



HISTORIC
**HOLMIES
BEACH**



CITY TOUR



*Walk, bike or ride the Island trolley
and learn about
the rich history of Holmes Beach
and our people*

**Presented by the
Anna Maria Island Historical Society**

402 Pine Avenue

Anna Maria City, Florida 34216

Trolley Stop at Crescent Drive and Pine Avenue

(941) 778-0492 • AMIHS.org

Historical Society Museum Hours:

Open Monday - Friday

January through March: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

April through December: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Closed the month of September

General Information and Tips

You can choose to walk, bike or ride the free Island trolley as you view the sites found on the map in the center, pages 12-13.

Trolley: The trolley stop nearest the historic site is indicated by N (northbound trolley) or S (southbound trolley) followed by the number of the trolley stop. For example: N, 12 means northbound trolley, stop #12.

Parking: Available at the shopping centers in downtown Holmes Beach (HB) and at the Manatee Public Beach. Parking is available on some side streets. Check for signs limiting parking and be sure to park with the flow of traffic.

Public Restrooms and Water Fountains: Available at Manatee Public Beach and at the Holmes Beach recreation field north of City Hall, next to Officer Pete Lannon Skate Park. You may want to be prepared with water bottles and sunscreen.

Biking or Walking: Bikers and pedestrians, pay careful attention to vehicular traffic.

This tour does not grant entry into the businesses and homes listed. Please do not trespass on private property. Please be respectful when taking pictures.

Anna Maria City Historic Sites Tour Brochure: The Anna Maria Island Historical Society (AMIHS) offers a similar brochure featuring historic sites in Anna Maria City. Brochures may be found at the AMIHS Museum, the AMI Chamber of Commerce and at various locations around AMI.

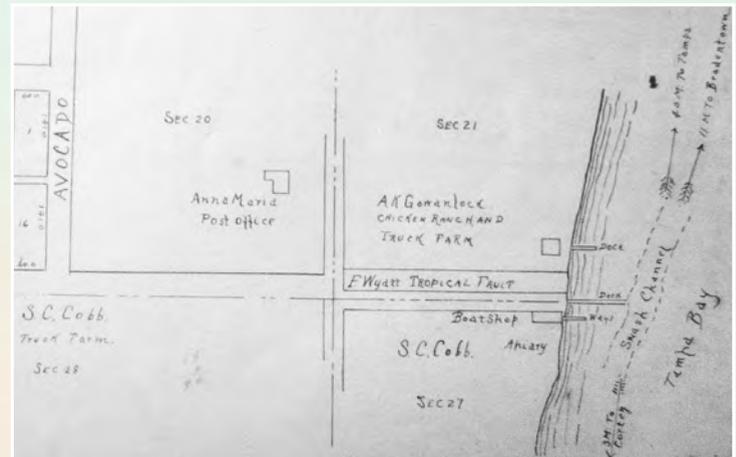
Supplemental Tour Sites: Not all of the historical sites on AMI could be included in this brochure. Visit our website (amihs.org) for a printable list of supplementary island-wide sites. Access this document on the "About Us" page of our website.

Motels and churches have played major roles in the history of Holmes Beach. Please check out historical photos and histories of Holmes Beach motels and churches at our website, www.amihs.org.

History of Holmes Beach

In 1891, Samuel C. and Annie Cobb came from New Jersey to the Manatee River area in Bradenton to survey land for a colony of Swiss settlers. After the colony dissolved, the Cobbs migrated to Tampa where they met George Emerson Bean, the first homesteader on Anna Maria Island, who invited them to visit AMI. The Cobbs immediately fell in love with the Island's tranquil setting and healthy climate; Tampa was battling a host of tropical diseases. In 1895, the Cobbs began staying with the Beans.

Anna Maria Cobb, born in 1897 and named for the Island, was the Island's first recorded birth. In 1898, the Cobbs homesteaded 160 acres and in 1907 established the Island's first business, Cobb's Marine Ways, which built and repaired boats into the 1970s. In 1902, the first Island



1910 plat map depicting a section of Cobb's Corner. Note the post office, boat shop, dock, channel, Cobb's truck farm, Gowanlock's farm and an apiary (bee hives). "Tampa Bay" is now the Intracoastal Waterway.

