

# Preservation News

A Publication of the Lee Trust for Historic Preservation

• Spring 2007 •

Phone (239) 344-0100

## Exhibition Hall Raised



The city of Fort Myers was determined that the historic Exhibition Hall come down. After years of neglect the city determined the building to be unsafe. Several years ago historic preservation architect, Linda Stevenson, determined that the structure was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places in a study commissioned by the city. Lee Trust had a

study done that determined the building to be structurally sound. The city was paid approximately \$500,000.00 in insurance proceeds for damage done by Charley. This money could have been used restore the structure but the city remained on its path to destruction. In March the bulldozers were on the move and the historic building has gone the way of so many other historic structures in Fort Myers



*Demolition of the Exhibition Hall*

## CAPE CORAL YACHT CLUB UPDATE

Residents of Redfish Point, where eight homes have already been deemed Cape Coral's only designated historical area, continue to be concerned about the city's proposals for redevelopment of the historic Yacht Club Community Park. Since the February 26, 2007 Committee of the Whole when consultants presented four concepts, each proposing to move the boat ramps to Floridian Court, neighbors have petitioned against relocation, talked to city officials, surveyed users of the park, and spoken directly to City Council during the citizens input portion of the March 5 meeting. Relocating ramps to Floridian Court would negatively impact the quality of life in this area.

In Betsy Zeiss' 1983 book *The Other Side of the River* a photo caption reads, "The canals in Cape Coral were laced with fish and the banks with fishermen soon after the developer arrived on the scene. The fish made so much noise that they kept people awake at night!" (p. 153) Certainly residents don't expect a return to those halcyon days, but are understandably upset about the increased water, air, and noise pollution that would result from boat ramp relocation.

When Cape Coral's first mayor Paul Fickinger said in 1970, "I want this to be a city where everyone who lives here can be really proud to call it his or her home city." (WGPU Public Media Dreamers and Schemers), he summarized what the citizens of Redfish Point continue to want for their neighborhood and city.



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

•••

**2006**

### Board of Directors

William Grace, President  
Earl E. Smith, Vice-President  
Gina Sabiston, Secretary  
Susan Grace, Treasurer  
Directors:  
Jane de Lisser  
Kay Holloway  
Mary Rawl  
Marsa B. Detscher, Ph.D.

•••

### 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.

## Things are really happening at The Mound House

The cavity left by the pool has been excavated down to the original sand floor of the island. It is estimated the Calusa began construction of the mound approximately 2,000 years ago. Among the many artifacts recovered during the excavation was a clay smoking pipe believed to be 2,000 years old. Carbon



tests will be made to determine the age and the type of substance being smoked. Historical records have determined that tobacco was in use by Native Americans approximately 2,000 years ago. The concrete roof that encloses the cavity is in place. The various strata along the wall of the mound are an incredible site. The concrete will be covered by earth making it blend into the mound. A cistern that was built in 1906 will be duplicated to the south of the roof.

A two day workshop was held March 7th and 8th regarding the permanent exhibit designs for both the archaeological exhibits and the house exhibits. Synergy Design Group, out of Tallahassee, has been hired to design the permanent exhibits. The workshop is the first step in the design process.

A Conceptual Landscape Plan has been completed. The advisory board met several times with the consultants who were hired to develop the plan. The firm of EDAW, Inc., out of Atlanta, is the consultant for the project. The plan was approved by the Fort Myers, Beach Town Council in February.

The restoration work for the house will begin with asbestos removal in late March. The architectural consultants are anticipating the exterior restoration will be going to bid also in late March. For more info visit: [www.pinelandparc.com](http://www.pinelandparc.com)

## Historic House for Sale!



**1768 Maple Ave**

Built in 1926 Spanish style with brick courtyard and guesthouse.  
It has over 3000 square feet, 3/2 and we're asking **\$525,000.**

**Call Ray Yunker at 896-4114**

## Art Hall Update

The restoration of the exterior of the Art Hall at the Koreshan State Historic Site began in December and should be completed this summer. White General Constructors Inc. was the contractor chosen for the job. The exterior siding is a large part of the job. Damaged siding is removed and replaced while attempting to preserve as much of the original material as possible. The distinctive eave brackets have been repaired and, where necessary, replaced. The exterior natural finish will be coated with a protective product and the doors and windows will be trimmed in white.



