

Friends of Sarasota County History Center



Vol. 1 No. 3

SUMMER 2007

From the History Center Archives

The Archives has recently finished inputting our architectural drawing index into Past Perfect Archive and Museum database. Past Perfect was purchased last year to help track all records in the archives and museum collections. All legal forms, such as gift agreements and loans, photos, new accessions and inventories are handled through this system.

The architectural drawing index consists of 304 structures for a total of 2569 drawings. You are now able to use the search keys in Past Perfect and search by name of structure, address (if known), architect and other general information. The data page that will appear will give you the name of the structure, architect, address, date of drawing, number of drawings and what is included in drawings. Some

of our drawings include the Mira Mar Hotel—1923, Sarasota County Court House—1926 and the Cohen House—1954 by Paul Rudolph. New drawings will be added as they come in.

The Archives has also started putting our photographs into Past Perfect. Again, you will be able to search by keywords and the image will appear. The archive has roughly 30,000+ photographs in its collection. We are beginning with the building photographs of Sarasota. This consists of 2½ file cabinets. The History Center staff will be happy to assist you in your search through these records. We hope in the near future to make the database available over the internet.

Volunteer opportunities are available if you would like to help. Call Hope Black at 360-3045 or email at HBlack04@aol.com.

Changes at the “Old Place”

When the History Center moved out of the Tamiami Trail location last December, plans were in place to make modest renovations and convert the former office space to museum space. After having asbestos-laden floor tile adhesive removed, work has now begun on making the anticipated changes. Most of the changes involve removing one wall and adding two, covering windows, replacing light fixtures and installing new flooring.

History Center staff is now designing the first of three anticipated permanent exhibits and expects to have one or two of them ready to install once the construction work is complete in early Fall.

County Budget Cuts Hit History Center

In response to the State Legislature's requirement that counties reduce their property tax levies, the Sarasota County Board of Commissioners was faced this summer with creating a FY2008 budget that is 7% below the current budget. This meant absorbing any cost increases over which the county has no control (such as fuel and insurance) and reducing services and staffing.

The result for the History Center is that with Ann Shank's retirement in September, her position has been

eliminated. Funds also were eliminated for student interns to digitize photographs for posting on the Web. Beginning October 1, research hours will shrink from 28 to 20 hours per week, staff will no longer give community presentations on local history and archaeology and the Historical Commission's marker program will operate with minimal staff support and produce two instead of three markers per year. Staff will no longer create specialty short-term exhibits for commu-

nity events. Administrative costs were also reduced.

YOU CAN HELP! Some of the loss in service to the community can be cushioned with increased volunteer involvement. Those of you who would like to try your hand at public speaking are especially needed to create a speaker's bureau. Those of you who are more interested in working with a computer and scanning photos are needed to help put the photo collection on the Web. Training in both areas is available. If interested or with questions, contact Friends Board member Hope Black at 360-3045 or hblack04@aol.com.

Dear Friends of the Sarasota County History Center:

You are cordially invited to a coffee hour (with sweets) and a tour of the new facilities of the History Center during the morning of Friday, September 7, 2007 beginning at 10:00 AM.

We are grateful and delighted that you have joined the "Friends" and we know that you share the common concern of preserving and studying the heritage of this very special place where we live.

The professional staff of the History Center continues to provide research assistance and information about our community while preserving the County collections. However, given the budget cuts imposed on County services, they need your help. Please consider becoming a volunteer at the Center. Just two hours a week will make a difference in preserving our unique historical and archeological resources. The work does not involve any lifting; computer skills are a plus. You'll be working with amiable and most appreciative professionals.

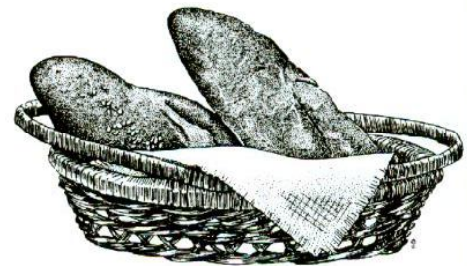
The History Center staff, archives and research library have moved to spacious new quarters on 6062 Porter Way where the irreplaceable collection is safe from impending storms. As a bonus, parking is convenient and readily available.

Please fill out the enclosed postcard and return it to us. We hope to see you on the 7th. To find the History Center, take Bahia Vista east of Cattleman Road. Follow the signs (turn right, then left, then right into the parking lot). For detailed directions call 861-6881.

Most Sincerely,

George "Pete" Esthus
President of the "Friends"

P.S. If you have been looking forward to becoming a docent at the History Museum at 701 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, you will be given that opportunity as soon as the renovations are completed in the fall.



Minutes of Meeting on June 27, 2007

The meeting was called to order by President George "Pete" Esthus at 9:07 A.M. at the Selby Library Conference Room. Members present were "Pete" Esthus, Diane Esthus, Dick Jackson, Curran Smith, Nathalie McCulloch, Hope Black, and Ann Shank. Minutes from the meeting of May 23 were read and duly approved. Curran Smith presented the Treasurer's Report indicating a current balance of \$7,516.32. Mr. Smith said that all sales tax information would be sent to the History Center at 6062 Porter Way. The Treasurer's Report was approved.

Membership Report: Diane Esthus, Membership Chair said that the membership remains status quo.