ABBREVIATION KEY

N - North S - South
HB - Holmes Beach
AMI - Anna Maria Island
AMIHS - Anna Maria Island Historical Society



Circa 1946 aerial showing the newly-built airstrip. Gulf Drive exists; Marina Drive does not. One of the buildings in the wooded area once housed the post office. The building to the left of the marina was Rhetta and Bob Grey's Flying Service begun in 1946. Locals like Humbug Cobb and John and Hugh Holmes, Sr. learned to fly there.

post office was established in Samuel's house. Cobb's Corner included the Cobb house, the business, a bayou, a harbor, a natural channel to the bay and a dock. It also included the general area of what is now downtown Holmes Beach. Samuel even filed a plat for Golden Shores, a community covering what is now the extended Holmes Beach downtown area with all the streets named after fruits. Only Carissa and Guava retain their original names. World War I and then the Depression kept those plans from being realized.

Anna Maria Cobb Riles recalled in later life, "The fish were so plentiful no one ever went hungry. The season was eight months for clams, scallops, blue crabs, stone crabs and Gulf crabs. All you had to do was drop a hook to catch a fish."

In 1894, Captain John R. Jones homesteaded land south of the Cobbs, extending to the current Public Beach. Jones was an Irishman from Canada who moved his family from Ontario to Tampa in 1882 to manage a citrus farm. Fleeing the rapid urbanization, the rampant tropical diseases and the winter frosts of Tampa, Jones decided to settle on sparsely-populated Anna Maria Island.

Jose M. Cazanias came from the Canary Islands to fish for mullet and homesteaded in 1895 to the south of



Anna Maria Cobb in front of her birthplace. (Photo circa 1950s)

Jones. Jones taught Cazanias to speak English, since a requirement for homesteading was citizenship. Cazanias and a man named Frank Gutierrez attracted folks from the Tampa cigar-making industry to the Island where they, in turn, built homes.

John E. "Jack" Holmes was born in Sweden in 1889. In 1921, while working on a construction project on Davis Island in Tampa, he traveled to the Island on one of the excursion boats that docked at the Anna Maria Pier. In 1925, Jack bought a home in Anna Maria City and soon served as a commissioner. When the Crash of 1929 brought hard financial times, he left to work elsewhere, but maintained his Island home. Returning around 1935, Jack and new wife Maud (Jack's first wife had passed away) started a real estate and home-repair business, serving a need to renovate the houses neglected due to the Depression. Maud was active in the newly re-opened Roser Church, teaching Sunday School and playing the organ. Around 1939, Jack and Maud began acquiring more land with an eye to creating a planned community. During World War II, Jack traveled around Florida building barracks. The Holmes kids manned the Army Air Corps tower (near where the Sandbar Restaurant is now). Whenever a plane or strange boat appeared, they reported it to Tampa. Following World War II, Jack began his community of "solid, affordable homes in a strict residential area with a small commercial area set aside."



Advertisement for a Holmes-built house in Jack's community of "solid, affordable" homes.

Jack developed the city shopping center and designed and built canals and roads. In 1950, Cobb's Corner residents voted to name the newly-incorporated city "Holmes Beach." The Holmes family donated the former airstrip lands for perpetual public use. Holmes Beach City Hall, library, baseball field, public works, fire and rescue station, dog park and the recreational complex all occupy this land. The fifth generation of the Holmes family continues to live, work and play on AMI.



View of downtown Holmes Beach (circa 1950s) showing the new shopping center and the Yacht Club. To the right of the marina an airplane rests at the tip of the airstrip.

Tour of Historic Sites in Holmes Beach

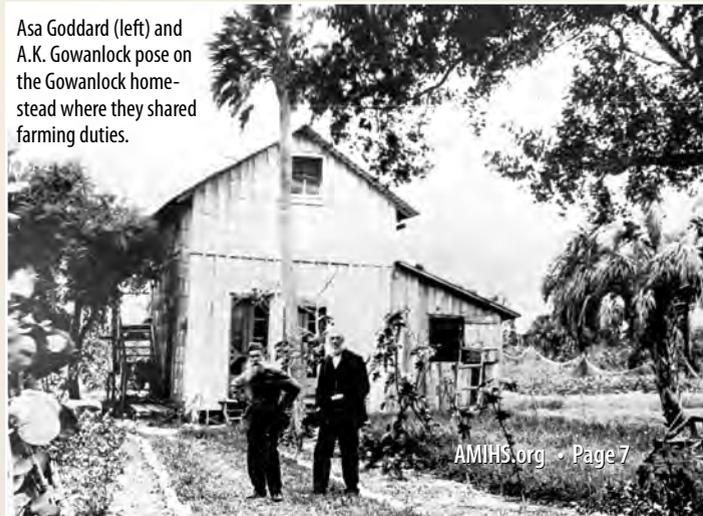
Cobb's Corner, Downtown Holmes Beach

 **Trolley (N,57/S,15) 1A. Cobb's Marine Ways** was located at approximately 202 52nd Street (across from Hancock Bank, behind A Paradise Realty and BB & T). In 1901, Scottish-born A.K. "Old Man" Gowanlock homesteaded north of Cobb's boat shop where he raised tropical fruit trees. In 1916, aged 101, he was the Island's oldest



Cobb's Marine Ways, which built and repaired boats, was the first Island business.

