

Know your Neighborhood:

Manatee County Neighborhood Histories

by Katie Fleck, Librarian II, Information Services, Manatee County Public Library System

In Summer 2020, Manatee County Public Library System's Information Services team created a web resource called Manatee County Neighborhood Histories (MCNH). This web portal focuses on local community history. MCNH gives community members, visitors, and residents the opportunity to learn more about the different neighborhoods in our county from the comfort of their computer or mobile device. It also provides a new means of showcasing the Manatee County Public Library Historical Digital Collections, which contain nearly 40,000 items including photographs, postcards, documents, interviews, speeches, maps, and miscellany.

Creating Our Web Portal

In May 2020, we began creating the MCNH web portal as part of a Results First Internship. Results First is a program in which college students work under the mentorship of Manatee County Government staff to create a project that benefits both the county and the student. Amber Aultman, a local resident and graduate student in Library and Information Science at the University of Maryland, created the web pages for MCNH using information and resources gathered by Information Services librarians from our historical collections.

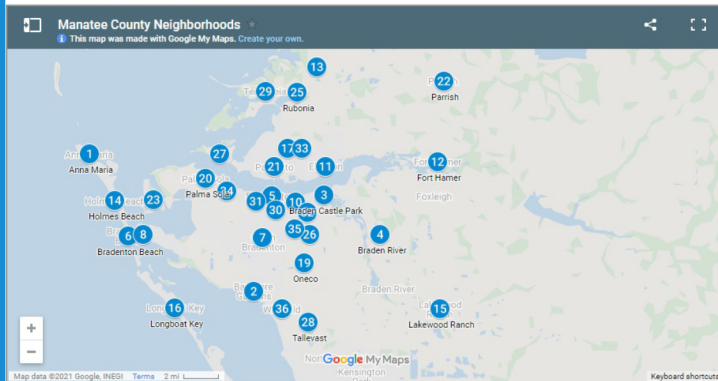
To determine which neighborhoods should be featured on the site, we collaborated with Manatee County's Neighborhood Connections, a division of the Neighborhood Services Department that works hands-on with neighborhoods, homeowner's associations, and community organizations. We selected neighborhoods based on criteria such as historical significance, distinctiveness, geographic and population size, and available resources at the library. After creating a list of about 30 neighborhoods that would be a good fit for the project, we began planning out the layout of the landing page and template for the neighborhood pages.

Some of the neighborhoods selected were Bayshore Gardens—a 1950s planned community comprised of mid-century modern ranch homes, Tallevast—an historically Black neighborhood originally established as a turpentine worker's camp in 1900, and Fort Hamer—an abandoned Seminole War fort which did not experience a residential resurgence until the 1990s.

The MCNH web portal is built on HTML pages hosted through ContentDM's Custom Pages feature. The HTML was written using Microsoft's free website building tool, Visual Studio Editor. The web portal's design was intended to connect it visually with our pre-existing website and Digital Collections. The logo for MCNH was created by graphic designer and librarian Audrey Dombroski. The map on the landing page is plotted with the geographical center of each neighborhood. This was created using the free MyMaps tool from Google. Each neighborhood has a title card linking to their individual page. All images used throughout the web portal are sourced from our own Digital Collections.



