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# HOW IT HAPPENED

Wilton Manors looks back as the 'Island City' celebrates 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary

1890s

• Edward John "Ned" Willingham plats 345 acres west of Dixie Highway and south of NE 26<sup>th</sup> St. and names it Wilton Manors.

• The first known settler of today's Wilton Manors was W.C. Collier who bought 71 acres on the Middle River northeast of Wilton Station. His land became part of the larger farming region called Colohatchee, which included much of now Wilton Manors and Oakland Park. While popular history has frequently repeated that the word *Colohatchee* is an adaptation of Collier's name added to the Seminole word for river, "hatchee", experts in Seminole language find that the "Colo" portion more likely refers to some natural feature of the river, like the color of its water or its glistening shells.

1925

# WILTON MANORS

A SUBDIVISION IN  
SECTIONS 26 & 27-T49S-R42E  
BROWARD CO. FLORIDA

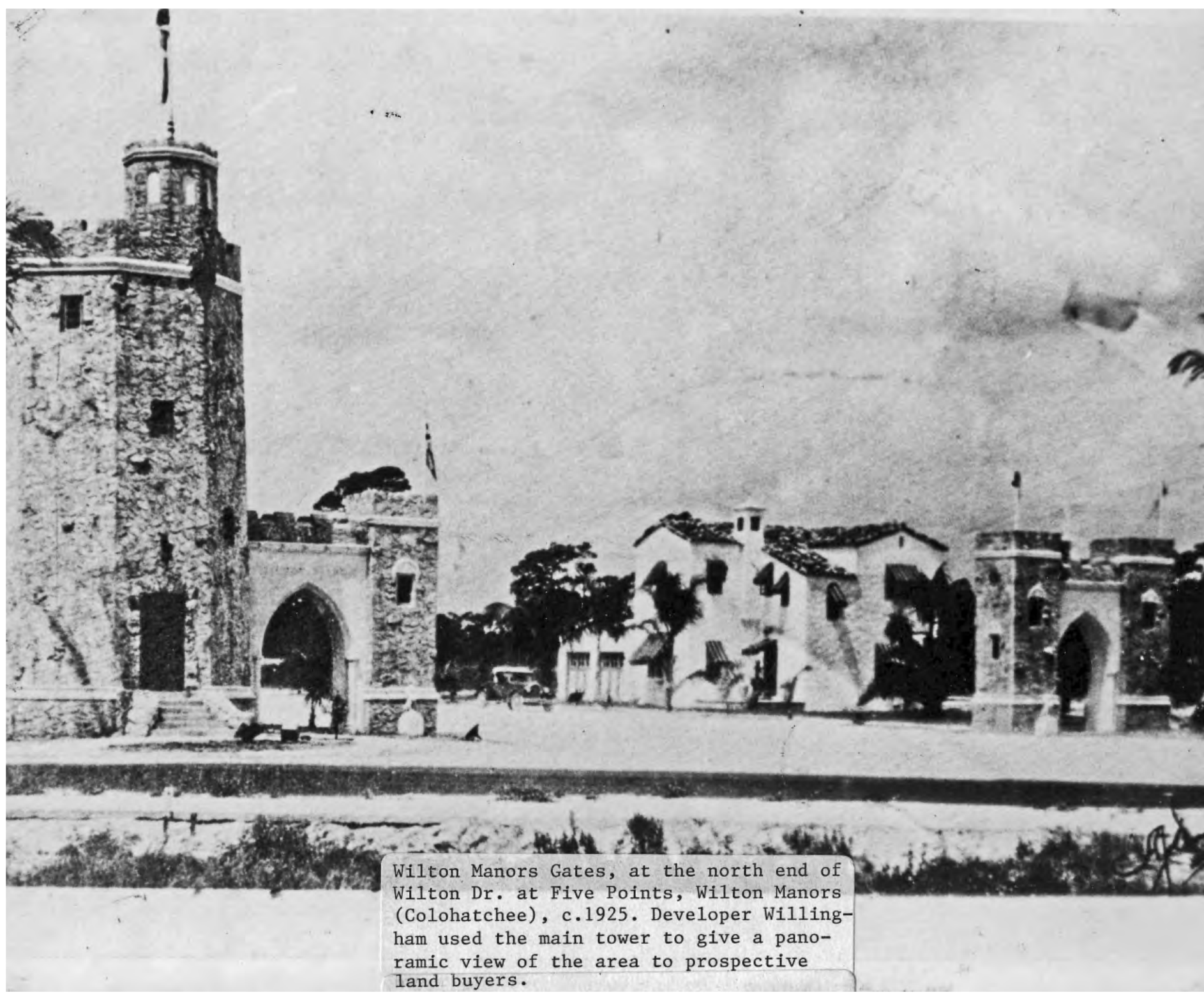
for  
**E.J. WILLINGHAM DEVELOPMENT CO.**

