

# Preservation News

SPECIAL EDITION

A Publication of the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

Phone (239) 344-8851

## CALL TO ACTION! HELP SAVE OLD LEE COUNTY CITY LANDMARK IN DANGER OF DEMOLITION

Another city landmark could be facing demolition. The Hall of Fifty States, thought to be headed for restoration, as outlined in the May 2005 contract between the Bill Smith, Inc. and the City of Fort Myers is facing possible demise.

Once the upper pavilion of the of the Pleasure Pier (circa 1927), the Hall of 50 States was originally located just west of the Yacht Basin at the foot of Carson Street. In 1943 the second floor pavilion was salvaged and brought ashore. With the assistance of local architect Nat Walker, the War Public Works Administration constructed an addition to the west side of the historic structure.

During World War II the structure served as a USO Center for soldiers stationed at the Buckingham Gunnery School and Page Airfield. In 1965 the Chamber of Commerce converted the facility into the Tourist Center, at which time it became known by its' current moniker, the Hall of 50 States. More recently, the stage and hall provided space for cultural and social activities; including the Edison Festival Junior Coronation, dancing lessons, receptions, art shows, community meetings, and festivals.

In 2005, during public meetings, the City of Fort Myers contracted with Bill Smith, Inc., to purchase the old shuffleboard courts and the non-historic additions to the Hall of 50 States; while the City of Fort Myers retained ownership of the Hall of 50 States.

In the original contract Bill Smith, Inc. agreed to restore the exterior of the Hall of 50 States and preserve it on site; while the City of Fort Myers would restore and maintain the interior of the building.

In a change of fortune, a new contract was presented to the City Council during a special council meeting on July 9, 2007. The new contract squarely places the burden of the entire restoration on the City of Fort Myers, additionally the contract states the Hall shall be moved within 180 days, or Bill Smith, Inc. may apply for demolition. The speed, with which these decisions are being made, are working to militate against finding a workable solution for saving this building.

The downtown streetscape and underground utilities

project is approaching this intersection and decisions must be made to purchase the right away adjacent to Hendry Street for a proposed farmers market, or to proceed with the original streetscape plan. The proposed market would necessitate a 100-foot widening of Hendry Street, from Bay to Edwards Drive. Thus the city must purchase a 30-foot swatch of land along Hendry Street, adjacent to the Hall of 50 States site from Bill Smith, Inc.



At the July 9, 2007 Special City Council meeting, Mayor Humphrey expressed concern over the changes in the contract and suggested the City Council postpone moving forward until the details were worked out. In a 6 to 1 vote (with Mayor Humphrey dissenting), the council voted to move forward with the new contract.

While several sites are being considered for relocation of the

Hall of 50 States, the city currently does not own the prime relocation sites. Additionally, the 18 month timeline and transfer of the complete financial burden to the City of Fort Myers, places hurdles in the track of preservation of a Fort Myers Landmark.

We are asking you to let our city leaders know that history is important to you. Landmarks, such as the Hall of 50 States, are important objects of the past, establishing values of a place and time; and giving a sense of orientation to our society. Skyrocketing land values, and developers' greed for land, should not be the steering factors for the City of Fort Myers. The Hall of 50 States is only one in a long list of disappearing public spaces.

**Your voice can preserve and shape the future.**

**Attend the Public Hearing at 5:15 on August 20, 2007.**

Contact the city council prior to the August 20 Public Hearing and let them know a preservation collaboration that helpful to this and future generation is possible. The Hall of 50 States is concrete evidence of the path we took early last century to make Fort Myers an outstanding community in the 21st Century and should be preserved as such for future generations

Letters of support and emails should be directed to all council members, the mayor, and city clerk's office. Contact info on inside page.



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

•••

**2007**

### Board of Directors

William Grace, President  
Earl E. Smith, Vice-President  
Gina Sabiston, Secretary  
Susan Grace, Treasurer  
Directors:  
Jane de Lisser  
Mary Rawl

•••

### Honorary Board of Directors

Keith Arnold  
Jan Brown  
Berne Davis  
Mariel Goss  
William H. Grace  
Nina Houghton

•••

Gina Taylor, Director

•••

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.

•••

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

•••

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.

A copy of the official registration and financial  
information may be obtained from the Division  
of Consumer Services by calling tollfree  
within the State of Florida 1-800-435-7352.  
Registration does not imply endorsement,  
approval, or recommendation by the State.

## City of Fort Myers Contact Information

Letters of support and emails should be directed to  
all council members, the mayor, and city clerk's office.

**OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**  
Marie Adams, City Clerk  
PO Box 2217  
Fort Myers FL 33902  
239-332-6742  
madams@cityftmyers.com

### Mayor's Office

Mayor Humphrey  
P.O. Drawer 2217  
Fort Myers, FL 33902  
(239) 332-6600  
mayorhumphrey@cityftmyers.com

### Ward 3

Councilman Levon Simms  
PO Drawer 2217  
Fort Myers, FL 33902  
(239) 461-3767  
councilmansimms@cityftmyers.com

### Ward 1

Councilman Warren Wright  
PO Drawer 2217,  
Fort Myers, FL 33902  
239-332-6605  
councilmanwright@cityftmyers.com

### Ward 4

Councilman Mike Flanders  
PO Drawer 2217,  
Fort Myers, FL 33902  
(239) 332-6142  
councilmanflanders@cityftmyers.com

### Ward 2

Councilwoman Johnnie Streets  
PO Drawer 2217,  
Fort Myers, FL 33902  
(239) 332-6732  
councilmanstreets@cityftmyers.com

### Ward 5

Councilman Randy Henderson  
PO Drawer 2217  
Fort Myers, FL 33902  
(239) 332-6733  
councilmanhenderson@cityftmyers.com

## Andrew D. Gwynne Institute



The Andrew D. Gwynne Institute was built in 1911 at the corner of Second and Jackson Streets. The building was named for Civil War St. Colonel Andrew D. Gwynne (38th Tennessee Infantry Regiment). Gwynne was a wealthy Tennessee cotton broker and grocer. His widow and son contributed \$8,000 towards the construction of the school as a match for the \$8,000.00 raised by the community. It was the first modern school building in Lee County and replaced an

overcrowded wooden school dating back to 1887. The cost of the building and furniture totaled \$45,000.00. Classes began October 20, 1911. Until now the building has been in continuous use as an educational facility. Lee county schools have ceased utilizing the facility and are looking for someone who can adaptively reuse the structure.



## Parking Lot Planned For Edison Park Historic District

**O**n August 27 there will be a special City Council Meeting at 3 p.m. at Harborside to appeal the Covert Presbyterian parking lot expansion HPC decision. Several months ago the HPC denied their request to expand the parking facilities to the former Mann Family backyard. While a few parking spaces may seem like a small concession, it is setting a precedence for additional expansion and encroachment into the historic Edison Park District.

Previously, the church purchased several homes in the district, but has been unable to utilize the homes for parking, or other uses, due to a moratorium imposed by the City Council restricting use in the Edison Park Historic District to residential only. Please attend the August 27th meeting, or contact City Council members and let them know you support the moratorium and are against parking lots in the Edison Park Historic District.

On August 30 at 4 p.m. the Historic Preservation Commission will hear an application for DEMOLITION for the Halgrim home on Sandra Drive.

## Hendry Street Restoration

**I**n July 2005, Kris Cella and Kaye Molnar, together with their husbands, purchased the vacant building at 1631 Hendry Street and set out on an adventure to completely restore the building to its' original 1925 appearance. The building was the perfect size and location for their consulting firm, Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc. and with Kris and Kaye's strong convictions about historical renovation and adaptive reuse in the River District, they set out on a year long journey.

Researching through the Fort Myers Historical Museum records, Kris and Kaye were able to obtain information on the ownership and use of the building back to 1941 when it was Ryals Drug Store owned by Earnest Hollis. Between 1957 and 1994 the building was owned by Douglas H. and Patricia Parker and was Parker Book Store's storage, and the "store front" was used as a display case. In 1995, Thomas Evan undertook a major renovation on the building and connected the original building in the front to a block building at the rear of the property and it became home to Mama Bella's Restaurant. In the years following, up until it was vacated in 2004, the restaurant changed hands to Tropical Breeze Café, Downtown Fort Myers Pizza and then Ricardo's Restaurant.

The building had some unique architectural details when it was constructed in 1925. It originally had a red barrel tiled overhang protruding out approximately 3 feet from the building, above the transom windows. Directly underneath the overhang there were turquoise green tiles laid in the gold brick that run the length of the building. Under the green tiles were diamond shaped rust accent tiles. The original construction provided a glass "store front" with wood doors and trim. The original awning had a "stepped" crown mold appearance and was held by twisted iron rods. Using old pictures and descriptions provided by "old timers", Michael Flanders, Flanders Architects, assisted Kris and Kaye in carefully redesigning the front of the building to its' original façade.

Now residing at the 1631 Hendry Street address, Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc. (CMA), established in 1996, provides professional consulting services in all aspects of public involvement, project management, event planning and coordination, transportation planning, and construction engineering inspection to prime consultants and governmental agencies in Southwest Florida. "We love how the building conveys our creative spirit to our clients," comments Kaye Molnar. "It is unexpected in our industry. People love that we have polished a piece of Fort Myers history and made it functional and beautiful for today."

In a world of engineers and transportation planning, CMA has found its niche. Because of their in-depth technical expertise in transportation planning, design and construction they are distinctive and one of only a few in Florida. They have been instrumental in conducting public involvement programs that have gained public acceptance for controversial projects. Serving as a public involvement firm for utility, roadway and bridge projects requires unique "people skills", patience and the ability to translate technical jargon into simply understood English. Kris Cella stated "Our philosophy in working with the public and our clients is the same - collaboration, communication, and open exchange cultivates a partnership with the public that greatly enhances the quality of our projects".



1631 Hendry Street  
Top: 1925 Bottom: 2007



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

## Langford-Kingston Update

The future of the LK house remains in limbo. The city owned property was to be leased by the Junior League but negotiations on the lease have terminated. The city has landscaped the grounds and installed the parking lot but the restoration of the house has not been instituted. A representative from the Division of Historical Resources was in town a month ago and expressed concerns that nothing was happening. The Division has provided considerable funding for the project and will be contacting the city for an update on its intentions relating to the structure.



LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

## Membership Application/ Renewal Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Save a stamp and email my meeting notices.

I am a:  New Member  Renewing Member

Level of Membership:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor - \$500 and up | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor - \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$250              | <input type="checkbox"/> Family - \$30      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$100             | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual - \$20  |

In addition to my gift, a matching gift will be made by: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Company)

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

*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.*

**2007 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 ■