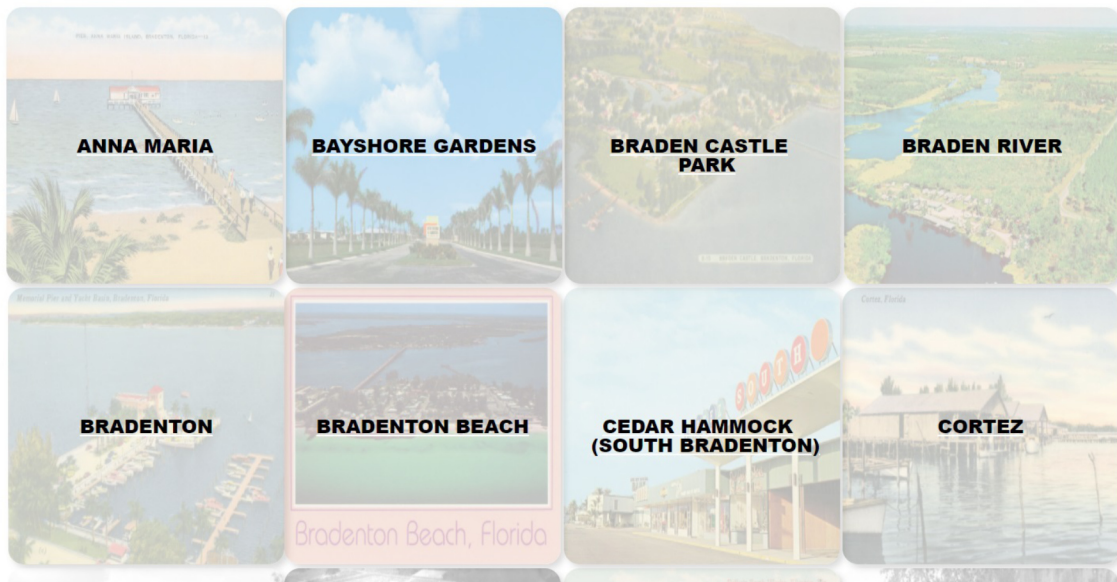
MANATEE COUNTY NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIES



There are over 2,000 neighborhoods in Manatee County each with their own unique character and history. Manatee County Neighborhood Histories is a great starting point for learning more about the history of some of our oldest and largest local communities.

To start browsing, select a neighborhood below. Each page features a brief history of the neighborhood as well as links to images, maps, postcards, and documents pertaining to the area from the Manatee County Public Library Historical Digital Collections. You will also find helpful information about community resources and local points of interest as well as nearby parks and schools.

For further assistance with local neighborhood research or for questions about the Neighborhood Histories, please [Ask A Librarian](#). If you have items of local historical significance that you wish to donate or loan for digitization, please contact [Neighborhood Histories Coordinator](#).



Manatee County Neighborhood Histories Logo/Landing Page

On each neighborhood page are links to related Manatee Libraries digital and physical collections. While pulling the data for the physical collections was as simple as creating a link to a keyword-search in our Polaris catalog, aggregating the Digital Collections was more complicated. To pull these resources via a keyword search link, we created neighborhood specific subject tags which then were manually added to any relevant images. Several Information Services librarians assisted with tagging images by searching the collection by street, landmark, geographic feature, alternative names, etc. Aggregating this information is such a large task that it continues to be an important role in maintaining the project. Our long-time digitization volunteer, Terry Hirsch, has continued to help tag records from home since we began working on MCNH.

In addition to providing historical resources from the library and a historical narrative about the neighborhood, we wanted to create a hub of resources for residents of the neighborhood. This information includes an education section listing the public schools serving the area, a list of nearby parks, preserves, beaches, and links to points of interest such as local museums and attractions as well as local landmarks and historical markers. Additionally, we include links to local media, community organizations, and other Manatee County resources. It was important to include information that would show both local history and a neighborhood's current characteristics.



Frontal view of Bayshore Gardens entrance, 1938

Bayshore Gardens Historic Digital Collections

[Images](#) | [Postcards](#) | [Maps](#) | [Documents](#)

Available at the Library

Follow this link to view items related to Bayshore Gardens in the Library Catalog: [Library Online Catalog](#)

The library also has uncataloged paper archives. For inquiries, please contact reference@mymanatee.org

History

Bayshore Gardens is one of the earliest planned communities in Manatee County. Purchased in 1955 by New York developer Sydney R. Newman, the land that became home to Bayshore Gardens was previously filled with thousands of acres of tomato fields. Newman's purchase of the land at \$2 million dollars was the largest land deal in the county since the early 1920s. Bayshore Gardens was developed to include parks, a marina, schools, churches, shopping centers, and medical facilities as well as homes in the mid-century modern style.

The neighborhood held its grand opening in 1956, offering 7 available home designs for purchase. The homes were affordable, ranging from \$8,000 to \$15,000 including the land. The veteran-friendly neighborhood offered military mortgages and discounts. The first home in Bayshore Gardens was sold to James and Samuel Gibson in July 1956.