Asa Goddard (left) and A.K. Gowanlock pose on the Gowanlock homestead where they shared farming duties.





Opening in 1975, Foodway became the newest and largest grocery store on the Island.

registered voter. Legendary marine jack-of-all-trades Louis M. "Humbug" Cobb, grandson of Samuel, ran the old marina until 1970, when he leased it out so he could become a tugboat skipper. The marina no longer exists.

Trolley (N,57/S,15) 1B. The Foodway Store (Currently, AMI Chamber of Commerce building), constructed in 1975 by Jack Holmes, became the newest and largest grocery store on the Island with a "massive" variety of produce and "nationally-advertised name brand groceries." Foodway moved to the site of the current Publix store. An Eckerd's Drug Store next located in the vacant Foodway building.

Trolley (N,57/S,15) 1C. Jack Holmes' Home (515 56th Street) was designed by Jack and constructed in 1952. Described at the time as "ultra-modern," the home had an inside fireplace, a Roman stone interior wall for coolness, large picture windows and featured the Island's first swimming pool.



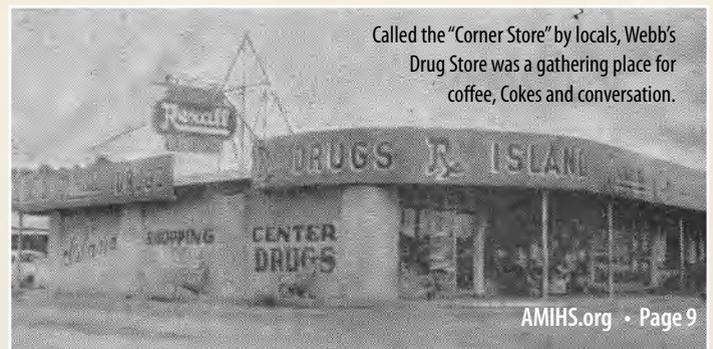
Jack and Maud Holmes by the Island's first swimming pool at their HB home. (Photo Circa 1953).



The revolving Compass Room at the iconic Pete Reynard's Yacht Club Restaurant.

Trolley (N,57/S,15) 1D. Pete Reynard's Yacht Club Restaurant (current site of Waterline) was the most beloved of the restaurants that replaced the **Yacht Club Restaurant** built by Jack Holmes in 1954. Greek immigrant and Clearwater restaurateur Pete Reynard and wife Eleanor leased the restaurant in 1954, renaming it and developing it into one of the most famous dining spots on Florida's west coast. Diners arrived by car or boat, enjoyed the signature sizzler steaks, sat in the revolving Compass Room with a view of the marina and visited the also-revolving salad bar. The well-stocked ice cream bar was a favorite of young and old. In the Mermaid Room, the bathing beauties swimming gracefully in a 50-gallon tank of clear blue water actually were constantly moving reflections taken from a film shot at The Miami Swimming Hall of Fame.

Trolley (N,57/S,15) 1E. Holmes Beach Shopping Center was built in 1952 by Jack Holmes and employed many locals of all ages. It originally housed a post office, drug store, restaurants, bakery, furniture store, appliance store and clothing store. The shopping center also has been home to the Island Water Company, Christian Science Reading Room, a weather station equipped with an

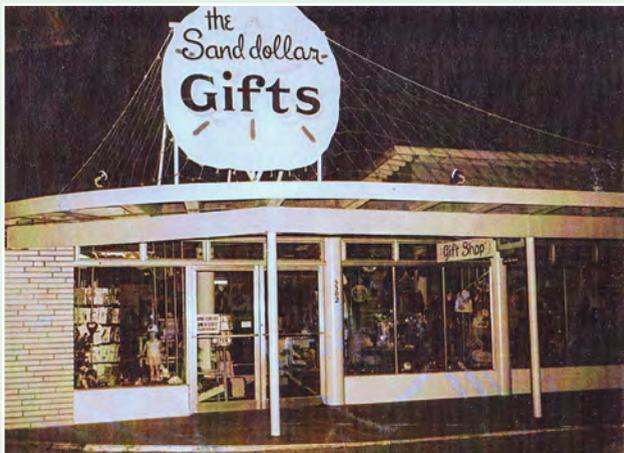


Called the "Corner Store" by locals, Webb's Drug Store was a gathering place for coffee, Cokes and conversation.

intricate barometer donated by Mayor “Max” Ingham, the Handy Dandy grocery store and a florist.

