



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

JUNE 2022

Colohatchee Train Station

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Edited by Mary Ulm June 2022

Wilton Manors Historical Society

The history of a train station within the city limits of today's Wilton Manors is somewhat murky. A station is clearly shown at NE 24th Street at the FEC Railroad tracks near Dixie Highway on two separate plats from 1910¹ and 1925². The depot was gone before Wilton Manors became a Village in 1947.

We've had to piece together information from a number of sources to form the depot's history. The Florida East Coast Railway archivist finds no references to either a Colohatchee or a Floranada station, where it is thought to have moved. Flagler archives do not have a lot of information about the freight side of the business. But it was there!

In 1903 we find the first published reference to an FEC Railway freight depot at Colohatchee in an Official FEC Railway Guide. It was an active operation serving area farmers in an agricultural region that encompassed much of today's Wilton Manors and Oakland Park.³ In 1913, for example, well over 100 train carloads of produce were shipped.⁴

A small town, also called Colohatchee, was platted in 1910 and formed around the freight depot. The Colohatchee Woman's Club, organized in 1916, was located adjacent to the depot on the site of today's Pride Center at Equality Park on Dixie Highway.⁵ The Woman's Club served as the primary community center and social hub for the entire Colohatchee region.

The 1920-1921 Fort Lauderdale City Directory provides a list of about 50 people and enterprises within

"Colohatchee": "[a] small settlement (PO Fort Lauderdale)." Most are farmers. Also listed are the Williams' Packing House and East Coast Growers Association, fruit packers, as well as the Colohatchee Woman's Club.

¹ "Colohatchee", a plat by Oliver, Moody, Weaver, Broward County Property Records, Dade County Book1, Page 91, 1910.

² "Middle River Plaza", a plat by Harry and Ella Meola, Broward County Property Records, Broward County, Book 9, Page 52, 1925.

³ Kirk, Cooper, 1991, "The Vanished Communities of Broward County", Broward Legacy, Summer-Fall, p. 25. Kirk described the Colohatchee region as "from about where the Fort Lauderdale High School now stands (NE 16th St in Fort Lauderdale), north to what is now Commercial Boulevard in Oakland Park, and from the FEC Railroad west to Powerline Road."

⁴ "One Hundred Cars Have Been Shipped Out From Colohatchee Station", *The Miami News*, April 25, 1913.

⁵ Kirk, "Vanished", 26.

By 1925, the South Florida land boom was showing signs of being past its peak and Broward County was looking to attract continued interest. A 1925 Broward County tourism brochure boasts: "The village of Colohatchee, located just north of Fort Lauderdale, on the Dixie Highway, is a shipping point for large quantities of produce." The depot would have been also shipping meat from the Southeastern Packing Plant (photographed in the brochure) -- a meat packing plant just north of the North Fork of the Middle River that opened in Oakland Park in 1922

By 1929, we can no longer locate references to a depot in Colohatchee, but rather references to one at Floranada. Floranada was a development backed by the American-British Improvement Corporation. Named for "Florida" and "Canada," it was to be the Biarritz of America. Land for Floranada was assembled from Oakland Park and beach-front land owned by Arthur Galt. By June 1926, the American-British Improvement Corporation had filed for bankruptcy and the land eventually reverted to Oakland Park and Galt in 1929.⁶

Could the plans for the development of Floranada, with its "super-rich" backers have lured the depot from Colohatchee? Noted historian, Norman Malcolm, writing about Wilton Manors history states: "This station [Colohatchee] was later moved to Oakland Park where it later burned down." However, Malcolm does not provide a date for the move.

Maps of the era that include the FEC seem to show a similar transition from Colohatchee to Floranada. On maps, the FEC depot is referenced as Floranada, not Oakland Park, as late as the 1940's. And, the Oakland Park Historical Society has photos of such a station and pioneers' recollections of same that are consistent with Malcolm's reference.

Moving the station to Oakland Park would have put it closer to the SE Packing Plant which would not have to haul their goods across the river for shipment. And, there was abundant agricultural activity on the Oakland Park side of the river as well. So, absent anything else, the station in Colohatchee/Wilton Manors went away around 1929.

There is a lot of evidence:

- 1903 - "Official Railway Guide: North American Freight Service Edition" listing a Colohatchee station on page 1047;
- 1907 - "Official Railway Guide" showing Colohatchee in the freight station listings on page 1159, but not in the FEC passenger station section [as expected];
- 1910 - Oliver/Moody/Weaver plat showing "Colohatchee Depot";
- 1911 - "Annual Report of the Railroad Commission of State of Florida" on page 149 lists an FEC station of "Colohatchee" at MP 338.3;
- 1911 - "U.S. Department of Interior, General Land Office, Map of Florida" shows "Colohatchee" as being on the FEC Railway line;
- 1911 - "Interstate Commerce Commission Reports" on freight rates on pages 780 and 782 notes rates to the Colohatchee station relative to surrounding stations;
- 1915 - "Southern Railway System Map" shows a Colohatchee stop on the FEC Railway line;
- 1916 - "Pocket Map and Shippers Guide of Florida" lists the Colohatchee station as having the following services: 'Southern Express, Prepaid Freight and Mail';
- 1919 - "Miami Metropolis" newspaper discusses meetings of farmers in Dade and Broward (seemingly sponsored by the FEC Railway) to promote the "3F Feed, Food and Forage Drive." It states: 'The work in Broward will be done in Ft. Lauderdale, Dania and Colohatchee';

⁶ Kirk, "Vanished", p.28.

- 1922 - "Coast Line of Broward County Florida" map (probably by the FEC RR) showing Colohatchee station and proximity to Southeastern Packing Company plant;
- 1924 - Colohatchee section of tourism brochure referencing the RR station, SE Packing Plant, Woman's Club activities and shipment of carloads of produce;
- 1925 - Colohatchee section of tourism brochure referencing "... shipping point for large quantities of produce ...";
- 1925 – Meola plat of Middle River Plaza showing Colohatchee Depot;
- 1926 - "C.S. Hammond Map of Florida" shows Colohatchee on the FEC Railway line;
- 1929 - "Florida Geological Survey Map" shows Floranada on the FEC Railway line and not Colohatchee;
- 1932 - "US Department of Interior Geological Survey" map showing an FEC station at Floranada and not one at Colohatchee [Floranada was already Oakland Park by then].

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