

Preservation News

A Publication of the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

Fall 2008 · Phone (239) 939-PAST

Preservation... The Ultimate Recycling

The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center *by Michele Patrick, Dir of Development*

The key to an arts revival in downtown Fort Myers lies in the Grecian columns and neoclassical lines of a magnificent building now being renovated as the new Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center. The center sprawls in its 23,000 square-foot glory over an entire block at First and Jackson streets in the River District, an area being revitalized as Fort Myers' dining and entertainment hub.

The 1933 building, designed by prominent Florida architect Nat Gallaired Walker, once served as a federal



*Then:
Fort Myers Post Office
Ca. 1933*

courthouse and originally opened as a post office. Now it is slowly, painstakingly being restored as a state-of-the-art visual and performing arts center, complete with three levels of gallery space with grand atriums and two rooftop levels with sculpture gardens. Even as the building's interior

awaits completion, the Art Center hosts numerous community events, exhibits, fundraising galas, performances, concerts, and the annual Florida Arts Festival (now in its 4th year).

The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center is as much an advocate of historic preservation as it is of the arts. The Art Center produced a program called "Stories from the Steps," in which long-time members of the community gathered weekly on the steps in front of the Art Center to recall their experiences of the building. As they told their own "Stories From The Steps," their voices were recorded, along with a piece of history. Participants included John Shepard, Jean Bouchette, Bob Halgrim, Barbara and Frank Mann, and Berne Davis.

Some participants recounted how, as children, they played together at the building with local Native American children visiting the town. Coordinator of "Stories from the Steps," Michele Patrick, said, "Although they didn't speak the same language, they all knew how to play." Frank Mann said he "learned his numbers" from playing at the building with his brother, counting the steps and post office boxes. As the Fort Myers natives reminisced in stories from their youth, Patrick said, "It's like they became that child again."

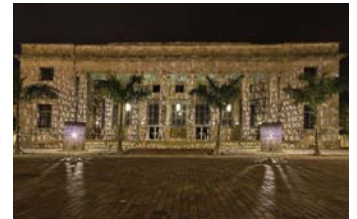
For many, the building's main attraction is its architectural aesthetics. The walls, embedded with seashell formations and coral, are complimented by elegant columns made of Florida

Key limestone. The natural native material attracts locals and tourists alike.

Upon starting the restoration process, the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center stumbled upon the original building plans in the basement. Ever since, the Art Center has been working steadfastly to restore the historic features of the building, while still bringing the modernity of a world-class cultural facility. For example, the Art Center restored the look of the building's windowpanes and made them hurricane resistant. The original post office boxes (circa 1933) were removed during the conversion of the federal building in 1965. The Art Center has been restoring the post office. More donations are needed to finish restoration of other original features of the building, such as the beautifully hand-painted plastered ceilings. All proceeds go to funding arts, cultural events, restoration and outreach programs.

The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, a nonprofit organization, works to further the building's restoration progress, which depends on grants and community support for its completion. There's a plethora of opportunities available for providing this support, including naming rights. Give a gift of a commemorative P.O. Box or an entire room. Your name or the name of a loved one goes forward into the future of the Art Center as an enduring honor.

Alternatively, a donation of any amount can be made to support the preservation of this monumental building. For more information, visit the Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center website at www.sbdac.com. Or call 239-333-1933.



*Now: Sidney & Berne Davis
Art Center
Photo Credit: Eric Lorrette*

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LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

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

Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

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2008

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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,
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www.leetrust.org

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Lee Trust is a 501(c)(3)
not-for-profit corporation
and all gifts made to Lee Trust
are tax deductible to the
extent allowed by law.

Help Serve Your Community and Those Serving Our Country *by Helena Finnegan*

On November 8, 2008, the Southwest Florida Museum of History Foundation Inc. is teaming up with Lee Memorial Military Support Operations for the Second Annual Veteran's Day Golf Tournament.

This fundraiser at the Verandah Golf Club will again help raise money for the museum and co-charity, Lee Memorial Military Support Operations.

This is a wonderful way to display patriotism for your local community. Lee Memorial Military Support Operations honors and aids our local soldiers and their families in a variety of ways. To date, more than 17,000 pounds of care packages have been sent overseas. Lee Memorial Military Support also plans and executes homecoming celebrations, supports families left behind who have been impacted with the rising cost of living, and has set up scholarship funds for children who have lost their parents.

