

Preservation News

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LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

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THE MISSION OF LEE TRUST IS TO PROMOTE HISTORIC PRESERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND ACQUISITION.

Aloia & Roland, Heirs To The Pavese Barbershop

By Gerri Reaves

Soon after attorneys Frank Aloia, Jr. and Ty Roland purchased their office in the historic Earnhardt Building, Aloia discovered that his family's history was tied to the very spot.

Aloia's great-grandfather, Rocco Pavese, founded the Pavese Barbershop, along with his brothers, Michael "Mike," Joseph William "Willie," and Salvatore. For almost seven decades, the barbershop opened by the Pavese brothers was a mainstay on First Street.

The brothers came to Fort Myers at the turn of the twentieth century on a boat, before the arrival of the railroad in 1904, says Frank Pavese, Mike's son.

Before settling in Fort Myers, Rocco had worked as a barber for his uncle, Peter Verri in Tampa for about one year. He heard about the business opportunity in Fort Myers and returned to New York City to tell his three brothers to get ready to move to Fort Myers. Then, Frank Pavese says, "Uncle Rocco came down to open up the barbershop," bringing a wooden barber chair on a friend's Model T." His three brothers followed soon after that.

In 1911, Willie married Nettie D'Alessandro. Both Rocco and Mike married soon after returning from World War I, Rocco to Nettie Amari, and Mike to Theresa "Tess" D'Alessandro.

The barbershop was first located in a wooden building next to Phoenix Hall, which stood on the southeast corner of First and Hendry. For over 20 years, that hall over the Evans General Store hosted the town's community, arts, cultural, recreational, and political events.

When Phoenix Hall was demolished to build the First National Bank of Fort Myers,

the barbershop moved to the Earnhardt Building next door, which was built in 1914 to 1915. Both the bank (now a law firm) and the Earnhardt still stand today.

The barbershop occupied the space between the bank and the Royal Palm Pharmacy and stayed in business until 1970. The new shop had eight barber chairs and two shampoo basins in the center of the beautifully tiled floor.

In the 1930s, a haircut, a shave, a shampoo, and a shower or bath cost only 25 cents each, so for a dollar, a man could look his best.

The two showers and bathtub in the back were supplied with hot water heated with propane. A hot bath was a popular service in the days before every private home had hot running water.

On Saturday night, Frank Pavese says, the barbershop would be full until 10:30 or 11:00 p.m., and the brothers would stay until every customer left.

"Everybody and his brother used to come to that shop," Pavese remembers from his childhood, "lots of well-known people, all kinds of people."

Benches lined one wall, so 10 to 20 people could gather and talk.

Conveniently located across from the Bradford Hotel, the shop saw a lot of traveling customers, including the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team, which played in Fort Myers from 1925 to 1936.

The Royal Palm Pharmacy next door also doubled as an office for the ball team and manager Connie Mack.

As a child, Pavese knew what it was to have sports stars sitting around the dinner table. No restaurant in town served spaghetti,

so Pavese's mother, Theresa, cooked a big dinner and his father brought home his baseball-playing customers.



Another notable customer who was just passing through, Pavese recalls, was a lawyer involved in the 1935 criminal trial about the 1932 kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby.

But the most famous customer was Thomas A. Edison, who frequented the barbershop for years. During the last years of Edison's life when his health was failing, Mike Pavese continued to be the inventor's Fort Myers barber by bringing the hand clippers and steaming towels to Seminole Lodge.

Aloia & Roland is located at 2250 First Street in the historic Earnhardt Building. The law partners have an appreciation for historic buildings and have preserved the original tile floor. They are in the process of preserving sections of the original pressed tin ceiling, as well.

Hands-On History—Edison & Ford Winter Estates Summer Camp

Inventor's Summer Camp 2009 at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates is a great way for children to experience history, science and the arts firsthand.

Beginning June 1, there are eleven weeklong day camps which continue through the final weeklong session August 10 – 14. Activities are centered in the air conditioned and restored Edison Caretaker's House and include work throughout the historic site. A limited number of scholarships are available through a project with Saks 5th Avenue and the Bell Tower Shoppes.

