



## WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Historical Notes

April 2008

## The City Seal

by Paul A. Kuta and Benjamin Little

Think of a city, and you get an image. San Francisco – the Golden Gate Bridge. Paris – the Eiffel Tower. London – Big Ben. New York – the Empire State Building. This is called “branding” and it is important to economic development. It is also important to creating a sense of community.

The official seal of the City of Wilton Manors depicts the Towers designed by Francis Abreu, a very important American architect, in 1925, to showcase E. J. Willingham’s new community of Wilton Manors. They played a prominent role in our early days. They were a vantage point from which you could pick out where you wanted to build your home, and a symbol, used extensively in publicity about Wilton Manors.

In the early 1950’s, Wilton Manors needed a “City Seal,” and J. Frank Starling, a City Councilman, sat in his car just north of Five Points and sketched out the seal from the original gateway. Wilton Manors was incorporated as a city in 1953. Starling became our third Mayor (1955-1960) and first City Administrator (1960-1981).

At some point, the Seal was reversed. The larger tower should have been on the east side of Wilton Drive, but was depicted on the west side. In 1970, when the fire station vacated City Hall and the truck bays converted to the Council Chambers, a multi-colored cardboard version of the incorrect seal, complete with sparkles, was installed in the Chambers. *[Editor's Note: In 2010, when the old City Hall was being vacated, WMHS discovered a version of the City flag from the Commission Chambers, also with the incorrect image.]*



In 1984, then City Council President Diane R. Cline undertook a private initiative to replicate the city seal in a large, Lucite, and lighted version to hang in the City Council Chambers. Vern Burnell, (City Council President in 1957) pointed out to Cline that the image was backwards.

Cline hired Hollywood resident Louise Mahoney to re-create the seal after admiring her

work during an art festival at Hagen Park. City resident Ruth Bartels undertook a private fundraising effort for the new version of the city seal and \$ 750 was raised. The new seal, flipped back to Starling's original and correct design, was placed behind the City Council dais in 1984 and has remained there ever since.

In February 2008, Diane Cline--in her current role as President of the Wilton Manors Historical Society--formally requested that the city relocate the large, backlit, silver and black city seal to the new Commission Chambers after the new City Hall is built.

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