J.D. Webb’s Rexall Drug Store (currently, the Sand Dollar Gift Shop) was a gathering place for locals. It was described as “air-conditioned, clean and crowded with countless articles.” The fountain counter hosted political, social and “spicy scandal” discussions.

The Sand Dollar Gift Shop In 1960, the day after Hurricane Donna ripped through the area, John and Shirley Duytschaver purchased Maureen’s Gift Shop located in the middle of the shopping center. They renamed it the Sand Dollar and moved it to its current corner location. It remained in the family for three generations.



The Sand Dollar Gift Shop. (Photo circa 1960s)

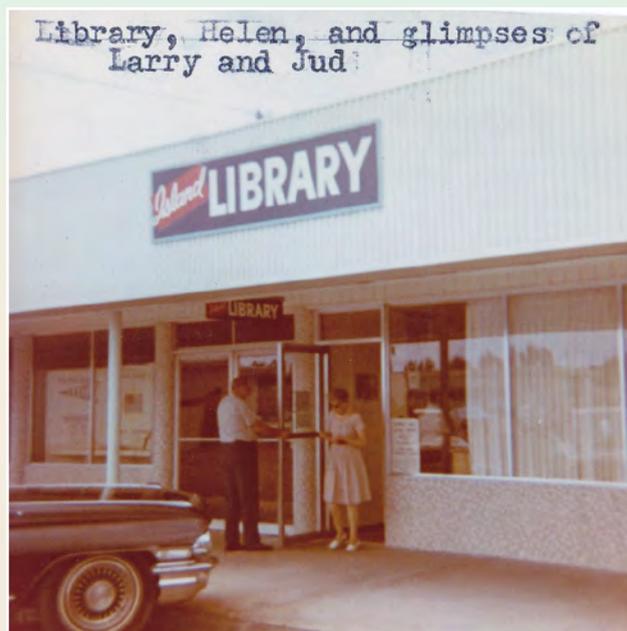
Trolley (N,57/S,15) 1F. Island Medical Center (5312 Holmes Boulevard, currently, “The Doctor’s Office” and the Anna Maria Island Art League) was built in 1953 by one of the Island’s first doctors, Dr. Edgar Huth. Serving the Island’s entire population of less than 1000, Dr. Huth



The Island Medical Center was opened in 1953 by Dr. Edgar Huth.