Call the Edison & Ford Winter Estates at 334.7419 for information and to receive a camp brochure or check the website at www.efwefla.org.

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2009

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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, semi-monthly.

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Henry Ford Winter Estate Restoration Complete

The Edison & Ford Winter Estates riverside restoration of historical buildings is celebrating the recent completion of work at the winter home of Henry and Clara Ford. The beautiful craftsman style bungalow was originally built in 1911 by Robert Smith of New York and purchased in 1916 by Henry and Clara Ford for \$20,000. They enlarged the original central living area adding wings for guests and their staff.

The recent restoration includes a 'new' steel shingle roof replicating the period Victorian style roof with funds provided by the Edison & Ford Winter Estates Foundation. Important other improvements also include a state-of-the-art fire suppression system which includes both an indoor VESDA mist system funded by grants from the State of Florida and HUD. The home's exterior was painted through a grant from Sears Great American Homes and the interior through a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Valspar historic paint collection. Furnishings and artifacts have also been restored and expanded with contributions from the Southwest Quilter's Guild, the College of Life Foundation including a Henry Ford portrait from the Spevak family.

Edison & Ford™
WINTER ESTATES



In the next month at the Ford Estate, a new system for wind panels and other storm retrofit will be completed through funding from a FEMA Wind Mitigation grant.

The Edison & Ford Winter Estates, Inc is the 2009 winner of the highest award of the National Trust for Historic Preservation for its work preserving, interpreting and managing the property. The Estates are open daily from 9 AM until 5:30 PM. Call 334.7419 for information or group tours.



FREE Family-Friendly River District Event, The Anniversary, Showcased the Region's Past and Present

Natalie F. Dunham, Ft. Myers Redevelopment Agency

With festivities celebrating the eleventh anniversary of the River District's Local Historic Designation as well as allowing visitors to stroll the new streetscape, the inaugural event, The Anniversary, allowed locals and tourists a free look at Historic Downtown on Saturday, April 18, 2009, from 2 p.m. – 5 p.m. The event began on the steps of the Sidney and Berne Davis Art Center with a ceremony describing the designation, then families toured inside several historic buildings available previously for public viewing including the Burroughs and Langford-Kingston homes, enjoyed both guided and self-guided walking tours, interacted with "Henry & Clara Ford", viewed historical artifacts, discovered fun facts about the city's original fort, and participated in children's activities including an archeological dig, interactive historical art, and a downtown details hunt, as well as being treated to period music in the streets. Many local businesses offered specials during the event, and several establishments served "historic" food or drink.



McGregor Boulevard

Jared Beck, Historic Preservation Planner – City of Fort Myers

McGregor Boulevard – was originally used as a military trail and connected Fort Myers to Punta Rassa during the second Seminole War in the mid-1800's. It also served as a cattle trail following the Seminole War during the early development of Fort Myers. The transformation of the roadway to its current beauty can be credited to two prominent individuals in Fort Myers history; Tootie McGregor Terry and Thomas Alva Edison.

Tootie McGregor Terry - Tootie and her husband Ambrose, a partner in Standard Oil, began vacationing in Fort Myers in the 1890's at the advice of their doctor who felt the Florida climate would be beneficial for Bradford, their ill son. The McGregors purchased more than \$150,000.00 worth of property in town and up river. Following the death of Ambrose, Tootie continued her support of Fort Myers development. She owned several properties, including the elite Royal Palm Hotel and was a major financier for Harvey Heitman, a very prominent developer in town who was credited with constructing the Bradford Hotel, named after Tootie's son Bradford, who did not survive his illness.

Tootie took an active role to improve Fort Myers' life, including the improvement of Lee County roadways. She became frustrated with cattle and other animals damaging the streets, especially Riverside Avenue (that later became McGregor Boulevard) and made an offer to the City and Lee County to personally pay for paving of Riverside Avenue from Whiskey Creek to Punta Rassa if the City and County would pay for paving from Whiskey Creek to downtown Fort Myers. She also offered to use whatever materials were chosen by the City and County and offered to pay \$500.00 annually for maintenance for the first five years. Unfortunately, Tootie never lived to see the completion of the roadway; her second husband, Dr. Marshall O. Terry oversaw its final completion in 1915. The roadway was named McGregor Boulevard in honor of Ambrose McGregor at the request of Tootie.

