



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

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WILLINGHAM CARRIAGE HOUSE RE-PURPOSING AND RESTORATION

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New life has been given to the Willingham Carriage House as a beautiful facility rich with atmosphere and nestled amid the cobblestone courtyards and lush natural setting of Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve. Thought to be the oldest historic structure in Wilton Manors, the Willingham Carriage House was effectively condemned and likely to be ultimately demolished until a handful of dedicated volunteers stepped in. Restoring and adapting the building to a new use was a labor of love led by the Wilton Manors Historical Society and done in collaboration with the City of Wilton Manors. Residents, business owners, and friends across the country embraced this effort through their financial support. “This project serves as a shining example of what can be done with a neglected historic resource to enhance the community at large,” says Bonnet House Museum & Gardens Curator Denyse Cunningham.

The project started in earnest in 2014 and was essentially finished in 2016, although both the City and the Historical Society continue to make enhancements into 2017.



Project

In November 2006, the City Commission designated the Richardson Historic Park and Nature Preserve a Historical Landmark as defined under City Ordinance No. 877, Article 155 General Development Standards - Section 155-010 "Archaeological and historical landmarks".

E. J. Willingham laid out Wilton Manors in the 1925. His 40 acre estate was south of the development plat and bordered the South Fork of the Middle River. It included a preexisting house. He built a garage with living quarters on the second floor, what we now call "The Carriage House." The "garage" was home to Perry Mickel's hay wagon and a horse. Later, it was home to Richardson Sr.'s tractor.



Richardson Golf Course Snack Bar

The George Richardson family purchased the Willingham property in 1938 and developed it as a golf course. The Carriage House was an important part of the Golf Course administration. The Richardson family lived on the property for over 60 years, first in the old Willingham House. George, Jr. built the one story eastern part of what we now call the Manor House in 1952 and put on a two story addition in 1973. He sold the western portion of the property where the Manor Grove condominiums are now in 1971. The old Willingham house was torn down in the 1980's because it was too decrepit so save.

The Richardson's sold what remained of this tract (5.4 acres) to the City in 2002 – conditioned upon it being used as a public park. The Carriage House was in a significant state of disrepair when acquired.

In 2007 the City did a refurbishing of the Carriage House which did not address its underlying structural issues. Tearing it down was a serious option.

Scope of Project

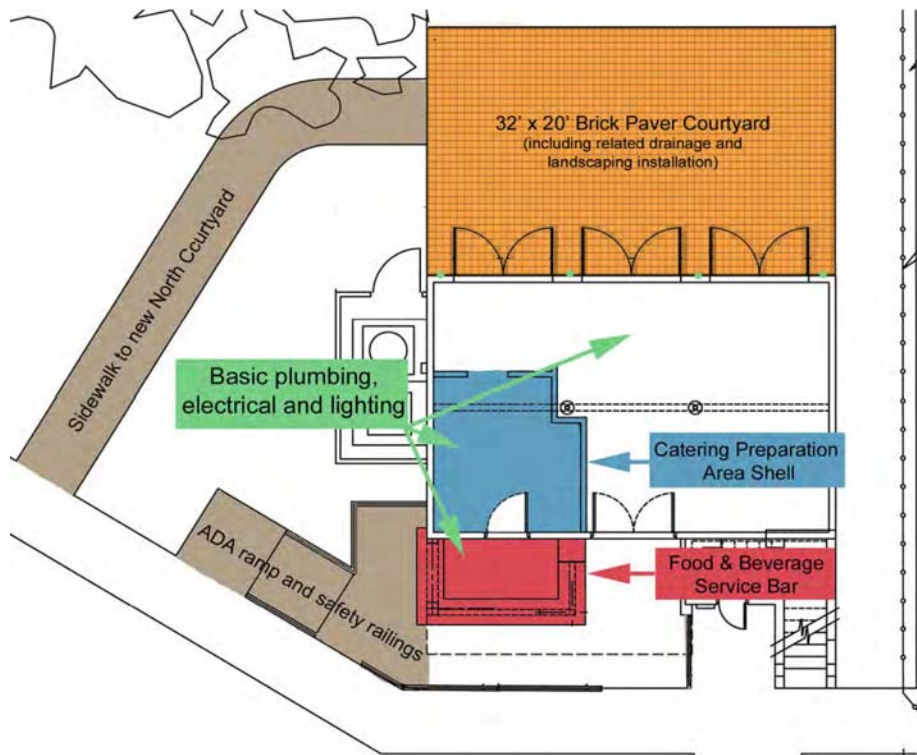
The Carriage House is a 1925 barn/garage with living quarters upstairs. It is made from Dade County Pine and recycled materials from the vicinity. Two 1920's era cast iron lamp posts identical to those used by E.J. Willingham for whiteway lighting along then Wilton Boulevard serve as second floor supports.

