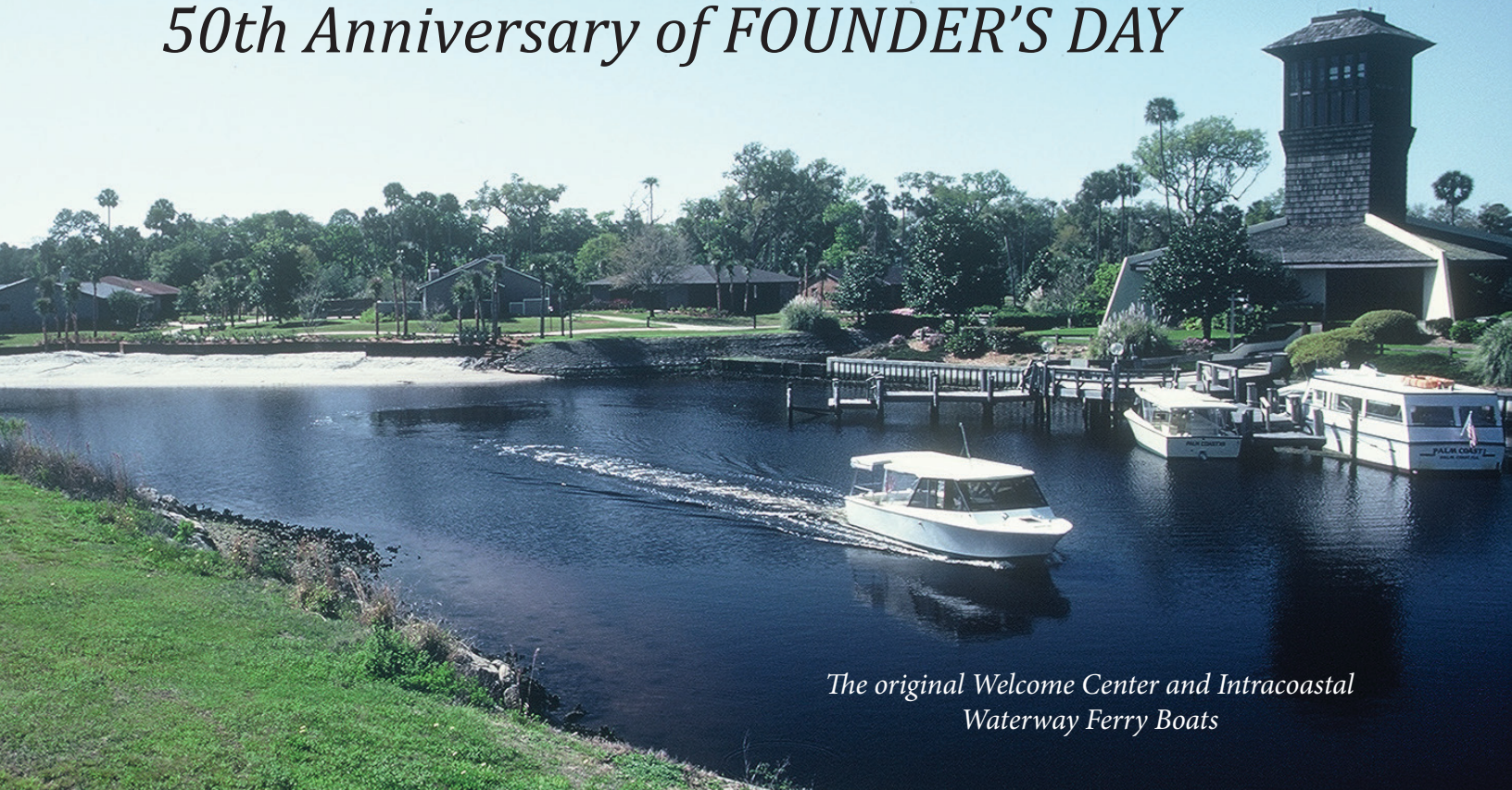


# Palm Coast Celebrates

## *50th Anniversary of FOUNDER'S DAY*



*The original Welcome Center and Intracoastal Waterway Ferry Boats*

*by Kathy Reichard-Ellavsky, Palm Coast Historical Society Vice-President*

**F**ifty years ago International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) changed the future of Flagler County forever when they opened their Welcome Center to prospective homebuyers in the newly created community of Palm Coast. The festive Grand Opening occurred on October 29, 1970. That date has since been known as Founder's Day.

The previous year ITT had purchased 68,000 acres in the rural county with the intention of building a 20,000 acre planned residential community. Affordable waterfront lots and the recreational amenities of golf, tennis, swimming and boating were to become the main attractions for future residents

seeking a carefree lifestyle in a warm climate. Five hundred miles of canals, roads, and drainage systems would eventually be created.

While the Welcome Center with its 64-foot observation tower was under construction ITT opened a land sales office in the former Animal Land attraction on Route A1A in the Hammock. That building is now part of the Flagler Technical Institute. During the 1960's the 105 acre facility featured a "motorized safari" through a zoological park and botanical garden complete with a natural coquina rock spring. Billed as "fun for the whole family" the attraction eventually suffered the

same financial fate that many other smaller Florida attractions experienced during that time and suddenly closed its doors.

