC. P.O. Box 1035 • Fort Myers, Florida 33902-1035

What do YOU think about preservation in Lee County?

As space permits we will choose comments, questions, and opinions at random to print. Send your e-mail to Leepreservation@aol.com

And let us know what YOU Think.



LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

Membership Application/ Renewal Form

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Make checks payable to Lee Trust for Historic Preservation and send to:

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Membership is for the calendar year. Dues are payable on January 1st and are considered delinquent after the annual meeting in February of each year.

2008 Dues Are Due! Help Us Save Old Lee County PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES!

Tired of seeing our historic buildings torn down? Want to know more about historic preservation? Then join Lee Trust!

Lee Trust is a nonprofit organization formed to promote preservation and assist our community when historic resources are threatened. We have a Revolving Fund Program to buy threatened historic structures. We also provide assistance and seek to educate the public about our community heritage. Our primary sources of funding are membership dues, gifts and fundraising events organized by volunteers.

Please fill out this form and send it in with your check. In addition to selecting your membership level, you may elect to be notified of meetings and events via email, saving the Trust the cost of postage. Consider an additional donation as a Contributor or Sponsor and help increase our Revolving Fund. For more information about Membership contact Gina Taylor at (239) 334-8851