The Historical Society, in partnership with the City, undertook a project to repurpose and restore the Carriage House with the goal to making it a contributor to the City's parks system as an event venue and preserving its historic status.

Project Phases

- Schematic Planning – identifying possible new uses, Architectural, Structural and Landscape assessments.
- Construction Phase 1 – remediating core structural issues necessary for basic public occupancy of the interior first floor and in preparation for the first floor interior work of Phase 2.
- Construction Phase 2 – repurposing the first floor interior and exterior including creating an exterior bar and interior catering staging area, with plumbing, a refrigerator and warming oven, and an air conditioner. Fabricating double doors on the south side into the public area and a door to the catering staging area. .
- Construction Phase 3 – building a free-standing canopy and patio on the north exterior
- Donated Services – There were significant in-kind donations of tangible goods and services, without which the project could not have been completed as envisioned.

Site Plans





South Elevation when the City acquired the property in 2002. .

New South Elevation with the new bar, which conceptually recreates the Richardson Snack Bar, which was on the East side.

Note the new door behind the bar into the catering preparation area and the double doors into public area.





North Elevation when the City acquired the property in 2002.

New North Elevation. Note that the three double doors open into the public area and the double doors on the south side provide an easy flow from the Pavilion all the way into the Manor House.





Interior of the first floor when acquired by the City. Leisure Services found it a useful place to store their equipment and by the time the Re-purposing and Restoration Project started, it was full.

The walls and ceiling were covered with gypsum board dating from the Richardson Golf era.

Interior of the public room showing the new floor and historically correct restoration of the floor joists of the second floor.

The exposed interior structural elements are primarily the original Dade County pine or other vintage wood. Exposed framing repairs/replacement were done using salvaged vintage wood or wood recycled from the Willingham Carriage House project.





The Catering Preparation Area is framed in.



The Catering Preparation Area is complete. The left view is from the Public area. The right view shows the aluminum counter with sink and the air conditioner above. Opposite is a refrigerator, ice chest, and a warming oven.

Exterior of walls of catering preparation area are clad in 1940's Ponderosa pine paneling, salvaged from a house being demolished in Wilton Manors. The interior of the catering space needed to meet modern building codes, because it is considered a food preparation area— although no cooking is permitted.



View from the Pavilion, through the Carriage House to the portico of the Manor House



The ground floor stripped of all the gypsum board. Note the plywood on the back wall where the new doors will go and also the two lamp posts laying on the ground.



Ted Arpin and his son Josh reinstall a central support posts. These are cut off versions of the same 1920's cast iron lamp posts E.J. Willingham used for whiteway lighting along Wilton Boulevard.

The new header bracket not only adds additional stability but holds the second floor down in the event of a hurricane.

The new slab was polished to resemble terrazzo. Hand-fired bricks were added as perimeter accent around the slab, and around the lamp posts.

To create the new event-space envisioned by the project, two new door openings needed to be cut in the south elevation of the building. This required the installation of a new 8x8 header beam in place of the existing material. The Project Engineer also required that doors for these openings be Miami-Dade wind load-compliant. There were none suitable, so our Restoration Carpenter, Ted Arpin, constructed them from scratch. They are brilliant.





Ted Arpin, Restoration Contractor and Carpenter, Susan McClellan, Restoration Architect, and Ronald Ulm, Project Manager and Wilton Manors Historical Society Advisor - Business, Research and Technology.

Ron Ulm and Ted Arpin at work



Resident Supervisor