The Southwest Florida Museum of History brings history to life in Fort Myers through traveling exhibits, educational programs, downtown walking tours, summer camps, regional author evenings and day trips to fun and exciting places throughout Florida.

This tournament offers four-person teams a Scramble with an 8:30 a.m. shotgun start on Saturday, November 8th preceded by the ceremonial fly over honoring our men and women in uniform. A portion of the proceeds from this tournament will go to the Lee Memorial Military Support Operations.

Mark your calendars for November 8th at Verandah Golf Club and help serve your community and those serving our country!

Tournament Registration and Sponsorship Forms are available for download at: www.cityftmyers.com/museum - just click on the golf logo!

Upcoming Events!

Halloween - Harrowing horse and carriage rides, communication from beyond psychic fair, haunted history and more awaits you.... if you dare! Join us for the first ever River District Spooktacular! October 31st 7pm-12

River District Passport - Stop by one of the 69 participating River District businesses to pick up your RD Passport and start your journey to possibly winning a grand prize package of cash and prizes worth \$3000 or more, or other great prizes! Have at least 55 downtown businesses stamp your passport and you will be eligible for the grand prize drawing! Call (239) 321-7100 or visit www.cityftmyers.com for more information.

FMPD 125th Anniversary - In 2010, The Fort Myers Police Department will celebrate its 125th Anniversary. In 1885, the City started with one marshal serving as the law enforcement representative in the area. Today we have over 200 police officers protecting the citizens of the City of Fort Myers.

To honor the years of service, we are making a pictorial history book. We are in search of photographs and memorabilia that show or represent our department. The book will be a 128 page hardcover book and will have pictures from the past to the present. Any assistance would be great. Points of contact are Sergeant Sean Hoover or Jeffery Bernice at 239-334-4155 - shoover@fmpolice.com or jbernice@fmpolice.com

Historical Birthday Event - Join the historical fun on November 2, 2008, in the River District when the 10th Anniversary of the area's local historic designation will be celebrated. Events include historical characters from the founding families, an architectural scavenger hunt, a self-guided historical architectural walking tour, and a children's entertainment area. Call (239) 321-7100 or visit www.cityftmyers.com for more information.

Art Walk Premieres in Historic Downtown Fort Myers River District

Eleven historic River District art galleries and venues have united to form Art Walk, a free downtown art celebration, on the first Friday of each month beginning on October 3, 2008, from 6 pm until 10 pm.

The Williams Academy Black History Museum Hosts its 2nd Annual

Fundraiser Luncheon - Tuesday, October 7th at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre from 11:30am - 1:30pm. Seating is limited and reservations are required by calling 239-332-8778.

Mason's Bakery Moving After 57 Years Downtown! by Lisa Ketcham

Mason's Bakery, located in the Historic Downtown Area on Hendry Street is moving after 57 years in the same location. Our family (the Ketcham's) purchased Mason's Bakery from Paul Peden (Veranda Restaurant) in 1980. It had two previous owners prior to Mr. Peden, one being Mr. Mason himself. Chris and myself are the current owners after buying the business from Chris' father in 1998.

It is very bittersweet to leave the downtown area for not only Chris and myself, but also for our bakers, decorators and front retail staff. While Chris has basically grown up in the bakery at this location, so have our three children. I also hold fond memories as this was my childhood bakery, and a favorite place to come buy a cookie while my Father (a court reporter in the old Courthouse) would be busy in court session.

Due to the road closures/utility replacement of the past three years, it is no longer feasible for our bakery to stay in the same location. Customers are weary of trying to navigate the closures, and the retail walk-in customer is nearly gone. We have seen many retail businesses closing their doors in the past three years, and Mason's Bakery and it's family have watched tremendous change in Downtown for the past 57 years. Our downtown has gone from a vibrant retail customer filled area, to an area that has flushed out the retailers. It is no longer a destination, but rather a place that you go to see an attorney, pay a fine or go to court. Efforts to remain downtown have been met with little to no interest in local government. Although Mason's has been a landmark in downtown for so many years, (in fact, probably the oldest surviving business in downtown) we find it necessary to move out in order to continue servicing our customers for the next generation.

Although our hearts are breaking to leave behind our beloved downtown, we are very excited about the opportunities that our new location will offer not only our existing faithful customers, but new customers as well. One chapter in our life, and Mason's Bakery is closing, but a new one will begin.

We want to thank our faithful customers for 57 years. We could not have done this without you. And here is to 57 more great years as your hometown bakery! We look forward to servicing you at our new location to be announced soon!