Newsletter: Dick Jackson said that the deadline for newsletter copy should be sent to him by the middle of the month prior to publication. The August issue will be published August 13.

As History Center liaison, Ann Shank reported that the Board of County Commissioners of Sarasota County will make a decision on the future of the History Center during the week of July 2. Ms. Shank also indicated that the placement of the plaque (in recognition of the Corporate sponsors) in the Chidsey Building must first be discussed with the Visitors Center. The first issue will be an artistic rendering of a design for the plaque.

Nathalie McCulloch put forward a motion that the "Friends" Organiza-

tion join the Historical Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County. The motion was seconded by Curran Smith. A discussion ensued, a show of hands was called for and the motion approved. President "Pete" Esthus will represent the Friends Organization at future meeting of the coalition to be held bi-monthly on the first Tuesday of the month at Twin Lakes Park.

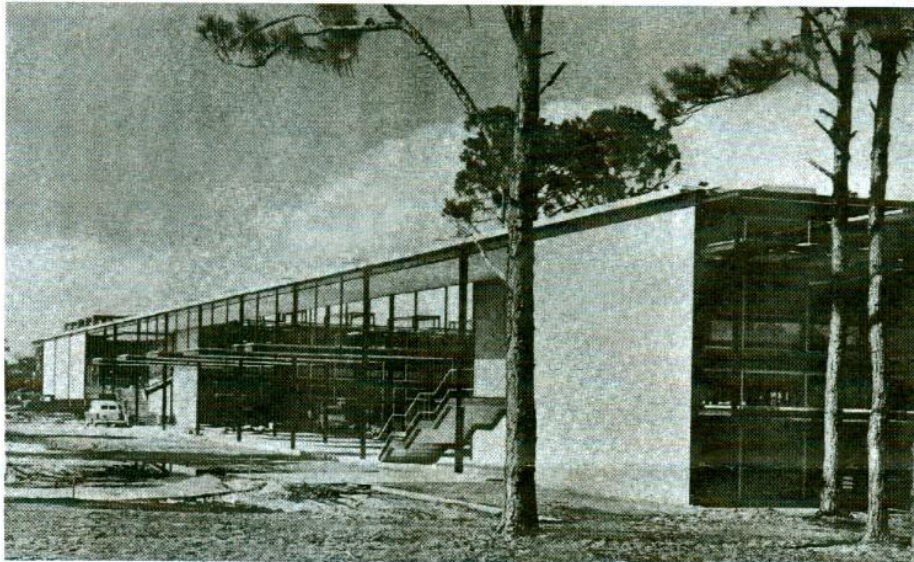
"Pete" Esthus appointed Hope Black as Chair of Volunteer recruitment for the History Center. A mailing will be sent to the "Friends" Membership.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30. The next meeting will be on July 25, at nine o'clock at the Selby Library Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Hope Black

The School Board that Dared!



Riverview High School, 1958

I have written Landmark articles on many of Sarasota's remaining architectural edifices and have enjoyed each and every experience. But on most occasions the architectural genre was credited to a European influence.

Riverview High School's modern design is a product of the "Sarasota School of Architecture," which means, according to Greg Hall, the head of Greg Hall Architects, "It is a regional adaptation of early 20th Century Modern European Architecture that was adapted to our specific tropical climate."

The school is located at the corner of Proctor Road and Lords Avenue and occupies forty acres adjacent to Phillip Creek. Built in 1958 and dubbed a "steel frame in the pines," it was contrary to any prevailing designs for schools at the time. The school's modern style featured air movement, outdoor hallways and outdoor teaching areas. Greg adds, "I grew up and lived in Palm Beach and much of the school construction in my area was modeled after Riverview High School."

The School's design was the brainchild of Phillip Hiss, who was elected to the School Board in 1952. An energetic man who often shook the room with his rants, Hiss wanted a "different" type of school than the present ones which he construed to be archaic and unsanitary. He solicited Paul Rudolph as the



Riverview High School today

lead architect of a group that included six others. They soon spearheaded a prolific school building boom that created many innovative and creative schools and school additions including Riverview High.

Rudolph later introduced Riverview High's simplistic and modern style on a larger scale. He used variations of this style on many homes he would eventually design. Rudolph went on to become a renowned architect and was considered one of the

three most influential architects in the United States. He later left Sarasota to become the dean of Yale University.

Riverview opened its doors for the first time on September 2, 1958 to much fanfare. Governor Leroy Collins gave the opening speech to the many guests, forty-five faculty members and the student body. Douglass Haskell, the editor of the prestigious Architectural Forum, was also in attendance.

The school building boom was happening just in time as the county's student body had swollen from 42,000 students in 1954 to 70,000 in 1958. Most of the new school construction was done in the modernistic Riverview High "Sarasota" style, which was viewed as a progressive and as an economical form of construction. From 1958 to 1962, the school board added an amazing 181 classrooms and over half of the 11,200 students were in brand new classrooms.

Theories abound about what should happen to the complex and its relevance as a "landmark," but one thing is certain. Riverview, according to Greg Hall, "is an important building that is universally meaningful in that it represents the integration of modern architecture into the educational arena. The impact of the school's architecture is recognized all through the United States as a vanguard of architectural innovation."

—Dick Jackson



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