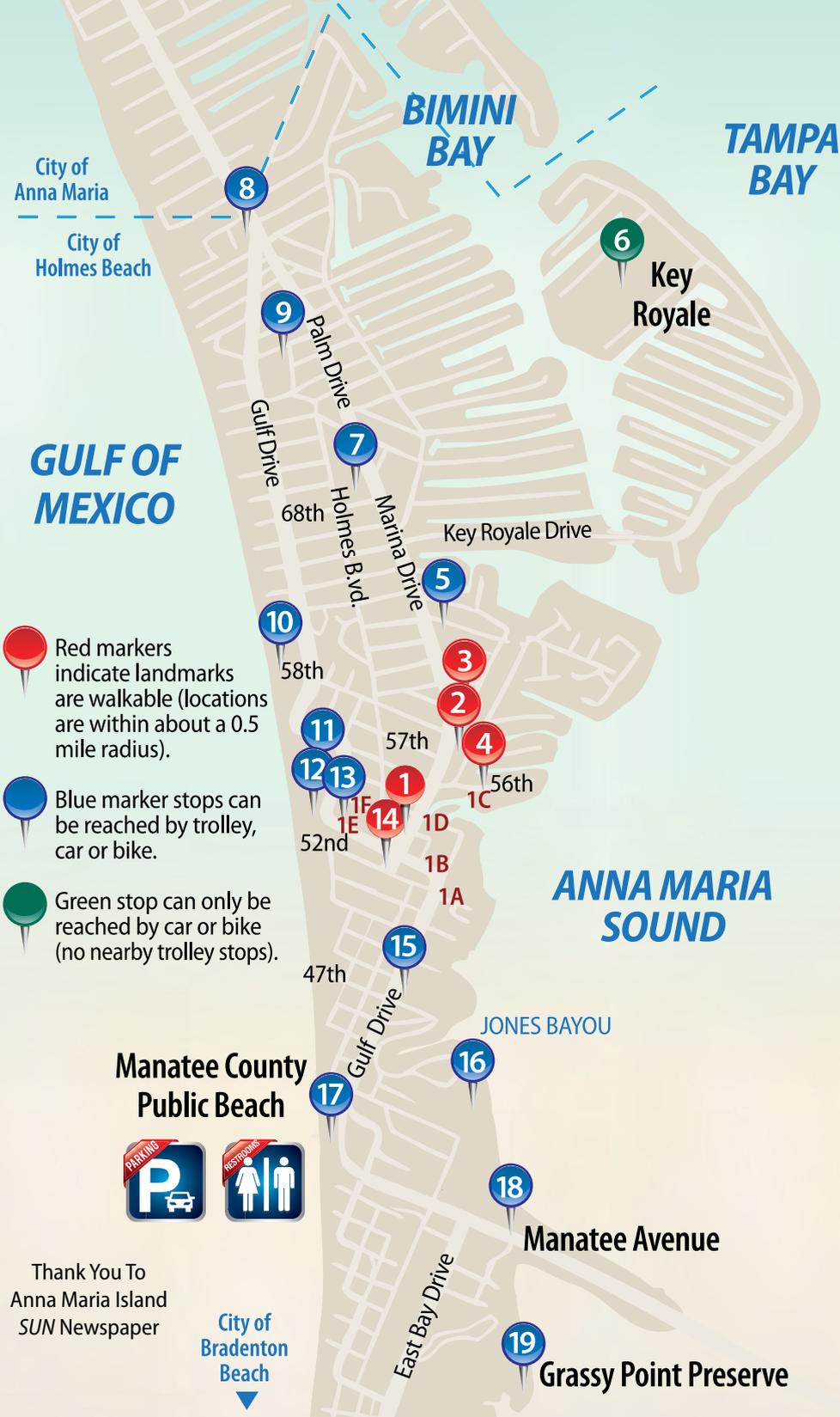
made house calls and visited numerous trailer parks along his route over Cortez Bridge to Bradenton Hospital. Dr. Huth, a charter member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, retired in 1960 and Dr. John Deam carried on the Medical Center. Dr. Rex Lee, the Island’s first dentist, had his office at the north end of the building.

Trolley (N,58) 2. Island Branch Library (5701 Marina Drive) opened in 1982 thanks to the efforts of what was first called The Island Friends of the Library (organized in 1965, now Friends of the Island Library). The Friends, led by Dr. Jane Carboni, raised funds and in 1970 opened the first Manatee County Island Branch Library. Located in the shopping center, it replaced the overworked Bookmobile service begun in 1964. By 1968 AMI was responsible for 30% of the book circulation in the county and for 30% of the patrons. By 1970, the Friends had 1000 members and a dynamo president, Mrs. Cullom (Eleanor) Walker. Eleanor coordinated fund raising from private donations, county and state funding and a grant from the Selby Foundation to secure the necessary monies for the existing library. The library site is on a patch of the old airstrip.



The first Island library opened in the HB shopping center in 1970.

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Points of Interest

- 1A. Cobb's Marine Ways
- 1B. The Foodway Store
- 1C. Jack Holmes' Home
- 1D. Pete Reynard's Yacht Club Restaurant
- 1E. Holmes Beach Shopping Center
- 1F. Island Medical Center
- 2. Island Branch Library
- 3. Old City Hall (Town Office)
- 4. Airstrip and Wimpy House
- 5. Seaside Gardens
- 6. Key Royale
- 7. Clark Spring Lake Estates
- 8. Haley's Motel
- 9. An Island Colonial House
- 10. Harrington House
- 11. Lippman House
- 12. Martinque Condominiums
- 13. 5347 Gulf Drive
- 14. S & S Plazas
- 15. Anna Maria Elementary School
- 16. Captain John R. Jones Homestead
- 17. Manatee County Public Beach
- 18. Manatee Avenue (State Road 64) Bridge and Kingfish Boat Ramp
- 19. Grassy Point Preserve

 Red markers indicate landmarks are walkable (locations are within about a 0.5 mile radius).

 Blue marker stops can be reached by trolley, car or bike.

 Green stop can only be reached by car or bike (no nearby trolley stops).

