

WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The First Funeral Home in Wilton Manors

by Ron & Mary Ulm

In 1947 Wilton Manors entrepreneur John Pedersen built a unique home at NE 21st Ct. and 5th Ave. Pedersen and his family moved away in the early 1950s to a larger copy of the house at his Africa USA theme park.

Over the years there's been a rumor that the house later served as the City's first funeral home. Pedersen's daughter said, "Absolutely not!" Decades-long neighbors of the property agreed. But, the rumor resurfaced with the recent demolition of the house.

So, was there a funeral home in Wilton Manors before Kalis Funeral Home opened in 1959? Yes, there was. It was located further north at 2301 Wilton Drive at the site of the original home of Wilton Manors pioneer, James Dean.

After Dean and his family had moved to the new Coral Gardens Subdivision, his Wilton Drive house became a rental. In December 1957 the City Council declared an emergency and passed in one session an amendment to allow operation of mortuaries in the Business 1 zone where the house was located. About a year later the property was sold to Marie Seacord, who was already operating a funeral home on N. Federal Highway.

The Seacords were beset by legal issues. Marie Seacord was arrested and acquitted of a charge of running an illegal ambulance service in 1960. In 1961 the State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers charged that the Seacords had no funeral directing embalming license. The Seacords held that as funeral home owners, they relied on a licensed employee to perform the funeral directing and embalming work.

In 1963 the Seacord Funeral Home business but, not the property or building, was sold to a New York licensed funeral director and embalmer, who renamed it to Manors Funeral Home (see ad at right). Despite the publicity, it appears that the business never actually operated in Wilton Manors and remained closed. Perhaps due to legal baggage associated with the Seacords or competition with nearby Kalis Funeral Home, Soderquist instead reincorporated the business in Hollywood, Florida under a different name.

The property still owned by Marie Seacord appears to have remained vacant for 7 to 8 years. In 1970 a church-sponsored coffee house (described as a "hippie hangout" by neighbors) operated there for a couple of years. In January 1972 Spectrum House purchased the site for \$80,000 to be converted to a 42-bed residential drug treatment center. Spectrum House operated on Wilton Drive for almost 25 years. The property seems to have once again sat vacant—this time for about 4 years—until developed as Island City Lofts, which opened in 2006.

Ft. Lauderdale News, Nov 2, 1963

Mr. D. Dale Soderquist

Formally Announces

the

COMPLETE PURCHASE

of

SEACORD FUNERAL HOME

As of March 7, 1963

It Will Be Known As

**MANORS FUNERAL
HOME, INC.**

**With Complete New Management
and Personnel**

**FULLY LICENSED BY THE STATE
OF FLORIDA**

- Air Conditioned
- Homelike Atmosphere
- Moderate Prices

Manors Funeral Home, inc.



R. A. GAUTIER - Licensed
Funeral Director and Manager

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