

The Palm Coast Historian

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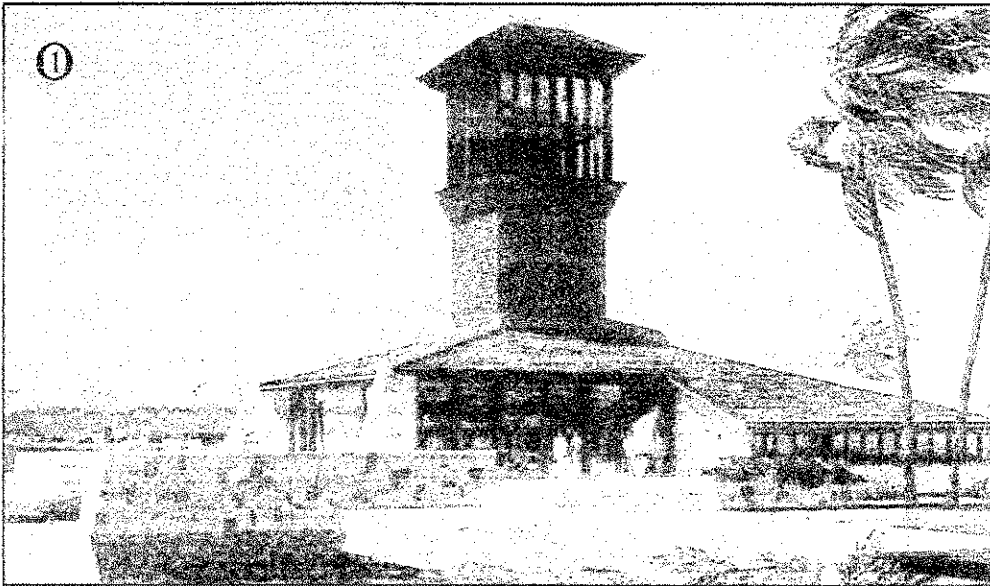
The Historic Core Area of Palm Coast (Part 2) by Art Dycke

The headline, "Pharmacy, offices could replace former Palm Coast welcome center," appeared on page 7A of the August 21, 2009 edition of THE NEWS-JOURNAL. The text began, "The landmark, blue-roofed building that formerly served as 'the' (italics mine) Palm Coast welcome center could be torn down to make way for a CVS Pharmacy." This most informative article gave a wealth of information regarding the ownership and proposed development of the property that was initially owned by ITT Corporation and revealed

that the project had been approved by the city Planning and Land Development and Regulation Board.

As volunteer historian for the city of Palm Coast, my immediate reaction was that I had to correct the impression given by the word "the" welcome center that there was only one because, in actuality, there were two. The original welcome center was the very first building constructed by the ITT/Levitt developers of Palm Coast as their sales center and it opened in October 1970.

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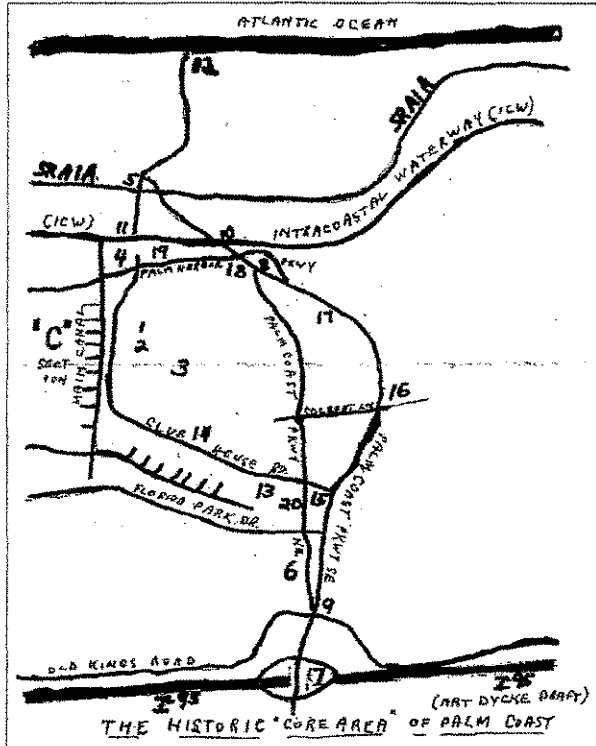
The 64' tower of the original welcome center provided a panoramic view of surrounding woods, lakes, streams, and Intracoastal Waterway that was to become the "core area" of Palm Coast. The building was at the center of the first model area and was to serve as the hub of all sales activities for the new development. It was a dramatic structure with a variety of graphics and audiovisual sales materials inside. The main feature was an elevator-accessed 64'-high observa-