**Manatee County
Public Beach**



Thank You To
Anna Maria Island
SUN Newspaper

**City of
Bradenton
Beach**



Constructed in 1957, the old Town Hall was located where Public Works is now. Marina Drive is to the left. Seaside Gardens can be seen at the top of the photo. Part of the airstrip is at the right.

 **Trolley (N,58) 3. Old City Hall (Town Office)** (5901 Marina Drive, general area of current HB Public Works) The land was donated by John E. Holmes, Peder Mickelsen, Frank Giles and Francis Karel. Some residents complained at the construction and furnishings' costs (\$9000 in 1957) and the "combination of boxes" design. Some questioned the need for the building at all when HB could rent the public beach pavilion for \$5 a meeting and accommodate more folks. The current HB municipal building that replaced the 1000 square-foot old Town Hall and tiny police station was equally as controversial with a \$1.6 million price tag (\$200,000 over budget). When it opened in 1998, it was called by some a "Taj Mahal," unnecessary for a town of 5000.

The current City Hall was designed by award-winning Island architect, Pat Fletcher, whose family purchased beach cottages on the Island in 1956. Pat apprenticed at Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's Wisconsin home and school. In addition to working on Ruth Eckerd Hall and the Van Wezel, Pat designed the Island Branch Library, the Island Baptist Church (now CrossPointe) and an addition to Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

 **Trolley (N,58) 4. Airstrip** (Land from the marina to the tennis courts) In 1946, Jack Holmes built the first and only airstrip on AMI. The dusty airstrip, home to millions of fiddler crabs, came of age in 1953 when Trans Eastern Airways



Shown in the top center, the first and only airstrip on the Island was built circa 1946 and closed in 1975 after a series of accidents. (Photo, circa 1960s)

inaugurated regular plane service linking the HB airport with many points in Florida. For \$5.25, passengers could take the 20-minute flight to Tampa International Airport. Due to a series of accidents, the airstrip was restricted to helicopter landings in 1973 and finally closed in 1975.

The tropical setting of the Island and the availability of an airstrip attracted Hollywood. In 1948, movie stars and film crews traveled to AMI to make portions of the movie "On an Island With You," starring Esther Williams and Peter Lawford. Island lore holds that Esther loved the Island. She owned an undeveloped lot for a time that Jack Holmes had given to her in a stroke of marketing genius.



The A.E. Wimpy house. Notice the tip of his Beechcraft Bonanza, stored in the attached hangar.

Seaside Gardens apartment homes offered many luxuries and comforts at affordable prices with a dock out the back door and an airport out the front.



Wimpy House (Behind HB City Hall - 5607 Flotilla Drive) A. E. Wimpy built his house to be close to the airstrip so he could commute to work in Georgia. He stored his Beechcraft Bonanza in a hangar built into his home.

 **Trolley (N, 60) 5. Seaside Gardens**, (63rd Street) In 1962, keeping to his vision of building affordable communities, 75-year-old Jack Holmes began developing Seaside Gardens. Holmes offered 1-story units with waterfront (canal) views, a boat dock out each back door and ownership of the land as well as the unit – all at low prices so “the average middle class couple” could afford to live in paradise. Prices ranged from \$8,950 to \$10,950. The brochure promised, “Everything for Wholesome Days to Come.”

 **Trolley (N, 61) 6. Key Royale** (Access begins at 66th Street/Key Royale Drive and Marina Drive – recommended bike or motor vehicle to see the area) Originally called School Key, the area was mangrove swamp and jungle, full of mosquitos and rattlesnakes, when Peder Mickelson moved here from Minneapolis for his health in 1946. He and his partners paid \$25,000 for the 150 acres. Land was cleared and filled in, canals were dredged to the bay and a bridge was built in 1960. By 1964 there were 60 home sites and a 9-hole golf course. There were 138 occupied homes in 1969.



School Key was a mangrove island before it was developed into a community of large and elegant homes on a series of dredged canals.

 **Trolley (N,61) 7. Clark Spring Lake Estates** (Visit the Pocket Park at 6807 Holmes Boulevard to see Spring Lake) Spring Lake Estates was the dream of Morton Clark, a retired industrialist from Lima, Ohio. Platted between Marina Drive and Gulf Drive from 68th to 71st Streets, Spring Lake replaced a “mosquito-breeding swamp.” Few houses were built, fewer remain of the proposed exclusive community. The 1955 premiere advertising brochure boasted of white sand beaches, an Aquatic Clubhouse and a well-stocked lake (both salt and spring-fed) with concrete curbs for a swimming pool. In the 1960s, John and Hugh Holmes claimed to have released too-small-to-keep Gulf grouper into the lake. While fishing here,



Retired industrialist Morton Clark's dream of an exclusive residential community on Spring Lake never was realized. AMIHS.org • Page 17

Dick Suman hauled in a 52-pound spotted jewfish and a 30-pound Nassau grouper.