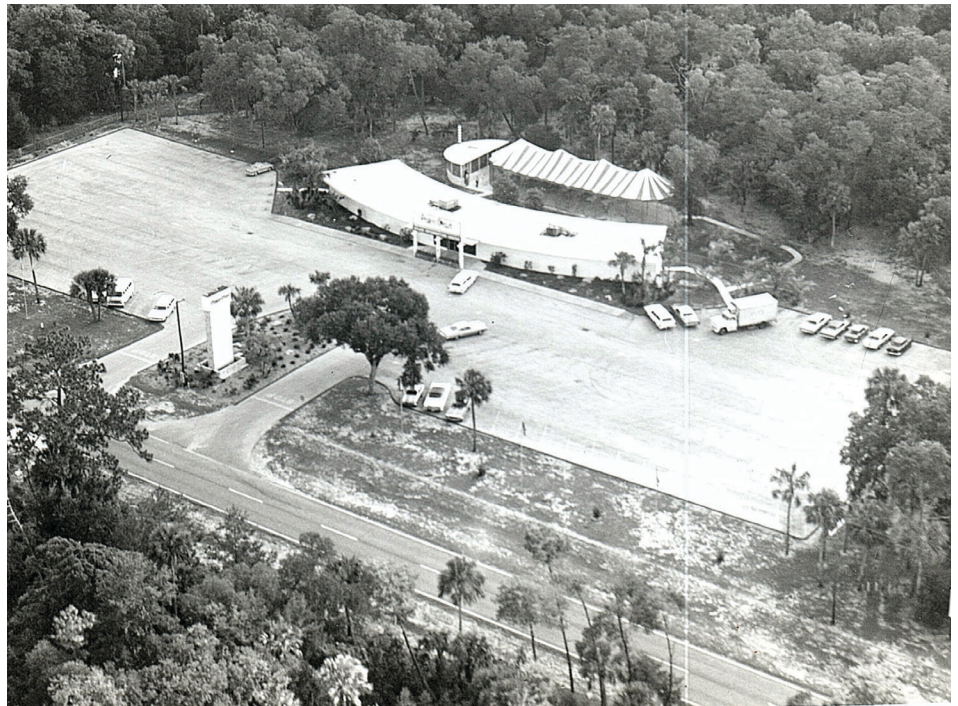
Visitors who stopped at the sales office on A1A would be driven to a small dock and taken by ferry to the west side of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). They would be guided to the Welcome Center where the Beatles song "Here Comes The Sun" set the tone for prospective buyers. An elevator took them to the top of the tower which provided a panoramic view of the ocean and the largely unpopulated swamp and pine forest below. There they would also see that construction was underway to transform the landscape. The



projects would include nine model homes, a golf course, and a dredging operation needed to create the main canal that would one day connect with the ICW.

The first homes were built by ITT/Levitt, one of the many subsidiaries of the international conglomerate, and was headed by Dr. Norman Young. He established his office in the former Lehigh Cement Plant on Colbert Lane. Residential construction began on the corner of Club House and Casper Drives. Pre-construction land and home packages started at \$13,000. Sales were brisk. Reportedly 8,000 home sites were sold the first year.

The first nine holes of the Palm Coast (later Palm Harbor) Golf Course opened on September 14, 1971. Four months later the first residents moved into their homes in the “core area.” Many who relocated have said that initially they had misgivings about the area. Those who drove to the Welcome Center via Old Kings Road passed miles and miles of trees with no signs of civilization and wondered if they should turn back to Daytona. Yet they pushed forward and upon reaching the dirt road intersection of St. Joe’s Grade, now Palm Coast Parkway, headed east to the Welcome Center.



*ITT Land Sales Office, June 1970*

The promise of “A Better Place, A Better Life, A Better Way” convinced 200 buyers to become “pioneers” and begin anew in Palm Coast. By December 1972 ITT Community Development Corporation opened the Palm Coast Yacht Club which included a marina, boat ramp, swimming pool, and tennis courts. The facility, featuring the Harbour Restaurant, became the civic, religious, and social center of the community. Religious services were also held at the Welcome Center and in the model homes.

Most of the early structures built by ITT are gone. The Welcome

Center was demolished in 1995. The original Yacht Club is now a vacant lot yet to be adapted to another use. In fifty years the population has grown from zero to over 90,000. Our history remains alive through the stories and photographs of another era, collected and treasured by the dedicated volunteers of the Palm Coast Historical Society. The 50th Anniversary of Founder’s Day is a significant milestone in the evolving history of our young city.

*To celebrate this event follow us on Facebook or visit our website at [palmcoasthistory.org](http://palmcoasthistory.org).*

<b>OPEN DAILY</b>	
<b>8 A.M. to 6 P.M.</b>	
Adults	\$2.00
Children, 6-16	\$1.00
Under 6	Free
FREE SEASON PASS AVAILABLE WITH EACH SINGLE ADMISSION	

**Florida's Animal Land - FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY**