

Calligraphy: "Village Green" with a large decorative flourish.

Village Green

a history
by
Saul Gottlieb

P R E F A C E

THIS SHORT DOCUMENT OF THE HISTORY OF THE FORMING OF THE VILLAGE GREEN COMPLEX HAS BEEN DRAFTED BY SAUL GOTTLIEB OF THE IXORA CLUB. ALSO INCLUDED IS SOME PRIOR HISTORY REGARDING THE LAND WHERE THE BUILDINGS NOW REST.

VERIFICATION OF SAME HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL AD HOC COMMITTEE STILL LIVING IN THE VILLAGE GREEN COMPLEX: PAUL BERRIEN, PHIL BREEN, KEN LONG, DON TOBIN, AND ROGER EMERY.

JUNE 1, 1993

HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS

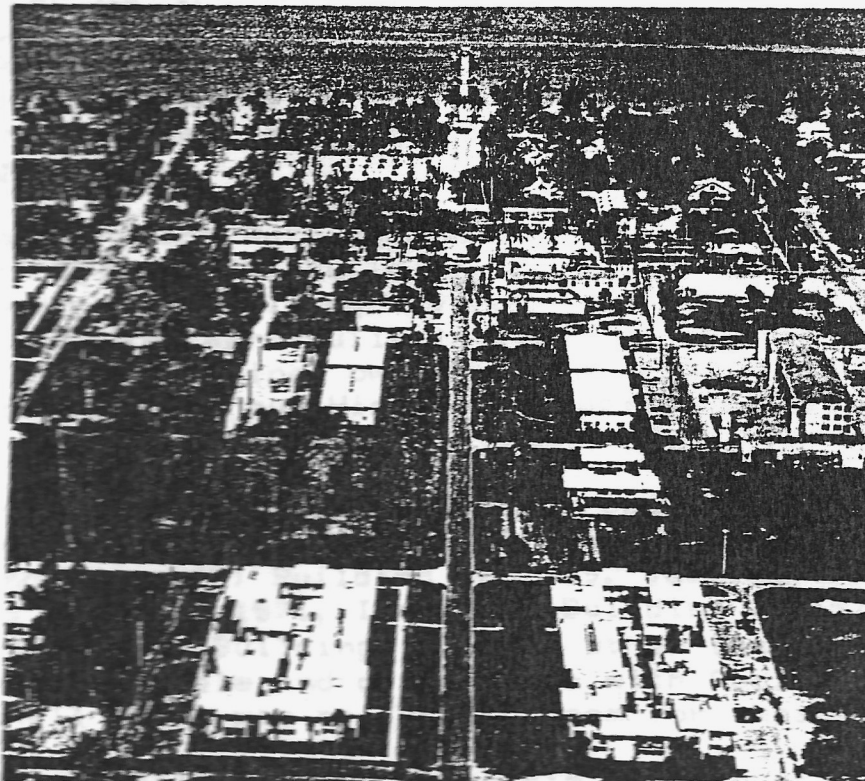
The land where VILLAGE GREEN is located was originally in St. Johns County, under an Ordinance of Major Andrew Jackson, then Governor of the Province of the Floridas. The date was July 21, 1821.

Monroe County was created from a portion of St Johns County by an Act of the Legislature on July 3, 1883. Another split-off occurred when it became Collier County on May 8, 1923.

While the site was conducive to a plan for the Village Green Complex that was in the making by the Naples Land Co. some developing to the physical area required a face lift. The section at the time was inhabited primarily by the black community who served the needs of the more affluent Port Royal inhabitants. A mark running from the gulf to Naples Bay dissected the area which is now the Mine Club and went diagonally through the Ixora Building. This area was filled in so the buildings could be constructed. The Ixora Building required 347 pilings to secure its foundation. The black population was relegated to the "McDonald's Quarters" area and new construction could begin. Several other Historic Buildings (the small one near the "Willow and the Willows", built in 1811) is a trading post built in 1811. The area has been designated as an Historic Site.



The above picture shows Building "A" shortly after completion. The picture below shows Building "H" under sonstruction. Buildings G,I, and J have not been started as yet. The Naples Pier can be seen in the background.



HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE GREEN COMPLEX

The Village Green Complex of ten buildings and 313 apartments is one of the most unique communities in Naples. One has to go to a megatropolis like New York City to find a residential park like situation such as we enjoy at Village Green. Grace Park, Gramercy Park and Chelsea Square in New York can compare similarly to what we have but they do not have the weather that is found in Naples.

Each building is an independent entity and a separate corporation but sharing common grounds which includes the pool and club house. Even though there are ten separate corporations, the complex operates independently of outside help with the exception of one office person and one maintenance man. Many people freely donate their time and effort to make the complex run smoothly.

Located in a quiet part of Naples free from congested traffic and limited to two and three story buildings with plenty of breathing room, only four blocks from the gulf of Mexico and two blocks from Naples Bay on the other side provides this highly prized location. Activities abound with something for everyone bringing the owners closer in a common bond of retirement pleasures.

It all started in November 1963, when one William Brunk who was a Treasurer for the Naples Land Company, an Indiana Investment Co, applied for building permits to build the Algonquin (A) Building and Bonaire (B) Building. In October 1964 the Model Apartments were completed together with the Office, Recreation Hall and Swimming Pool and sales were ready to begin.

According to Harry and Ruth Beam who were the second purchasers in Cypress (C) Building, Mary Cameron was the first to buy in this building. Cypress (C) Building and Dolphin (D) Building were built in 1965. To gather information on all original owners is too time consuming and of small importance in our History discussion of Village Green.

In 1966 Everglades (E) Building was started and was built in three different sections. Fairfax (F) Building came along in late 1968 and Heron (H) Building in 1969. Jasmine (J) Building was added in 1971, Ixora (I) Building in 1973 and finally Gardenia (G) Building in 1974. Other than our park like area in the middle and office area with Pool and Recreation Hall there was no further room for expansion.

Prior to 1973 a feeling of camaraderie swept over the complex and made itself manifest in the formation of an Entertainment Committee. The members who started this

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movement, were Ken and Mildred Long, Roger and Barbara Emery, and Bob Fox all of Fairfax Building; Don and Kathleen Tobin of Cypress; the Hannams of Jasmine and the Whites of Ixora. As a result many activities were offered to allow entertainment for Village Green Owners, making our complex a happier place to live.

At a later date travelogues were introduced by Ernie Richards, Ed Cooper, and Saul Gottlieb who shared their travel experiences with everyone.

In 1972 the Naples Land Co began to show a strong hand in their methods and the handling of affairs within the complex, especially where entertainment programs were concerned. The apartments were owned by the owners but the land was owned by the Naples Land Co. To start with there were certain limitations on the use of the Club House. In order to combat the restrictive use of the Club House that was forced upon us by the Land Owner Management and to make all residents aware of the situation the Village Green Newsletter was started and continues today under the direction of Saul Gottlieb. This became a method for informing the owners of the situation and also putting pressure on the Naples Land Co. to turn the use of the Club House over to the Village Green Owners. Within a year serious differences of opinion developed between the management and the owners. In order to get to the bottom of the problem it became necessary to explain the terms of a land lease that was in existence at the time.

The original land lease was for 99 years, both for land and recreational ground uses. While buildings A, B, C, D, and E were not liable to the land lease, they were tied into recreational use lease. To add to the confusion all buildings except Ixora and Gardenia were registered as Cooperatives. Buildings Ixora and Gardenia were classified as modified condominiums. While the land rent for recreational use was not for land under their unit they were not subject to increases during the existence of the 99 year lease. Buildings H, I, J, F, and G were subject to an increase every five years to be based on the Cost of Living Index. This then became an unconscionable type of lease subject to all sorts of problems. Owners had not been fully informed about the problems that could arise when they bought their apartment. This would ultimately develop into an untenable situation. As forethought to this situation the following episode made a great change in the actual ownership and management of the complex.

