

# Preservation News

SPECIAL EDITION

A Publication of the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

February 2008 • Phone (239) 344-8851

## Lee Trust Projects & Accomplishments by William Grace - Chairman of the Board

**REVOLVING FUND:** Lee Trust has acquired by gift or purchase two residential properties that were sold to third persons after recording deed restrictions that protect the historic character of the structures. The structures have been fully restored. One structure was in the Buckingham community and the other in the Dean Park Historic District.

**LANGFORD/KINGSTON:** Lee Trust raised \$236,000.00 to move the structure and supported a City application for a Special Category Grant to do partial restoration work.

**ADVOCACY:** Lee Trust has appeared before The Florida Historic Preservation Commission, the Fort Myers City Council, the Fort Myers Preservation Board, the Lee County Commission and the Town Council of Fort Myers Beach on many issues relating to historic preservation. Lee Trust initiated and participated in the designation of the Edison Park, Dean Park and Seminole Historic Districts. Lee Trust was the applicant to locally designate the Buroughs Home, the Langford-Kingston Home, the Lee County Court House and the Edison Ford Winter Estates. All four were designated by the Fort Myers Historic

Preservation Commission. Lee Trust was instrumental in the acquisition of the Mound House by the Fort Myers Beach Town Council.

**EDUCATION:** Lee Trust has sponsored numerous seminars workshops and speakers on subjects relating to historic preservation. A newsletter is published to inform the membership and public about local preservation projects and other subjects relating to historic preservation.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** Lee Trust has helped finance several preservation projects. The Koreshan Unity Alliance received a loan so that restoration work on the Art Hall would not be disrupted. Financial support has been given for production of several of the television programs known as the Unknown Florida. Lee Trust assisted the Calusa Land Trust with the purchase of the only surviving remnant of the ancient Calusa Canal which once bisected Pine Island.

**EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT:** Lee Trust has sponsored several first person speakers related to Florida history in conjunction with the Florida Humanities Council.

## Being on the National Register of Historic Places by Gina Taylor - Director

Have you ever wondered what it really means to be on The National Register of Historic Places? Over the years I've heard so many conflicting statements and misconceptions I decided to get the facts.

The Historic Preservation Act of 1966 says the National Register exists to assist in public and private efforts to identify and protect historic buildings and sites. Properties listed on the register includes districts, sites, buildings and objects. They must be significant to American History, architecture or archaeology. First the site needs to be associated with a significant historic event or person, or show a distinctive characteristic of a specific period, and it needs to be at least fifty years old.

The following five statements are facts as taken from the register:

1. Listing in the National Register honors the property by recognizing its importance to our Nation.
2. Private property owners can do anything they wish with their property, provided that no federal license, permit, or funding is involved.
3. Owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even maintain them, if they choose not to do so.
4. Federal agencies whose projects affect a listed property must give the Advisory Council on historic preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.
5. Owners of listed properties may be able to obtain federal historic preservation funding when funds are available. In addition, federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation and other provisions may apply.

There are some prevailing myths about National Register status. First off the belief that the inclusion on the register protects buildings from demolition is a widely held misconception. The status won't necessarily protect a structure from the wrecking ball. The Federal Government's recognition of the site as significant, should make one think seriously before starting a demolition. Another myth is that one is restricted from making alterations once sited. It does not mean that you cannot paint your property any color you desire.

The spirit of America is founded upon our history. Historic properties significant to our nation's past are being lost, or frequently and substantially altered. The preservation of our irreplaceable heritage is in the public's interest to be preserved and maintained for future generations of Americans.

We ask you to let your officials know that saving an old building is our responsibility today and is the **ultimate recycling.**



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**

### Board of Directors

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

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### Honorary Board of Directors

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

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Gina Taylor, Director

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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 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.

## Art Hall Update

The painting of the Art Hall ceiling looks sharp and was sufficiently complete last Friday. There will be some minor touch up done in certain areas of the ceiling. White construction will still raise the cap on the floor to make it flush, cover the holes under the stage, repair a piece of glass that cracked on the front entrance door, and sand the notched post for the 11/2" ADA grab bar clearance for the hand rails.



## Art Hall Restoration Timeline

**August 1999** Filed grant application to fund a Restoration Plan \$13,000.00

**February 2000** Received grant of \$13,000 as a 50% match to fund the Restoration Plan. Ranked #9

**March 2000** Request for Proposal published for architect to do Restoration Plan.

**May 2000** Contracted with Linda Stevenson Architects to do Restoration Plan.

**December 2000** Contracted with Linda Stevenson to design HVAC and roof restoration plans.

**June 2001** Completed Restoration Plan

**September 2001** Bids submitted for HVAC and roof restoration.

**May 2002** Applied for Special Category Grant to complete the restoration. \$261,409.00.

**June 2002** DEP pledged \$100,000.00.

**September 2002** Awarded Special Category Grant for \$261,409 to complete the restoration. Ranked #45.

**December 2004** Grant award agreement signed for \$261,409.00.

**March 2005** contracted with Linda Stevenson Architects for construction documents.

**November 2006** Contracted with White General Constructors, Inc. to do restoration work.

**December 2007** Final payment to White General Constructors, Inc.



LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, INC.

*You're Invited*

## **Annual Meeting**

**February 23rd, 2007  
at noon at the  
Historic Tarpon Lodge**

**Reservations are required**  
since we will be ordering off the menu.

*Hope to see you there.*

RSVP to Gina Taylor at 239-945-0905

## Another Successful Re-Use - Fancy Flamingo Antiques Mall

We are nestled in a quaint historical 1909 Railway Express Agency Building in the Historical Downtown District on Peck Street. On the South Side of Martin Luther King Blvd. Behind the Oasis Restaurant.

The building once housed the Fort Myers Mattress Factory know as Mattress Bobs and we have the original sign on display that was used on the building at that time.

The City of Fort Myers then acquired the building which became a storage for the Historical Museum Archives. The old Coca-Cola sign from the Coca-Cola building on Cleveland Ave was found stored here along with an old WWII bomber training airplane.

The building is now owned by the Bochette-McNab families and has been occupied by Fancy Flamingo Antiques Mall since 2002, after much renovation.

You may want to spend the day in the historical antiques area touring museums, restaurants and other nearby shops. Come share a part of your day with us being nostalgic and reminiscing.

Open All Year • 11am - 5pm • Tuesday thru Saturday  
239-334-1133

Hendry St.

MLK Blvd.



Jackson St.

Peck St.

## *John Paeno's Calusa Ghost Tours*



With Calusa Technology Seminars you can learn to make cord, rope, clothing, baskets, and spear shafts from the native palm. Learn how the Calusa made latex paint, shell tools, and listen to the true stories of the area put together for you by John, Saturdays at Wildchild Art Gallery in Matlacha. Advanced reservations are a must so materials can be provided for the participants.

For reservations at Wildchild call – 239-283-6006

To have a seminar, demo, or cast of Calusa performers at your location call 239-938-5342 or email [calusaghosttours@comcast.net](mailto:calusaghosttours@comcast.net) - you can learn more about us at [www.calusaghosttours.com](http://www.calusaghosttours.com)

Come see a live performance with dinner of “Expulsion of the Friars” at Wild Child Art Gallery and brought to you by Calusa Ghost Tours.

Musical support from the Pine Island Drum Circle and Flutist/native dancer Annie Wenz.

Also at the Wildchild take the original Calusa Ghost Tour on our 33' canoe.

I have kayaks from Backwater Outfitters for rent and will deliver them anywhere on Pine Island for your convenience. We have kayak, fishing guides, history guides, or just site seeing guides if you would like one. We offer the best quality in kayaks and canoes for rent with certified trainers and guides available upon request. Rentals start at \$25 for a half day and \$40 for a full day, for a single. To rent one call Backwater outfitters at 239-541-2592. “You request we do the rest”

For additional stories about the historical Pine Island area, contact John Paeno, Calusa Ghost Tours at 239-938-5342 or [calusaghosttours@comcast.net](mailto:calusaghosttours@comcast.net) If you have pictures, stories or legends of the sound to share, John would love to hear from you. Visit us on the web at [www.calusaghosttours.com](http://www.calusaghosttours.com)



## Why Should We Preserve The Past by Rusty Bell

Why should we preserve the past? What is it that compels us to keep our history alive? History, of course, is largely subjective. George Santayana had said, "History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren't there." Fortunately, the same cannot be said about the structures that hopefully endure the passage of time to reside in our present. These buildings cannot be altered to fit any particular viewpoint; they are solid and objective reminders, not just as architecture, but also of our culture. They evoke our own longing of some permanence in an increasingly disposable, impermanent world.