tion tower affording visitors unobstructed views of their surroundings, including the golf course, the model houses, and the inland waterways and canals. Earliest visitors often came from Route A1A to a small dock on the east side of the ICW, proceeding by boat to the welcome center on the main canal.

When the prospective buyers arrived, they were taken to the top of the tower to view the area. The cleared land within immediate view of the tower must have looked desolate at first and beyond that stretched a seemingly endless pine forest. At first, much of the land was sold sight unseen from a platted map for as low as \$3,500 for a home site. The sales person was likely to locate one's property by pointing in a direction away from the tower and telling the buyer, "It's out there somewhere."

The Historic Core Area of Palm Coast *(continued from front page)*

This rough draft map from "THE HISTORIC CORE AREA OF PALM COAST: THEN AND NOW" printed April 2007 is for your reference. I will do a short review of locations 1-4 as they relate to Palm Coast residents in the summer of 2009. I will then skip to location 9, the welcome center described on the front page. Information regarding other listed locations and updates for all locations on the list will appear in future Palm Coast Historians.



- 1 – Welcome Center – Palm Coast's first building
- 2 – Model Center
- 3 – Original Palm Coast Golf Course
- 4 – Original Yacht Club (including tennis & swim clubs)
- 5 – Entrance to original Sheraton Palm Coast Inn
- 6 – First Shopping Center (Publix)
- 7 – I-95 Interchange
- 8 – Players Club
- 9 – ITT Welcome Center II
- 10 – Hammock Dunes Bridge

The welcome center was sold when the ITT developer ended most operations in Palm Coast after 1995. I believe the building was torn down in the summer of 2000; the same with the model center sometime after. (Author's note: I am offering a Palm Coast history book to the first person who has evidence of the exact time the welcome center was torn down. Contact Art Dycke at

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Under construction in 1970, this photo of the model center was taken from the top of the observation tower. Preconstruction homes were marketed starting at \$15,000 before Palm Coast opened officially on October 29, 1970. The original Welcome/Model Center was continually modernized through the 1980's. This author estimates that about half the people living in Palm Coast in 2000 passed through that welcome center at some time.

- 11 – Original Welcome Center Boat Dock
- 12 – Original Sheraton Palm Coast Inn, now Hammock Dunes Clubhouse
- 13 – First Business – Handy Way Convenience Store and Post Office
- 14 – Casper Drive (first houses built)
- 15 – Community Center
- 16 – DBCC Flagler/Palm Coast Campus and Amphitheater
- 17 – FAA Training Center
- 18 – European Village
- 19 – Harbor Club
- 20 – St. Marks by the Sea Lutheran Church

The Historic Core Area of Palm Coast *(continued from page 4)*

artpchistory@bellsouth.net.) A condominium and boat slip complex called Old Hammock Cove was planned for there a number of years ago, but I'm not aware of its present status.

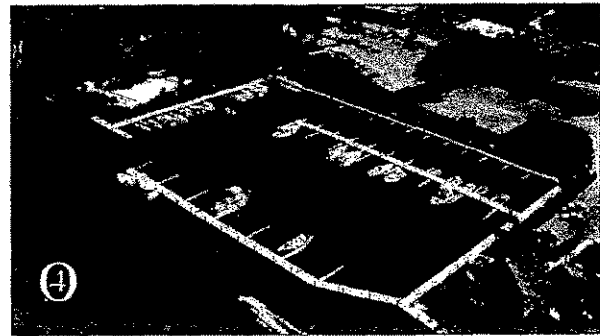
The first nine holes of the Palm Coast Golf Club opened September 4, 1971. The first homes built in the community at Casper and Cooper Drives off Clubhouse Road were adjacent to the sixth-hole fairway. The Bill Amick-designed course was complete a year later and featured a 19th-hole restaurant that looked like a paddle wheel riverboat.