At a meeting of the Presidents of the ten Buildings that made up Village Green on December 2, 1975, Mr. William Brunk, the Secretary Treasurer of the Naples Land Co. announced that he was going to raise the salary of a Mr. Morton, who was then the hired manager of the Naples Land

Co. This money was to come out of the monthly maintenance fees paid by the owners. The amount involved was to be \$1000.00. Mr. Brunk, who always chaired these meetings asked that the Presidents ratify his motion to increase the managers salary. A rather long silence ensued which was finally broken by Mr. Collie Luth, President of Jasmine Building. He emphatically stated that he could not vote for any such increase which would translate into an increase of monthly maintenance fees, without the consent from the Board of Directors of his building. A sharp discussion immediately took place and Bob Galloway, President of Cypress Club stated that he had learned from a Mr. White, a shareholder in the Naples Land Co., that the leases in the Village Green were on sale as a block for about \$1,100,000. At this point a little arithmetic indicated that with 313 apartments in the complex the cost for land purchase would be about \$3500 per apartment. It appeared to be a small price to pay to rid ourselves from the bad lease agreement. Saul Gottlieb offered to organize a group to proceed further into the matter with no immediate response. It appeared to be too overwhelming at the moment and too much too fast, and understandably so.

On the following New Years Day, in the morning, Mason Kassel of Jasmine Club approached Saul Gottlieb because he had heard of the discussion and possibility of Naples Land Co. selling the leases. A reiteration of what had transpired over the past month to Mr. Kassel, who up to this point, had not been privy to this information and situation immediately asked, "What are we waiting for". Mr. Kassel was a retired attorney from New York and immediately offered his services if Mr. Gottlieb would organize the owners to act and assist in raising the necessary funds to negotiate the purchase. Both parties agreed to offer their services free of any cost to the owners. With the assistance of legal services the incentive to act was there and the very next day January 2, 1976 Bob Galloway and Saul Gottlieb each contacted six people from various buildings to form an AD HOC COMMITTEE. The members of this original committee were:

Paul Berrien	Heron Building
Tom Devine	Gardenia Building
Saul Gottlieb	Ixora Building
Chet Hahn	Heron Building
Bob Galloway	Cypress Building
Mason Kassel	Jasmine Building
Roy Sheppard	Ixora Building
Phil Breen	Fairfax Building
Roger Emery	Fairfax Building
Josh Fish	Fairfax Building
Deacon Hunt	Ixora Building
Ken Long	Fairfax Building
Henry Opitz	Bonnaire Building
Don Tobin	Dolphin Building

Each of the members gave their consent to serve and each contributed \$10.00 to cover the cost of printed circulars explaining the purpose of the plan to purchase the existing land leases. The Village Green Newsletter provided a great vehicle to explain our efforts and reasoning for Land purchase. This move was of course objected to by the Naples Land Co. in no uncertain terms. Roger Emery, as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee reports he was privileged to attend a meeting in Ad Miller's office where the subject of Village Green buying the leases was told to Ad Miller personally by Saul Gottlieb and was met with a very definite negative attitude with an inference that other parties were interested. At this point Mr. Gottlieb reminded Mr. Miller that a recent change in the State Condo Laws made it mandatory for developers, about to sell their interest in a Condo complex, to give right of first refusal to the Owners of the individual Condos and if refused, a law suit on the matter was a forgone conclusion. Mr. Miller immediately became more cooperative as a result of this meeting. It later turned out that Mr. Miller himself was interested.

From this point it took nearly a year before our original plan of purchase could be consummated. There were many things we learned that were going on within the Naples Land Co. One of the directors of the Naples Land Co. was also attempting to form a separate group of people to pick up the land leases. The actual rental lease income was \$131,460.00 per year prior to any increases allowed which could take place in five years. This of course was a good investment and they were not interested in letting it go for the original price of \$1,100,000 stated by Mr. Brunk at the December 2, 1975 meeting. When the Naples Land Co. realized the seriousness of our intention to purchase they upped the price to \$1,250,000. When we tried to negotiate with Ad Miller, representing the Naples Land Co., by offering a down payment of \$50,000 all sorts of obstacles were placed in our path. Firstly, our attorney, Mason Kassel was not licensed to practice in the state of Florida. We then prevailed upon the services of Jack Forsythe who lived in Fairfax Building to take over as our legal representative. Next we had to form a viable conduit to conduct business with banks, title companies, etc. This was very time consuming but necessary to proceed with our end goal of land purchase. But finally the Village Green Land Co was formed with Mr. Ed Cooper as Chairman. This was a sizeable undertaking and of course needed the help of many people besides Mr. Cooper. Other people included in this endeavor were Helen Hutton of Ixora Building and Phil Breen of Fairfax Building.