Sincerely,

Chris and Lisa Ketcham
Owners, 2nd Generation

Richard and Carolyn Ketcham
Previous Owners, 1st Generation

Another Adaptive Re-Use - The Franklin Arms Hotel By Gerri Reaves

Walk down to the shady arches of the historic Franklin Arms and you'll find Fort Myers' first skyscraper, a superb example of "adaptive reuse." This historic building has its origins in one of the city's first boarding houses, Hill House. Mary F. Hill had established Hill House in 1889 on the southwest corner of First and Lee Streets.



*Courtesy of the Florida State Photo Archives
The Franklin Arms Hotel in the 1920s,
Fort Myers' first skyscraper*

Hill ran the boarding house with the help of her two daughters, one of whom was M. Flossie Hill, aka "Miss Flossie," who opened the downtown women's clothing store on First Street in 1905 and ran it for over 50 years.

The Hill House was a thriving business when Walter P. Franklin bought it in 1918 and renamed it the Franklin Arms. He subsequently remodeled and expanded it, incorporating the original two-story wood-frame structure that was notable for its spacious porches – talk about recycling and adaptive reuse! A brick exterior was added to the front portion of the hotel.

A few years later, the Franklin Arms underwent a \$300 thousand renovation that added seven stories to the rear of the hotel. Because of its skyscraper status, many photographers used the Franklin Arms as a perch for taking aerial shots of the growing city and nearby subdivisions with lots for sale.

The city's first high-rise hotel opened on March 1, 1924, boasting 102 rooms, a roof garden, steam heat, and other boom-time amenities. In 1927, it advertised as "an absolutely fireproof hotel, catering to the refined tourist and the commercial trade." By the end of World War II, the hotel had added a cocktail bar, private baths, and a veranda to the list of amenities.

Gilmer Heitman, Jr. later bought the Franklin Arms Hotel, renovated and reopened it. In the 1970s, it became the Edison Regency.

Today, the 1924 high-rise addition is Franklin Arms Court, and the street-front section of the building houses Roetzel and Andress LPA.

Sources: *The Story of Fort Myers* by Karl H. Grismer and the archives of the Southwest Florida Historical Society.



*Photo by Gerri Reaves
The Franklin Arms today, on the
southwest corner of First and Lee Streets*

The Historic Lee County Throws Are Back!!



The Lee Trust has reordered these wonderful throws. They will be available in blue and cranberry. We will be selling them for \$49.50 available through the Trust Office and at many local museums.

Also available are Limited Edition Note Cards for \$8



Historic Building Plaques for \$55.00 each, including tax.

Mound House Updates *by Theresa Schober*

Calusa Carts

The Mound House archaeological and historical site will be taking its show "on the road" thanks to a \$27,790 matching grant from the Division of Historical Resources awarded in July. Designed in concert with the shell mound exhibit, where visitors will soon be able to walk inside the Calusa mound in the former location of a large



swimming pool, two mobile educational carts combine graphics, text, audio-visual and interactive components to enhance our interpretive abilities off-site. A stratigraphy cart will replicate a one-by-one meter square excavation unit that demonstrates layers within a shell mound over time and includes pull-out discovery drawers of different mound layers that interpret mound building episodes between A.D. 0-800. A second cart will focus on regional geography of sites within the Calusa domain including a touchable exaggerated relief map with fiber optic lights accompanied by audio recordings that identify changing patterns of site use, location, and design through time. Both carts provide room for artifact replicas, display areas, and docent supplies. Designed to fit side-by-side in the back of a truck or van, the carts will make their debut in spring 2009 at a variety of community events and educational venues to increase public awareness of Florida's rich cultural heritage. The Mound House is owned and operated by the Town of Fort Myers Beach.



Mound House During Restoration

FPAN (Florida Public Archaeology Network)

The Mound House is excited to announce its selection as the Southwest Florida Regional Center of the Florida Public Archaeology Network. Established by the Florida legislature in 2004, the network strives to "stem the rapid deterioration of this state's buried past and to expand public interest in archaeology." Each of eight network centers across the state is staffed with a public archaeologist and outreach coordinator whose primary role is to increase awareness of Florida's rich heritage by fostering visible public outreach programs and partnering with other educational organizations, assisting local governments in their efforts to preserve archaeological resources, and raising awareness of state programs by providing venues for regional training and assisting in the identification of sites eligible for listing on the National Register. The Southwest Regional Center will serve Charlotte, Glades, Lee, Hendry, and Collier Counties.