 **Trolley (N,67/S,9) 8. Haley's Motel** (8102 Gulf Drive)

Around 1949, pilot Frank Haley had engine trouble. He missed the HB airstrip and landed on the beach. Seeking help, he walked up a sandy path leading to Shell Street. Frank fell in love with the pristine area and in April 1950, with wife Martha, purchased the land and built Haley's Motel. Originally built as a place for Frank's friends to visit, it was incorporated as a motel in 1953.

 **Trolley (S,10) 9. An Island Colonial House** (7405

Gulf Drive – private home, do not enter) Constructed between 1924 and 1929, this house resembles a typical Southern plantation house with its pillared portico. Construction materials were shipped from Tampa by boat. It sits on the largest single residential lot remaining on the Island. Exterior walls are travertine. The heavy interior wooden beams were supposedly 100 years old at the time of construction. The current owner is only the third owner.

 **Trolley (S,13) 10. Harrington House** (5626 Gulf Drive, currently, a bed and breakfast) Built circa 1925, it is one of the largest structures from this era still standing. It was built with coquina block shell walls and features pecky cypress floors, ceilings, staircase and doors. Renovations have been necessary for preservation, but most of the original cypress features remain exposed. The most famous occupant was the third mayor of Holmes Beach, Maxwell Ingham. After his death, his



Harrington House was built circa 1925 as a private home. It is one of the largest structures from this era still standing.

widow donated a small triangle of land across the street as a park where a large rock engraved with a dedication to his memory remains.

 **Trolley (S,14) 11. Lippman House** (Currently, 5400 Gulf Drive Condominiums) Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Walter Lippman built his winter home here in 1934. For the next few winters he worked in his HB home, writing his "Today and Tomorrow" column for *The New York Herald Tribune* and playing some golf. The home was destroyed in the 1960s to make way for "5400" Condominiums.



 **Trolley (S,14) 12. Martinque Condominiums** (5200 and 5300 Gulf Drive) The first and last high-rise condominiums were constructed in 1970 and 1971. After these two 7-story buildings were constructed, HB passed an ordinance banning high rise buildings. Bradenton Beach and Anna Maria City already had such ordinances.

 **Trolley (S, 14) 13. 5347 Gulf Drive** (Currently, Fun and More Rentals) Jack Holmes constructed this building in the early 1940s to store materials and equipment for his construction and development business. After World War II, son John and partner Melvin Davis managed Holmes Construction out of this building. Jack focused on real estate and development from his original office in



Bradenton Beach. Later Hugh Holmes, Sr. and then Hugh Holmes, Jr. managed the Holmes Construction Company.

 **Trolley (S,15) 14. S & S Plazas** Peter Stellas and Andrew Sellas, AMI residents, developed the two shopping centers and also owned the S/S White Sands Motel on Gulf Drive. Mr. Roberts clothing store has been at this location for 50 years. Roy Roberts came to Bradenton in 1914 and ran Montgomery Roberts, a department store on Manatee Avenue which was open until midnight to accommodate the farmers who ferried over the river to shop. Son, R.G. Roberts, opened this store in 1966 with a nautical motif – associated with the play/movie, “Mr. Roberts.” R.G.’s daughters, Linda and Signa, continue the family tradition.

 **Trolley (N,55/S,17) 15. Anna Maria Elementary School** (4700 Gulf Drive) The first public school on the Island, a one-room schoolhouse, was established in 1913 on Magnolia Avenue in Anna Maria City (shown in photograph). In 1950, the growing school moved to this site where a new building housed 100 students. The schoolhouse on Magnolia was repurposed as a youth center by the AMI Lions Club. It was later bulldozed to make way for the current Center building. Its bell tower was moved to this site, where it stands in front of Anna Maria Elementary School (AME). AME is part of the Manatee County School District and serves students from AMI, north Longboat Key and others who exercise school choice. The current building was opened in January, 2006.



Built in 1913, the original school building was located on Magnolia Avenue in Anna Maria City. The surviving bell tower stands in front of the current elementary school.