Several months after the Village Green Land Co was formed which was about September 10, 1976 we had collected over \$900,000 from owners. The balance was pledged by eleven

members of the various buildings to take up the difference between the \$900,000 and the final purchase price. The unredeemed lease holds were pooled and placed into the Land Trust. All of these leases except one has been redeemed as of this writing.

While the above episode seems to be just a matter of chronological record and sequence, the truth of the matter is a totally different story. Every imaginable object was placed in our path in our efforts to buy the land lease. Deceit, desception, untruths, damaging rumors and attempts to sell to outside financiers, including foreign investors were discovered and only by sheer persistence and determination on our part were we able to accomplish our goal. By October 15, 1976 a check was delivered by Saul Gottlieb in the amount of \$1,276,000 to the Naples Land Co. for the 313 land leases in the Village Green.

There apparently was a competitive bid of \$1,275,000 as we were informed by Ad Miller so the extra \$1000 was an absolute necessity.

Helen Hutton of Ixora and Phil Breen of Fairfax were the two people who determined the exact amount each owner had to pay for his or her share. There were a number of factors taken into consideration to determine each share, the toughest being the incremental lease portions (every five years as to the no increase 99 year leases). Some buildings were slightly under \$3000 whereas buildings Heron and Jasmine were as high as \$5400 per unit.

When the land lease deal was completed the Village Green Owners Association was formed so that we could have a centralized voice. It was made up of ten members, one from each building and of course it was the President of each building. The Officers of the Village Green Owners Associated were selected. In order to avoid conflict of interest, no President could serve as an officer of the association. The incorporation was started by Harry Boyce of Fairfax Building, Henry Opitz of Bonnaire Building and Saul Gottlieb of Ixora Building.

The first President of the new association was Claire Turner of the Everglades Club. He served for a term of one and a half years. John Forsythe and Saul Gottlieb rewrote the Declaration of Condominium laws which was duly recorded by each building. These rules with amendments are a model for most condos in the Naples area today.

With ownership of our entire complex and full control of the operation thereof a feeling of camaraderie was brought about and many things began to happen. The forming of an Entertainment Committee took place with Saul Gottlieb as its

first Chairman. This brought people together with common interests and friends were made with people from other buildings. Many planned activities were put into place, bus trips, excursions, boat trips, etc. The Club House became used on a daily basis.

As we became managers of our own affairs we became aware of costs and efforts were addressed to these areas. Especially prominent was the cost of heating our pool during the winter months. Ernie Richards and Saul Gottlieb took this project under their wing. Plans for the construction of a Solar Heating System was drawn up and shortly with the help of others within the complex a solar heating system was operational. As a back up the system was aided by a fossil fuel heating furnace which would kick in if the solar system was insufficient to provide adequate heating. The system has greatly reduced costs and has now been in operation for many years.

A spirit of cooperation grew into a well managed and controlled organization. All chores were handled by volunteer owners who receive no remuneration. Responsibility and most work of course fell on the President of the Village Green Owners Association. The Presidents in order of serving since 1976 are as follows:

Claire Turner	Everglades Club
Joseph Klein	Jasmine Club
Saul Gottlieb	Ixora Club
Walter Mitchell	Jasmine Club
Ned Emely	Fairfax Club
Robert Marker	Everglades Club
Jack Patterson	Cypress Club
Ernie Richards	Heron Club

A Plaque has been placed in the Recreation Room in recognition of their service and the years served.

There has been a paid office person to handle the daily routine and keeping the record books and paying bills plus answering the many questions of the dozens of owners that come into the office every day. The first person to have this job was Mary King, then Mildred Lamberton, the next Mary White and then Jane Wigley. When Jane Wigley decided to retire from this job we hired an outside person, Jerry Ferrell. Another important change in our operations that came along in 1990 was the installation of a computer to handle all the book work and record keeping. This was done under the complete direction of Ernie Richards and aided by Lawrence Vandervelde both of whom had substantial knowledge in computer operation. Software in the form of Lotus 1,2,3 was used as the basic program. All transactions, income maintenance fees, assessments, fines, other, plus all expenses are put into the computer and are automatically

carried and charged to the appropriate building and finally to the Quarterly Reports with all the mathematics done instantly with no chance of error.