We are creatures of emotion, and have, for much of our history, surrounded ourselves with objects that evoke feelings of security and stability. But, as much as a sense of solidity, our desire to preserve the past stems also from our dichotomous desire for change, and our equally compelling need for stability and permanence. These icons of the past say who we were, but can also illuminate another spectrum in our search for our changing identity.

Who we were is not just a measure of who we are. In truth, it is a measure of who we now wish to become.

### Meet Robert N. Macomber

Locally raised, Robert is an award-winning internationally recognized maritime writer/lecturer who has garnered the Florida Genealogy Society's Outstanding Achievement Award for his work in maritime history, the Patrick Smith Literary Award for Best Historical Novel of Florida, and the John Esten Cooke Literary Award for Best Work in Southern Fiction. His Honor Series of novels cover the life and career of U.S. naval officer Peter Wake, from the Civil War on the SW coast of Florida to his assignments around the world, ending in 1907, as a confidant of Theodore Roosevelt. Along the way, Macomber's readers in ten countries are treated to compelling characters woven through richly detailed history. His newest novel, *A Different Kind of Honor*, takes place in the early 1880's at Washington DC, Panama, and Peru. It has already received rave reviews and is available at all bookstores. For more information, visit his website at [www.robertmacomber.com](http://www.robertmacomber.com)

## Books On Local History by Michele Wehrwein Albion

### *White Mother* by Jessie Bennett Sams, 1957, McGraw Hill

In 1957, McGraw Hill released a book by Jessie Bennett Sams, a young woman who had grown up in Fort Myers. It was an inspiring story describing how she and her orphaned twin sister were virtually adopted by a local woman, Rossie Lee. Thanks to her guidance and their own self-discipline, Jessie and Bessie rose from abject poverty to become a teacher and a nurse. Yet at the time, the story made people uncomfortable. What seems a moving story today, was considered an abomination then. The girls were black and Miss Rossie was white.

*White Mother*, begins when 7 year-old Bessie, emaciated, filthy, and dressed in rags, approaches Miss Rossie about a job. She could have sent the girl away, but instead Miss Rossie invited her into her home and drew Bessie a bath. As Jessie described the encounter, "Mrs. Lee said, 'Here's a cloth. Rub yourself real hard so you'll be cool.' That was the way Mrs. Lee started speaking to us and it was the way she always spoke, instinctively choosing the right words. It would not have been the same if she had said: 'So you'll be clean.'"

Almost immediately a neighbor, who knew full well there was a black girl in Miss Rossie's bathtub, arrived asking to see her redecorated bathroom. Miss Rossie politely refused, but took the situation for what it was, a warning. In Fort Myers of

1923, segregation was not only custom, but law. Whites and Blacks lived in separate neighborhoods, shopped and different stores and attended different schools. Miss Rossie was taking a risk. By helping the little girl, her husband could lose business. They could be shunned by neighbors. The family could even be run out of town. But Miss Rossie continued to help Bessie and Jessie, essentially becoming their mother, and raising them as her own.

*White Mother* is inspiring for its story of courage - courage to defy segregation and the courage to love and be loved. Sadly, the book is out of print. Copies can be borrowed from the Lee County Library and books can be purchased through local used book stores, al libris, and other out-of-print websites for anywhere between \$10 to \$50. But whatever you do, read it. If you didn't live through the segregation era, it will help you to better understand a very different time in local history. But better than that, it will do your heart good.

Michele Wehrwein Albion's book, *The Florida Life of Thomas Edison*, will be released this fall through the University Press of Florida.



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

Please join us on  
**February 23, 2008**  
at noon at the  
**Historic Tarpon Lodge**  
in Pineland for lunch.

**Reservations**  
**are required**  
since we will be  
ordering off the menu.

Hope to see you there.

RSVP to Gina Taylor at  
**239-945-0905**



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.*

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

**T**ired 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 ■