Thomas Alva Edison – made his first trip to Fort Myers in 1885 with his business partner, Ezra Gilliland. He was so charmed with the small town, he purchased 14 acres on the Caloosahatchee River. The following year, he began constructing the estate, including his residence and one adjacent to it for his business partner. By 1901, Edison's second wife Mina had purchased the adjacent home and began renovations to create the estate we know today. The Edisons also became very involved in Fort Myers life and like Tootie McGregor Terry, worked to improve the City.

Mr. Edison was fascinated with subtropical foliage and in particular, palm trees. He notified City Council in 1907 that he would bear the expense of planting Royal Palms along Riverside Drive from Manuel's Branch to downtown. The City accepted his offer and although it was initially very difficult to acquire the palms, eventually some 1,300 palms were purchased and planted along the roadway. Mr. Edison also offered to maintain the palms for a two year period. After that two year period, many palms died and Edison personally paid for the replacement of more than 400 palms.

The City then appointed the first Parks commission in 1915. The City also allocated \$1,000 to the commission, with the first task to spray and fertilize the beloved palm trees and part of the funds to be used to plant royal palms on First Street between Jackson Street and Billy's Creek.

Today – McGregor Boulevard remains intact today, 2009, despite minor alterations. It serves as a continual reminder of the care, dedication, and commitment to the growth of Fort Myers from a small cattle town as envisioned by Tootie McGregor Terry and Thomas Alva Edison.



Local Artist Scott Lee Dozier Raffles Off His Latest Painting At The Last Art Night On March 6 At The Bar Association

Visual art is only one way to express the creativity common to all aspects of human endeavor.

Art Night, downtown Fort Myers is growing to be quite the event. Last Month The Bar Association Bistro On Hendry Street decided to add their unique style to the event. Owners Ron Kopko and Mark Solomon decided to have the artist of the evening raffle off the work of art that was produced. The tickets were sold 10 for \$5.00. A name was drawn at the end of the evening and all the proceeds are donated to the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation. The Bar Association has decided that the Lee Trust for historic Preservation is their charity of choice. The Art night event was such a great success that another one is planned for next month. Art Night is the First Friday of every month and local artists that would like to participate are encouraged to contact Ron Kopko for more info.

Scott Dozier began his study of visual art with the historic painter Jack Clifton in Hampton, VA, at age ten. Other instruction included audit courses at The Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. as a young teen, followed by more formal credit courses at a number of community colleges after serving in the United States Coast Guard. While attending college he worked as an illustrator with Graphtek, Inc. in Panama City, FL, and later with The Charlotte Sun Newspaper in Port Charlotte, FL.

For the past three years he has been associated with local Sculptor, Donald J. Wilkins, creating over life-size standing portrait sculptures of Thomas Edison for Edison College and Henry Ford and Mina Edison for the Edison & Ford Winter Estate in Fort Myers. In November of 2008 a statue of the "American Newsboy" was dedicated at the entrance to The Island Arts Foundation Purple Heart Theater on Fort Myers Beach He is currently working on a relief panel of the Muses of Comedy and Tragedy for the same theater.

His most enduring passion is portraiture both in paintings and sculpture with a particular interest in historic figures. Public monuments of historic figures define our past by stating our presence with our aspirations for our future.

The Lee Trust is so excited and grateful for the generous contributions of The Bar Association Bistro..We are curious to see what they will think of next. They have recently started Italian Night on Tuesday evenings. Singer Dominick DiStefano sings to the crowd with his operatic voice while a very original Italian specialty is prepared in the Kitchen.



Original Scott Dozier pastel.

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Also available are Limited Edition Note Cards for \$8

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have a Revolving Fund Program to buy
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