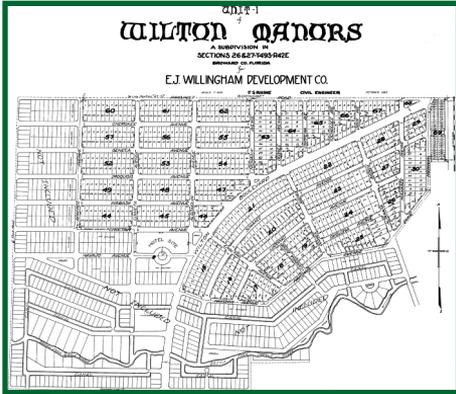


Commemorating the Centennial of the Founding of "Wilton Manors"



The founding of Wilton Manors came on **October 26, 1925** when **E.J. Willingham** filed the plat for **"Unit 1 of Wilton Manors"**.

Willingham was semi-retired as a successful farmer, banker, manufacturer and philanthropist from Macon, Georgia. His vision for *Wilton Manors* was an upscale residential suburb—"*Fort Lauderdale's Beauty Spot*". He reserved 40 acres for his own estate home and farm on the site. The entrance gateway was built, streets were paved, and lighting installed — but the 1926 hurricane and The Great Depression upended his plans for further development.

WMHS, in collaboration with Leisure Services, recently commemorated the **centennial of Willingham's legacy and vision** for Wilton Manors with a reception at the Carriage House. This included the unveiling of interpretive markers (below) in the Richardson Historic Park parking lot — which document the story of what remains of the site of his homeplate. Visit them the next time you are there to see

the details! Can't wait to learn more? You can also download them from our website at <https://tinyurl.com/WM100yrs>

The Willingham Estate

E. J. Willingham, a successful farmer, banker and manufacturer arrived from Macon, Georgia in 1923. His first local land development was *Lauderdale Beach* (on AIA south of Oakland Park Blvd).

In 1925 he platted Unit 1 of *Wilton Manors* as an upscale residential suburb—"*Fort Lauderdale's Beauty Spot*" (reserving 40 acres for his home and farm). But a 1926 hurricane and The Great Depression upended his plans. He returned to Macon, leaving "right-hand man" Perry Mickel as custodian of the property.

In 1938, golf course designer George Richardson, Sr. bought the 40-acre estate from the E.J. Willingham's heirs. Here he built the third golf course in Broward County.

Around 1970 the Richardsons sold some 35 acres—to be developed as the *Manor Grove Villages Condominiums*.

In 2002 the City of Wilton Manors purchased the remaining 5.4 acres to become this park.






The urn-stand (bottom left corner) and the Carriage House (inset) in this 1926 photo, are now the last vestiges of Willingham's Wilton Manors homeplate.

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This urn-stand, along with the Carriage House, are the last vestiges of the 1925 homeplate of Wilton Manors founder E. J. Willingham.

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The Willingham Carriage House

The Carriage House is believed to be the oldest surviving structure in Wilton Manors. It and the adjacent home were built around 1925-1926 for the city's founder E.J. Willingham. (While both survived the devastating 1926 Hurricane, the estate home, unfortunately, had to be demolished in the 1980s.) Briefly, Willingham, then for nearly a decade, Perry Mickel and family lived on and farmed the 40-acre property. The "Carriage House" ground floor served as a barn and the second-floor provided basic housing for farm/estate workers.

When the Richardson Golf Course opened at the end of 1930, the ground floor remained a barn/maintenance area. The small structure on the right was added as a take-out lunch counter for golfers. In front was another addition—variously described as a "caddy shack" or a laundry room.

The upstairs was converted into a complete one-bedroom apartment; with a living room, kitchen and a bathroom. Over the years it was occupied either by snow-bird guests or various Richardson family members.

Beginning in late 2013 WMHS and the City collaborated on an adaptive-reuse restoration plan for the building. With various funding valued at over \$200,000 (including community donations and labor) the ground floor restoration was completed in 2017. It now serves as a popular event venue. Restoration of the upstairs awaits its re-design and funding.

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