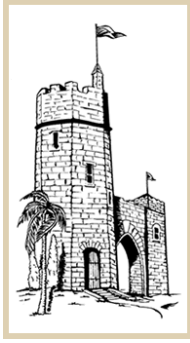


Editor's note: Some facts have been corrected based on information obtained by WMHS after the original publication date. MGU - 07/2022



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

MAY 2015

The Island City

By Benjamin B. Little

Wilton Manors Historical Society

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines “island” as a tract of land surrounded by water and smaller than a continent. That would be Wilton Manors.

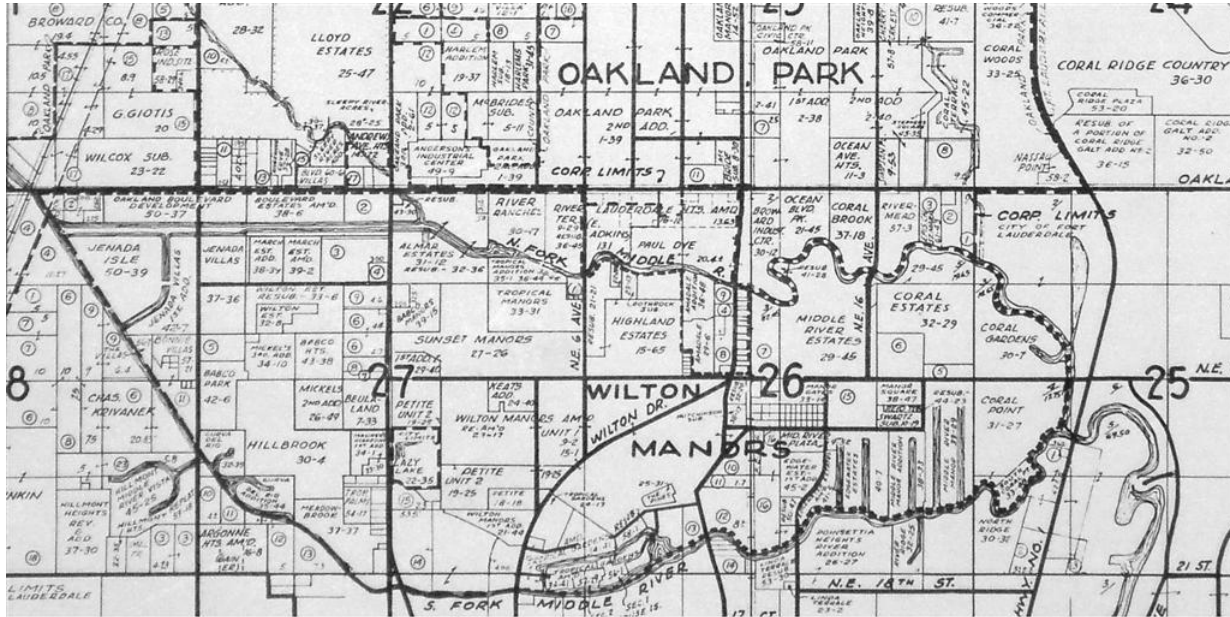
Wilton Manors is encompassed by the North and South Forks of the Middle River. Its’ earliest history begins with the archaeological finding that for millennia indigenous people sought temporary refuge when roving between the Atlantic and the Everglades. The land that forms today’s Richardson Historic Park was found to be one of those points of temporary shelter.



By 1870, Seminole Indians had settled on the South Fork of the Middle River where Starbucks is today on Federal Highway. In 1905, Frank and Ivy Stranahan, of Fort Lauderdale Stranahan House fame, bought 40 acres of farmland on the South Fork directly across the river from the Seminole encampments. Their farmland is now the Coral Point subdivision of Wilton Manors. Ivy reported that the river was very clear and colorful tropical fish regularly swam with she and Frank’s canoe.

In 1923 Edward J. Willingham, a successful farmer, banker, and manufacturer, arrived from Georgia. In 1925 he platted 345 acres as Unit 1 of Wilton Manors. A 1926 hurricane and other events brought the depression locally well before the rest of the nation; ending those plans. Nevertheless, the new community came to fruition in the post-World War II years. In June of 1953, the Florida Legislature created the City of Wilton Manors.

Wilton Manors was not an island at that point. The southern boundary was the South Fork of the Middle River from the eastern-most point moving westward to about Andrews Avenue, then northwestward to the Seaboard Railroad, where it intersects with Oakland Park Blvd. and forms the western boundary. Then, proceeding east along Oakland Park Blvd., the northern boundary proceeds to Andrews Ave., where it then follows the North Fork eastward, excluding about 40 acres just west of the FEC Railroad. The North Fork picks up as the north boundary at the FEC Railroad and continues eastward to where the South Fork and North Forks meet, just before Federal Highway.



Broward County Historical Commission Collection
 (c) 1966 Dolph Map Company - BHC indicates Dolph retains all rights - cannot be reproduced without permission
 (extracted from larger map image by Wilton Manors Historical Society 10/30/08)

By 1957, the South Florida Water Management District had expanded its canal system to include Canal C-13 North Fork Middle River. The Jenada Isle subdivision took advantage of this expansion and linked the North and South Forks of the Middle River at the western-most point of today's Wilton Manors.

In the 1987, the City of Wilton Manors asked residents to participate in a contest to create a new City Logo. Norma Rollinson, a thirty-year resident and graduate of the Pratt Institute in New York, won the contest. Her design invited visitors with "Welcome to Wilton Manors—Island City" above a drawing of a small island with a healthy stand of palm trees. These signs now greet visitors at all bridges into town.

The City of Wilton Manors has embraced the rivers. Every year since 1992 it has sponsored a canoe race circumnavigating the island. Started at then City Councilman John Fiore's suggestion, it is now a very well attended, and competitive event. In addition, there are parks with access to the rivers at Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve, Colohatchee Park, the Island City Park Preserve, Donn Eisele Park, and Snook Creek Boat Ramp.

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.**