*Above: South side of Art Hall Main building  
Below: North side of Art Hall Main building  
The roof deck underside, fascia and brackets along with casings received one coat primer and 2 coats white paint.  
Siding is a mix of original and new.*

## Letting Go of a Cool Million

by Michele Albion

The Edison-Ford Winter Estates Foundation owes the City of Fort Myers over a million dollars. How that happened is a long story with more plot twists than a Grisham thriller. It all started in 1886 when Thomas Edison had a house built on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River in Fort Myers. At the time, he had no idea that over a hundred years of humidity, insects, hurricanes, delayed maintenance, and yes, even neglect would leave his home, Seminole Lodge, in grave peril.

In 2003, the not-for-profit Edison-Ford Winter Estates Foundation came to the rescue. Through private donations, grants from the City, County and State, nearly eight million dollars was raised. But it was not enough. Faced with over a million dollar deficit in restoration funding and the



potential loss of funds contingent on total project support, a last minute deal was struck. The City of Fort Myers loaned the Foundation more than a million dollars to

complete the 9 million dollar project. Thanks to the loan, the restoration was completed just prior to the devastating hurricanes of 2004 and 2005. The loan from the City of Fort Myers likely saved Seminole Lodge from certain destruction.

So, why should Fort Myers forgive a million dollar debt? In 1947, the inventor's widow, Mina Edison, entrusted the City to care for the home. In the years since, Thomas Edison's home, laboratory and historic gardens have become one of the most visited historic sites in the nation. The site did not deplete City coffers, instead actually funded other City programs and reduced its citizens' tax burden-but at a cost. While the City may have had the best intentions towards its "crown jewel," it was sorely neglected. By loaning the Foundation the money to complete the project, the City did the right thing. Now it's time to finish the task. Mina Edison chose the City to care for Seminole Lodge because she believed in Fort Myers. It's time for Fort Myers to return that trust.



## Florida Public Archaeology Network

by Kara Bridgman Sweeney

Florida Public Archaeology Network has received a grant from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation to compile a basic inventory of the current status of historic preservation incentives and personnel around the state. As part of this survey, I have been interviewing people about their knowledge of ordinances for city and county governments. I have also asked whether those governments would require that any studies or surveys be formally conducted, and if so, under what conditions. One additional issue relates to whether grants and other incentives are available to those who would be willing to rehab historic buildings. Finally, this survey takes into account the point that many governments may already have their own lists of local landmarks and structures, that are not yet recorded on lists at the state level. This survey should allow for us to examine how historic preservation is handled across the state. Obviously all of these governments have worked independently to develop these guidelines, so each area looks quite different, even at first glance. However, Lee County is an area with quite a strong preservation ordinance, especially when compared with other counties in southwest Florida. This is of course thanks to the efforts of many individuals who have worked hard to protect different properties, and to speak up to support this ordinance. If all of our cities also would consider enacting or updating such ordinances, I am sure we would all be happy!



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

**CALL TO ACTION!  
FOR CAPE CORAL'S YACHT CLUB**

After many meetings with many concerned citizens in the area, the consensus is to strongly disagree with the expansion project of the planning board of the city of Cape Coral. We are opposed to making changes to the oldest neighborhood in Cape Coral which boasts to have the first 8 homes already deemed historic, along with the first residences came the first meeting pavilion and the yacht club beach.

**Please help us advise the city leaders to improve the area thru beautification as opposed to demolition. VOICE your opinion by writing a letter to the mayor and city council of Cape Coral.**

*We appreciate your help*



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:

- Benefactor - \$500 and up
- Patron \$250
- Sponsor \$100
- Contributor - \$50
- Family - \$30
- 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!**

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) 344-0100 ■