For more information on the Florida Public Archaeology Network visit the website at <http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org>



For Sale - The Stucky Home - Circa 1924

2644 Providence Street is unlike many old homes as it has retained it's primary floor plan. Many of the home's initial features and fixtures are intact, including the large mirror hanging above the fireplace mantle that was purchased by Mrs. Stucky from an Antique store in New York in the 1940's, and some of the original ten pane wood casement windows still adorn the house.

Downstairs there's a kitchen/breakfast area, grand living room with a fireplace and two built-in book shelves, attractive arched entryways, and large formal dining room with remnants of the old servants bell still visible. Upstairs original doors lead into a full hall bath and three bedrooms, enormous walk-up attic with beautiful exposed beams! The bathrooms still house the original "chicken wire" tile floors, tubs, sinks, medicine cabinets and hardware!



For More Information call:

Michelle Nugent, REALTOR® Sales Associate, ASP • Cell-239-826-3199
RE/MAX Realty Group • 7910 Summerlin Lakes Drive • Fort Myers, FL 33907
Direct- 239-210-4582 • Office- 239-480-0444 • Fax- 239-337-3690



Friday, December 5th

Please join us for a book signing
with Michele Albion
and nationally recognized local author, Ad Hudler
Details to Follow!

How We Got Here by Christine Jordan-Ballis

Three years ago Kosmas and I had an art studio on Pine Island in the middle of a palm tree orchard on one acre. He was preparing for a featured artist exhibit in the Flag Museum in Baltimore, MD for NCECA (National Council on Education for Ceramic Arts.) (Kosmas is an International and National award winning abstract ceramic sculptor.) Hurricane Charley destroyed the studio along with all the work that was to be exhibited in Baltimore. We drove to all the art galleries through the northern states and collected all his work so that we could do this major exhibit of his work. When we came back home we needed a break – a place for a new studio.

Our goal we set our sights on the rehabilitation of the area we now work and live in. We started renovation and the rehabilitation of the historic Hough/ Fowler neighborhood 3 years ago – it was, as you know, a very rough neighborhood that had beautiful architecture that was in desperate need of historical preservation. The Fowler property had over 40 people living in it and was a mess. Kos did all the renovation of the original Pine floors, transoms, double hung windows, etc. while I painstakingly painted the outside of this large building by hand to give it the details and respect it so greatly deserved.

The 1792 Hough Street home was a drug house but had beautiful built-in cabinets, pine floors, a beautiful stone fence and real charm.

Built in the late 1800's this home has so much historical history and we have the original abstracts dating back to 1883 with Augustus M. Wilson & wife Callidonia, the first owners, being granted the U.S patent by president Chester A. Arthur owning 162.58 acres which included the property at what is now 1793 Fowler Street. Then pieces of the property were slowly sold to Francis A. Hendry through 1910 - Francis Asbury Hendry (November 19, 1833 – February 12, 1917) was a Florida cattle rancher, politician, and officer in the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War. On August 12, 1885, Hendry chaired a public meeting held at the schoolhouse in Fort Myers, at the corner of Second and Lee Streets. There, the electors voted to incorporate the town, and Hendry became one of its first councilmen. As such, in 1887, he led efforts to create Lee County, Florida, and was elected to its first Board of County Commissioners.

**THE AREA'S LARGEST SELECTION OF RARE,
OUT OF PRINT & HARD TO FIND BOOKS & RECORDS
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VINTAGE EROTICA, SMOKING ACCESSORIES,
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**PLEASE VISIT US AT: 1793 FOWLER ST.
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LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

Membership Application/ Renewal Form

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I am a: New Member Renewing Member

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In addition to my gift, a matching gift will be made by: _____
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Make checks payable to Lee Trust for Historic Preservation and send to:

Lee Trust for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 1035 · Fort Myers, Florida 33902-1035
www.leetrust.org

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.

Membership donations are tax deductible. For more information about Membership contact Gina Taylor at LeePreservation@embarqmail.com or (239) 939-PAST

You Can Join At Any Time!



LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

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

P.O. Box 1035 • Fort Myers, Florida 33902-1035

**Do you live in a
historic home?**

**Do you own a
historic property?**

**Do you have an
interesting story to tell?**

Then let us know!

***IF THESE WALLS
COULD TALK***

**We would like to
tell your story in
our newsletter.**