 **Trolley (N,54/S,20) 16. Captain John R. Jones Homestead** (4700 Gulf Drive to the Manatee Public Beach) Because of his experiences with farming and as a captain of boats running between Tampa and Cuba, John R. Jones was authorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish an agriculture station on the Island. He imported trees and shrubs from South America, India and Mexico. Some species, like the sausage tree, still grow on the Island. The Jones house stood in the general area of St. Bernard’s Church on what is known as Sportsman’s Harbor. The house was destroyed around 1957.



 **Trolley (N/S, Public Beach) 17. Manatee County Public Beach** (Gulf Drive at 39th Street) The county’s first public beach was created by a 1947 legislative act. Tax levies paid for land purchase and construction of a building containing restrooms, showers, lockers and a small concession stand. The roof doubled as a sun deck and dance floor. The pavilion officially opened in 1951 and was one of the sites for The Beachcomber Fair organized by The Lion’s Club and The Women’s Club. The fair featured a barbeque, dancing on the roof, children’s games and contests (including climbing a greased pole to reach a \$5 bill) and a costume parade.



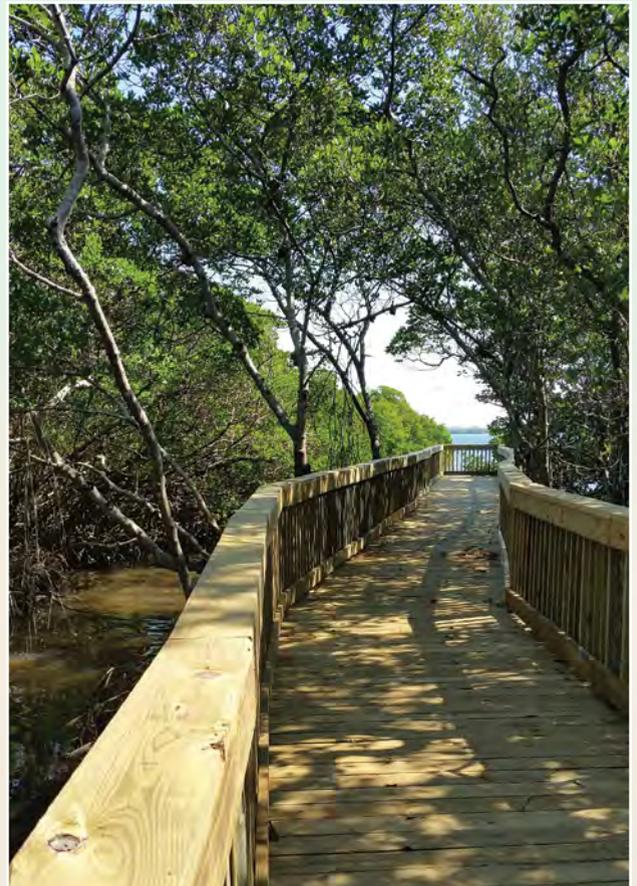
Manatee County's first public beach. The pavilion officially opened in 1951. Its roof doubled as a sun deck and dance floor.

 **Trolley (N,54/S,20) 18. Manatee Avenue (State Road 64) Bridge and Kingfish Boat Ramp** The Anna Maria Island Bridge, sometimes called the Manatee Bridge or the Mid-Island Bridge by old timers, is an iconic, bascule bridge. It opened for traffic on September 4, 1957 as a toll bridge with a roundtrip charge of 30 cents. Toll collection ended in 1964. It retains the charm of old Florida for walkers, bikers, cast-netters and those who enjoy up-close views of passing wildlife.



Manatee Bridge opened as a toll bridge in 1957. Toll collection ended in 1964. This photo looks from the mainland out to the Island. The toll booth can be seen at the bottom right. Kingfish Boat Ramp does not yet exist.

 **Trolley (N,51/S,23) 19. Grassy Point Preserve** (Beside and behind Mike Norman Realty – from East Bay Drive turn east on 29th Street, then north on Avenue C to the entrance and parking lot) Purchased by HB in 2000 through a grant from the Florida Communities Trust Preservation Project, Grassy Point owes its existence as a preserve to long-time Islander Billie Martini. With 3000 feet of shoreline along Anna Maria Sound, Grassy Point is approximately 34 acres of pristine, natural ecosystems including coastal uplands, wetlands, tidal flats, sea grass beds, oyster bars and red, white and black mangrove forests. It is part of the Sarasota Bay Estuary system and is essential to maintaining the excellent water quality of greater Sarasota Bay. Grassy Point is the last, large, undeveloped coastal area on AMI. A boardwalk offers strolling visitors a glimpse of true Old Florida.



A view from the boardwalk in Grassy Point. Anna Maria Sound can be seen through the mangrove canopy.

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