Renamed the Palm Harbor Golf Course in 1981, the former ITT property passed through a number of ownerships, ending up in the hands of Centex Destination Properties in August 2005. The developer planned to build condominiums and townhouses around a thoroughly renovated golf course as part of a larger area project called Palm Coast Resort. In July 2006 Centex shut down the course, sprayed the grass with herbicide, and abandoned its maintenance. Later that year, they demolished the clubhouse. Centex abandoned its uncompleted planned projects, leaving a huge void in the center of Palm Coast's historic district. The city negotiated a property donation/lease deal in September 2007 for the now unplayable course, which promised it the municipal golf course it had been craving for years. The city council approved sufficient funding for planning and executing the major renovation required to restore and modernize the historic Palm Harbor Golf Course; play is expected to begin there in Fall 2009.

The original Palm Coast Yacht Club, built by ITT to become the social hub of the new community, opened on December 15, 1972. The club became the political and religious, as well as the social center of Palm Coast with civic associations and religious denominations holding their meetings and services there. Social gatherings included club activities, parties, dances, festivals, art shows, and other entertainment. The first tennis courts, outdoor pool, boat launching ramp, and marina were located there. The original ITT Yacht

Club buildings were completely redone and expanded in 1987 to reopen as Sheraton Inn (our city's first hotel) with bar, dining room, and meeting/ballroom facilities. This beautiful site at the junction of the Intracoastal Waterway and the main canal was subsequently renamed Harborside Inn, Palm Coast Golf Resort, then Ocean Hammock Resort: Harborside Inn.

In August 2005 Centex Destination Properties purchased Harborside Inn, Palm Harbor Golf Course, and Palm Harbor Marina and announced

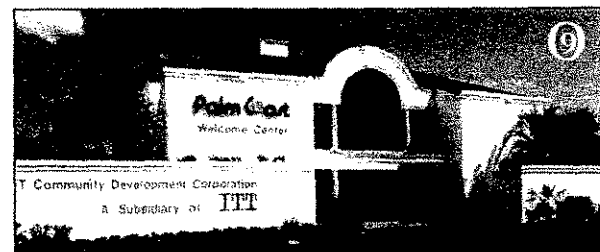


Palm Coast Yacht Club in 1979

plans for an elaborate new Palm Coast Resort. All but the marina were demolished to be rebuilt as a condominium/convention center. Exterior work on one of the project's two eight-story condominiums and a 50'-high parking garage had been completed when the developer informed the city in February 2007 that the application for completing the project was being withdrawn.

ICDC (ITT Community Development Corporation) built the beautiful new Welcome Center II on the southeast corner of Old Kings Road and Palm Coast Parkway to attract visitors as they exited I-95 heading east. Clients could then tour

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The Historic Core Area of Palm Coast *(continued from page 5)*

the area in a colorful trolley/bus that took them through the core area to the modernized original welcome/model complex. Today, the building houses Palm Coast Real Estate.

Our first building and its surrounding model center have been torn down and the site is empty and awaiting development. Our second building, the original Palm Coast Yacht Club, served as the community's eating and meeting place for 33 years. It was torn down with a promise of a modern replacement, but only the marina, eight-story condominium, and parking garage occupy a large open space. Our first golf course was destroyed and a renovation by the city has allowed it to rise from the ashes. What will happen to the Blue Roof (Welcome Center II).

As an historian, I have an innate inclination toward preservation of the old. As I get older, I come to the realization that even I will eventually need to be replaced. Owners have their private property rights and facilities need continuing modernization. On the other hand, future generations may look back and blame us for obliterating too much and leaving them too little trace of their honored past.

There is only so much a city can do to help preserve its heritage. There are local, state, and national programs that encourage modernized use of older buildings. I would suggest that the city make a publicly accessible historical signage the responsibility of developers of historical significant sites.

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