Most of the statements made so far have dealt with the physical aspect of the Village Green Complex. It would be seriously remiss if we omit the making of the Village Green life style or social events and those responsible for giving our complex the richly deserved acceptance it has earned.

As reported earlier the current monthly catered dinners were called "Pot Luck" dinners. Each person or couple prepared a dish to serve eight people. Members of the Entertainment Committee for that month brought salads and desserts. Each person supplied their own meat which was barbecued at the grill. A small contribution of twenty five cents was charged to defray cost of beverages and set ups. After several years the "Cook Out" finally gave way to the catered dinners we have today.

Grace Cooper taught a class that was eager to learn how to paint. This class was held once a week. It was attended by many Village Green Owners who benefited greatly by Grace's experience. Those who attended her class were richly rewarded by her generous coaching. The arts and craft classes were sponsored by Freda Gottlieb. The technique of miniature shell work and many other crafts were explained. Freda also baked tasty cookies, etc which she served with tea to those who attended her class.

The ladies' bridge luncheon was started by Jay Marsh of Algonquin Club. The purpose was to allow the ladies of the Village Green to meet once a month to play bridge. They accomplished this by serving a lunch, for a moderate fee, about \$1.50 per person, that was served in the Club House. Bridge and other card games followed in the afternoon. Kathleen Tobin later became Chairperson assuming this job for a period of four years. Each month Kathleen picked a different committee of women who selected the menu from their favorite recipe and made the luncheon. Other active participants in this activity were Evelyn Wilkinson, Kay Emley, Virginia Ricker, Vera Mae Thompson, Frieda Gottlieb, and many more.

Many endless hours were contributed by the Hannams, Ed and Bea who established "Bingo Night". Others picked up the chore when the Hannam's could no longer do it. Another high light promoted by Ed and Bea was a yearly agricultural tour. Mary Meade established our bi-weekly exercise class activity which became very popular with Village Green ladies. Amy Eccher assisted and keeps this activity going to this present day.

Lawrence and Nancy Vandervelde started the Shuffleboard

Tournament which they ran for 14 years before turning the reins over to Jack Bieber, Amy Eccher, and Sam Lombardo. They also started the Round Robin Bridge Tournament and arrange once a year for a trip to the Naples Fort Myers Dog Track for lunch and an afternoon of fun.

Phil LoPresti has started a singing group which meets once a week. Karl Weller takes over the directing and Edith Berry provides the piano accompaniment.

For a while the most popular annual affair was the Annual Mixer Party conceived and sponsored by Ken and Mildred Long. This event has been taken over by a morning Coffee Hour headed by Mary and Dave Moritz and assisted by other volunteer ladies.

The Entertainment Committee, lead by Tony and Jane Abrams have given us an annual "Tombola" or fair which is used to raise funds for the expenses of the various activities involved in the entertainment of our Village Green residents.

The Wednesday and Saturday night card games in progress allow residents an evening of neighborly fun. Bridge, poker and tripoly are played. An arts and crafts exhibit was started in 1992 and is growing in popularity. Here our residents can display their artistic talents and efforts in oil, acrylic, or water color painting or other creative Art Works of their own choice. This activity was started by Ruth Gordon and this past year handled by Don Wire.

In the years gone by many bus trips to the Miami Zoo, Shopping Malls, Disney World, Busch Gardens, Sea World, boat trips into the Carribean has provided much pleasure for many people.

In retrospect while one can give mention to those who gave their time and effort to make the Village Green one of the better places to live there were and are others who contributed their time and efforts to make all the above mentioned activities take place. For example, the Presidents and their boards of each individual building and their committees, those members who man the special events and the many others who give of their time and efforts that make this, the Village Green, a very special place to live.

From the above history, while many other incidents have not been mentioned it becomes obvious that the spirit and substance of the Village Green and its uniqueness as a non profit organization, has come about, not through the efforts of one single person but because of the efforts of many. I can only hope that the spirit that we have demonstrated in the making and existence of the Village Green, our Village Green, will set an example and induce others to follow in

the footsteps in guarding what many have left behind. One valuable asset is the maintenance of rigid rules and regulations that protect the rights of owners to enjoy a peaceful existence in their declining years. Strict ownership, and not rentals has been proven the key to success in maintaining a harmonious existence between our neighbors. We have learned that the pride of ownership is the sole protection of our land values and peace of mind.