



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

JUNE 2008

LAZY LAKE – INDEPENDENT VILLAGE

By Benjamin B. Little
Wilton Manors Historical Society

Lazy Lake is an independent village. It is completely surrounded by Wilton Manors, but is an independently incorporated municipality. It is bordered on the west by Andrews Avenue, on the south by what is now NE 21st Court, on the east by what is now NE 1st Avenue, and on the north by NE 24th Street. The southwest corner is the furthest extent of the old Richardson Golf Course, and is now the Wilton Manors Rachael Richardson Park.

Edward J. Willingham, who created the original plat for a 1925 "boom" development called Wilton Manors, quarried the area for stone ~~for the Wilton Manors Towers at Five Points and~~ to build roads and foundations for houses. The resulting rock pit filled with water, creating a lake. *[Editor's Note: several sources, including the Arpin family that ran the rock pit, confirm that it could not have produced the stone used to construct the towers.]*

In 1943, the developer/speculator John P. Pedersen lived with his family across the street at 90 NE 21st Court. Pedersen had a business interest in the sub-division, as well as a number of lots to the east and north. Pedersen thought the lake needed goldfish, so he dumped something in to kill the existing fish. There turned out to be many more resident fish than were anticipated. Dorothea Mickel reports that the stench permeated the neighborhood. Pedersen tried to talk her boys into cleaning up the mess.

Accountant Charles Lindfors bought the 13 acres that surrounded the lake in 1946 and, with partners Clinton Gamble and Hal Ratliff, set about to develop it as a subdivision. Gamble was an architect and Ratliff a contractor. Their homes were the first ones built on the property.

In April 1947, the residents of Wilton Manors were getting very nervous about being annexed by either Oakland Park or Fort Lauderdale and had a meeting to decide whether or not to incorporate as an independent village. They approached the seven homeowners in the Lazy Lake community and asked if they wished to be part of the new City. They declined, as did the residents of the Highland Estates sub-division. Pedersen wanted his holdings surrounding Lazy Lake excluded from the proposed Village of Wilton Manors as well. The meeting got "testy," and Petersen lost.

As a village, Wilton Manors was still not safe. On June 4, 1953, Wilton Manors officially incorporated as the eleventh city in Broward County. A day earlier, to prevent a takeover by Wilton Manors, the village of Lazy Lake, with less than 30 residents, became incorporated. Charles Lindfors was named the first mayor and served for eight terms until his death in August 1968.

The lake was a favorite fishing spot, especially for local children. In 1959, Lazy Lake residents got exercised after a resident introduced illegal waterfowl – swans, geese and ducks – into the lake. They took the offender to trial, but dropped the charges after he had the fowl removed.

Lazy Lake had made it a career of keeping a low profile. There were problems in 1969. Wilton Manors was eyeing it again. Wilton Manors council member William Smith did not help relations when he called Lazy Lake a “great big septic tank.”

Later that year, a raid closed down the bookmaking operations of a man and woman that police said rented the garage apartment of Lazy Lake Police Chief Edward C. Inglis for their criminal enterprise. The alleged bookmakers were believed to have earned between \$500,000 and \$1 million annually taking bets on football games and thoroughbred racing at Tropical Park.

In 1977, Lazy Lake garnered statewide attention for its election irregularities. Broward County Circuit Judge Morton Abrams agreed with the Broward County Canvassing Board’s vote to throw out Lazy Lake’s City Council election results because the mimeographed ballots and the size 9D shoe box pressed into service as a ballot box didn’t conform to legal standards. Since then, Lazy Lake voters have cast their ballots in Wilton Manors.

The village also gained notice for trying to return \$1,198 of federal revenue-sharing grant money, but the feds refused to take back the funds.

In a summer that didn’t have enough sensational news to keep its pages filled, the national tabloid magazine *Star* ventured to Lazy Lake in 1987 and proclaimed it a hotbed of tranquility. The headline dubbed Lazy Lake “TINYTOWN USA.”

In February 1986, Hal Ratliff, the village’s elder statesman patiently pointed out to the *Sun-Sentinel*, “I resent the fact that the newspaper every year has to write a story about Lazy Lake. We can’t stop you so we might as well give you the right story instead of what you imagine.”¹ And, of course, he was right. It is the perfect topic for a slow Sunday supplement.

In 1995, however, residents, after years of discussion, decided to see if they could sell Lazy Lake as a complete package. Fifteen million dollars was the asking price. Local realtors had

¹ *Sun-Sentinel*, “Lazy Lake Residents Go Nowhere Fast,” David Jackson, February 12, 1986, Page 3 CP

a hard time getting their arms around the concept. The individual properties were worth maybe \$2,000,000. If you added in the lake and the semi-paved road, the math still did not work, but the bonus was that you would own your own village. Residents were ambivalent about moving, but for their split of \$15 million, they would get over it.

Two years later, Lazy Lake had not sold. There were nibbles from a Kuwaiti prince, O. J. Simpson, and others, but no takers. Sue Carolyn Wise, the jet-setting broker, pitched it on CNN, A Current Affair and other outlets where the super rich might get wind of it. While not admitting that \$15 million was way too much, she pointed out the person who needed to own it would pay whatever was asked. The Village's contract with her was not renewed and Lazy Lake came off the market.

After using residents' homes for village meetings and business and a locked mailbox as its village hall, Lazy Lake opened a village hall of its own in 2006...in Wilton Manors. The seat of village business became a 6.5 by 9-foot room in the Wilton Centre building at 2101 North Andrews Avenue. The office is big enough to hold a desk, a few chairs and some storage space.

Today, there are 16 homes, several with detached guest houses. Ten of these homes are accessed by Lazy Lane, a narrow dead end street. One is accessed from Andrews Avenue, and five from NE 24th Street. Most of the homes were built in the early 1950's, one in 1968, one in 1992 (which may have been a replacement). The largest is 4,600 square feet. There are four large homes (McMansions) built in 2003/4, one on a subdivided lot and three replacing two older houses. Houses listed for sale point out that the city may allow the lots to be subdivided to hold as many as four houses each.

To this day, the City of Wilton Manors provides support to Lazy Lake, but it is its own municipality.

The material on this site is made available solely for research, teaching, and private study. All images and written content should be considered © **Wilton Manors Historical Society** or another entity. **Any duplication, publication, or other re-use requires permission and appropriate attribution.** Please click on "CONTACT US" on the menu bar for further information.