By April 1956, the neighborhood had 400 homes, all of which were designed by Bradenton architect Sidney Wilkinson. Soon, other developers began building homes in the neighborhood, including Richmond Homes and Arrow Home Builders. The neighborhood experienced a huge boom in the late 1950s and by 1960 it was the most populated voting precinct in the county.

Education

Located below are the public schools that service the neighborhood of Bayshore Gardens:

- Elementary: Bayshore Elementary School
- Middle: Encia Acosta Leon Magnet Middle School
- High: Bayshore High School
- Higher Ed: State College of Florida - Bradenton Campus

Parks, Preserves, Beaches

- The Bayshore Gardens Recreational Center

Points of Interest

- The Bayshore Gardens Shopping Center
- The Family Heritage House Museum
- The Pops Orchestra of Bradenton and Sarasota
- The Bradenton campus of the State College of Florida

Community Resources

Click on the links below to access various Bayshore Gardens community resources:


- Bayshore Gardens Park and Recreation District
- South Manatee Library
- Bayshore Banner Monthly Newsletter
- Manatee County Residential Information Tool
- Breezein' Through Manatee County Map
- Southwest District Story Map Focus Areas

[Anna Maria](#) | [Bradon Castle Park](#)

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Bayshore Gardens Neighborhood Page

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Collections

Select All Collections

Historic Images

Historic Interviews, Speeches, and Miscellaneous

Historic Maps

Postcards

Show All


Cancel Update

Searching items in: **Postcards** Sort by: Relevance Results per page: 12

Search Terms:


bayshore gar... ✕

Records 1-11 of 11 < 1 >




Bird of Paradise Home at Bayshore Gardens

☆ Save




Century Home at Bayshore Gardens

☆ Save




Camellia Home at Bayshore Gardens

☆ Save




Entrance to Bayshore Gardens

☆ Save




The Heritage at Bayshore Gardens

☆ Save




The Vistas at Wild Oak Bay

☆ Save




Administration Building, Manatee Junior College

☆ Save




Band Shell and Music Building, Manatee Junior College

☆ Save




Samuel R. Neel Auditorium, Manatee Junior College

☆ Save



Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church

☆ Save



Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church, America's...

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Postcard Collections Results for Bayshore Gardens

Building and Growing

The MCNH web portal was first introduced to the public in August 2020 at a Manatee County Board of County Commissioners meeting. It was also featured in the Manatee County Neighborhood Connections Magazine and in Anna Maria Island's The Islander newspaper.

Since that time, Information Services has received many inquiries from community members eager to learn more about their neighborhood, its history, and any potential additions to the project. As of Fall 2021, we have 36 neighborhoods showcased on the web portal and are in the process of adding more. As the coordinator of this project, I continue to answer questions about the project, add and edit content, work with patrons seeking more information about their neighborhood, look for marketing opportunities, respond to requests for inclusion in the project, and develop partnerships with community resources that could be highlighted in the web portal.

This project is also helping to grow our library's collection and network. Local residents have sought information and the Historical Preservation Board has requested to collaborate and showcase their efforts via MCNH.
Importance During Covid-19

In normal times, Manatee Libraries offers the vast resources of our Elizabeth Eaton Florida History Reading Room & Collection as well as research assistance and programming to patrons interested in local history. As we faced uncertainty in our ability to provide in-person reference and research assistance due to Covid-19, creating online information hubs became pivotal in our service provision. Although we reopened in July 2020, being able to provide digital resources for patrons who did not feel comfortable visiting the library in person remained paramount.

MCNH played a key role in ensuring that library patrons knew about the historical resources available to them outside the walls of the library. We have a significant physical collection of local history books, papers, and print media, and our online Historical Digital Collections is equally notable. Creating the new Manatee County Neighborhood Histories web portal helped us point a new audience toward that collection and grow our audience of local history enthusiasts.



2022 Library Day
January 18-19, 2022
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www.flalib.org/advocacy-action-center