© Wilton Manors Historical Society



**1926**

• Designed by notable architect Francis Abreu, the "commandingly beautiful" Mediterranean-revival entrance gateway (left) to Wilton Boulevard (today Wilton Drive) is completed. The larger tower is where Wells Fargo sits today. A hurricane and other events brought on the Depression well before the rest of the nation, ending Willingham's plans for Wilton Manors.



Wilton Manors Gates, at the north end of Wilton Dr. at Five Points, Wilton Manors (Colohatchee), c.1925. Developer Willingham used the main tower to give a panoramic view of the area to prospective land buyers.

© Wilton Manors Historical Society

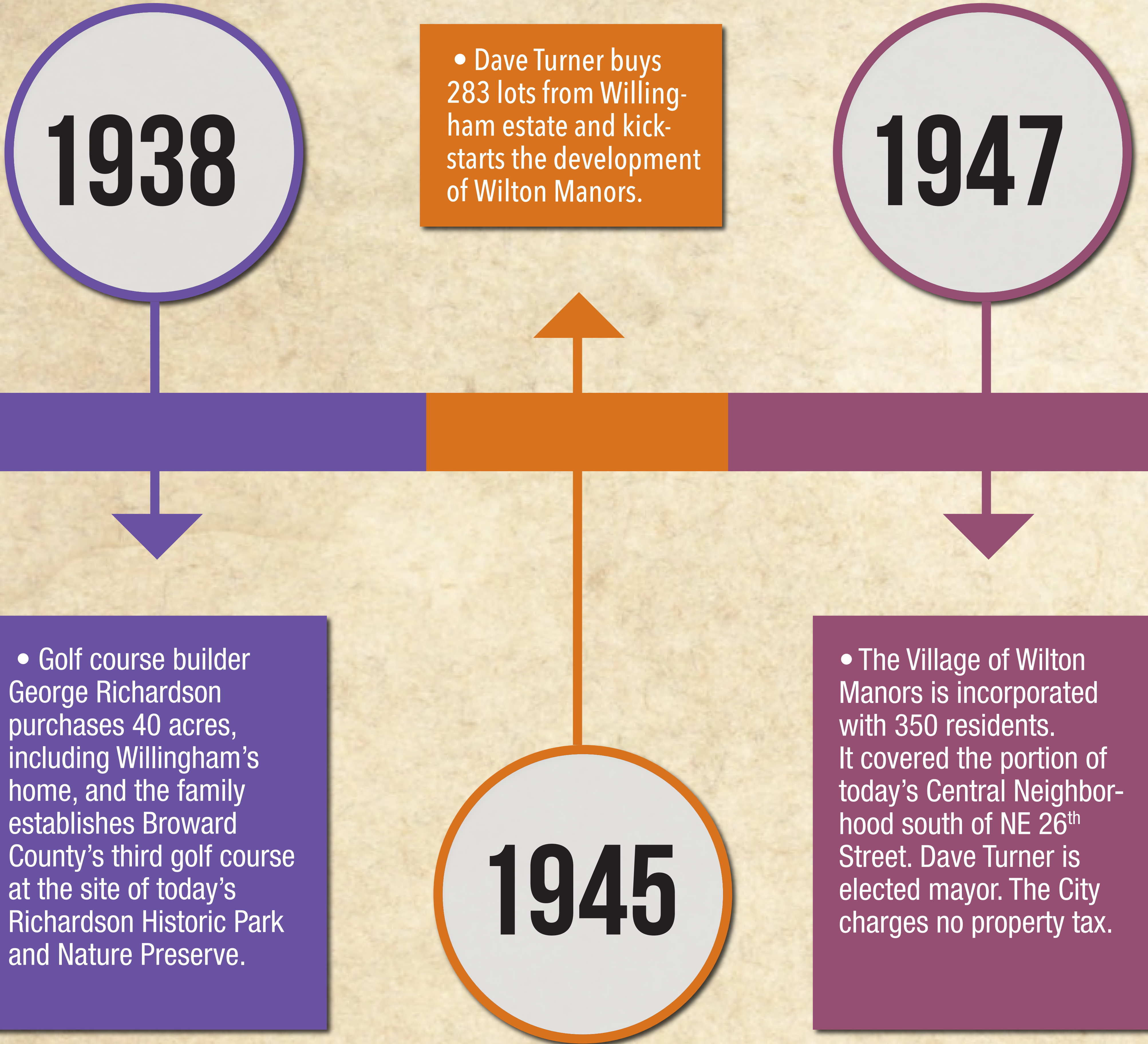


© Wilton Manors Historical Society

**1948**

This photo is a view going north on Wilton Drive. It shows the Tropical Club/ Williams Pharmacy Building (left), where Tropics Grill today, and the laundromat, where Papa Duke's is today. Note the No Taxation sign

for the Village of Wilton Manors. The sign was located just south of the today's Dairy Queen. Wilton Manors managed to provide services without taxing property for almost a decade. Also note that Wilton Drive was a two-lane road at the time.





**1950s:** An aerial view of Five Points. Today, CVS sits in the bottom right corner and Wilton Station is located in the top right. Note that Wilton Drive is four lanes. That widening was completed in 1955.

**1949**

• Voters annex the mostly undeveloped and sparsely populated land east of the FEC Railway, between the North and South Forks of the Middle River, to Federal Highway.

**1952**

• A Village Hall is built by volunteers on the site of today's Wilton Manors Library.

**1951**

• As the village of Wilton Manors grows, the need for a school leads to the opening of Wilton Manors Elementary School.



1955: The “Formal Opening of Beautiful New Four-Lane Wilton Drive” was celebrated with fanfare.

© Wilton Manors Historical Society

1952

• Wilton Manors incorporates as a City and extends its boundaries to include the majority of today’s West Neighborhood.

1955

- Water formerly supplied by wells begins to be supplied by Oakland Park.
- The Village’s first police officers and volunteer firefighters are named.
- The NE 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge is opened to Federal Highway, igniting development of today’s East Neighborhood.

1953

• The City celebrates Wilton Drive expanding to four lanes. The event was celebrated with a Fiesta event, as seen in this advertisement (ABOVE) published in the *Fort Lauderdale News*.

# SHOP AND SAVE IN WILTON MANORS

- **Prices Are Low Due to Low Rents!**
- **No Parking Meters All Parking Is FREE!**
- **Wide Variety of Stores and Merchandise!**
- **All Home Owned and Operated by Your Neighbors!**

A A A HOBBY SHOP  
 BEN FRANKLIN STORE  
 BROWARD QUARRIES  
 BROWN APARTMENTS  
 FOOD FAIR  
 HELENE'S HOUSE OF BEAUTY  
 BESS BROS.  
 HULL TV SERVICE  
 HANSON'S SWEDISH MASSAGE  
 JORDAN NURSERY SCHOOL  
 JUVENILE HOUSE  
 MANOR BOOKKEEPING SERVICE  
 MANOR CURTAIN & FABRIC  
 MANOR INSURANCE AGENCY  
 MANOR MEN'S STORE  
 MANOR MOTOR SERVICE  
 MANOR SERVICE STATION  
 MANOR SHOE STORE  
 MANOR SUNDRIES

MAR-LEN TOGGERY  
 MIDDLE RIVER NURSERY  
 MILLER HARDWARE  
 NANCY'S DRESS SHOP  
 REED'S CHILDREN'S SHOP  
 GEORGE RICHARDSON  
 SPECK ELECTRIC  
 TONY MEN'S WEAR  
 TROPICAL CLUB  
 TROPICAL CONSTRUCTION CO.  
 TROPICAL HOMES  
 TROPICAL PAINT  
 TROPICAL SERVICE STATION  
 VOLLMERHAUSEN LITTLE GERMAN BAKERY  
 WHITE ORCHID CLEANERS  
 WILLIAMS CITY DRUGS  
 WILTON MANOR FURNITURE CO.  
 WILTON MANOR NURSING HOME

**This Advertisement Published By  
WILTON MANORS BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

**1954:** The Wilton Manors Business Association (WMBA) was formed in 1950 and by 1954 was promoting more than three dozen businesses via this advertisement in the *Fort Lauderdale News*.

- A property tax referendum passes to help fund City services.



**1956**



© Wilton Manors Historical Society

**1965:** Tropical Club and the Drug store on Wilton Drive which is today the location of Tropics Bar and Grill. The striped awning on the far right is the Dairy Queen.

**1957**

- Andrews Avenue and Oakland Park Blvd are expanded to four lanes.

**1972**

- City Hall is built at 524 NE 21<sup>st</sup> Ct.
- Wilton Manors Library is established at the former Village Hall site.
- More than 80 businesses are in operation on Wilton Drive.

**1965**

- At 11 stories, Lunde Towers (now Wilton Towers) is built by the Church of Religious Science congregation and becomes the City's tallest building.





**1987:** The reference to Wilton Manors as the "Island City" began in 1987 when a new entry sign was designed for the City.

**1973**

• Wilton Manors resident Norma Rollinson, a graduate of Pratt Art Institute, designed a new entry sign for the City that said, "Welcome to Wilton Manors Island City".

**1990**

• The largest residential complex, Manor Grove, is completed.

**1987**

• Tony Dee opens Chardees Restaurant and Bar, the first gay establishment on Wilton Drive. (It was located in the space where Eagle Bar is today.) Georgie's Alibi would follow as the first gay bar on Wilton Drive.

Subsequent to publication it has been documented that, while not as well-known, "JJs Den" in the early 1980s and "The Palms" in 1986 were likely the first two gay establishments on Wilton Drive--RAU/WMHS

05/2022

# MAYORS THROUGH THE YEARS

Dave Turner - 1947-1952

Perry Mickel - 1952-1955

J. Frank Starling - 1955-1960

Harold T. Price - 1960-1968

Gerald F. Thompson - 1968-1974

James E. Maurer - 1974-1975

Eugene Metzger - 1975-1976

Arthur Welling - 1976-1980

James. E. Maurer – 1980 - 1984

Robert DuBree - 1984-1986

Tracy Stafford - 1986-1990

Sandra Jedlicka Steen - 1990-1994

King Wilkinson - 1994-1998

John P. “Jack” Seiler - 1998-2000

John Fiore - 2000-2002

Jim Stork - 2002-2004

Donald Scott Newton - 2004- 2008

Gary Resnick – 2008 - 2018

Justin S. Flippen – 2018 – 2020

Tom Green (Acting) 2020 - 2020

Donald Scott Newton – 2020 -

- John Fiore is elected mayor of Wilton Manors and earns the distinction of becoming Broward County’s first openly gay public official. He is quoted as saying “There was no “gay” agenda... there are no “gay” potholes.”

- The first Stonewall Pride Festival and Parade is held on Wilton Drive — an official welcome to the LGBTQ community. Today, the annual event attracts more than 40,000 Residents and visitors.



2000



**2006:** Wilton Station was built, the first of several large residential developments that transformed the City.

• A new City Hall opens at 2020 Wilton Drive.

• The 2010 Census finds Wilton Manors is second only to Provincetown, Mass., in the proportion (15%) of gay couples relative to the total population.

**2000  
- 2010**

**2018**

• A construction boom dramatically changes the face of Wilton Manors and adds the residential complexes of Wilton Station (2006), Belle Isle (2006), Island City Lofts (2007), and The Gables at Wilton Park (2010).

• In 2008, The Pride Center at Equality Park relocates from Fort Lauderdale, buying 5.6 acres in Wilton Manors and becoming one of the largest Pride Centers in the U.S.

**2010**

• In November 2018, Wilton Manors becomes the second city in the nation (after Palm Springs, Calif.) to be governed by an all LGBTQ+ City Commission.

• LGBTQ+ commerce is now undeniably a driving force in Wilton Manors' economy.

• Wilton Drive gets a major facelift and returns to two lanes in the interest of safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. The \$2.8 million Lane Elimination Project was designed by the FDOT and funded by the Metropolitan Planning Organization at a cost of \$2.8 million.



**2021:** The \$15.3 million Residences at Equality Park opens its doors to LGBTQ+ seniors.

**2021**

**2019**

• The Residences at Equality Park, the first affordable housing project with supportive services for LGBTQ seniors in the state, officially opens its doors in May. The \$15.3 million project provides permanent affordable housing coupled with on-site supportive services for low-income senior adults ages 55 and older living with disabling conditions.

