



Strolling down memory lane: Historical tour brings Naples' past to life

By Naomi Reiter

Naples was founded in the 1870s as a destination for fishing and hunting aficionados and has enjoyed specific attention from various powerful personalities ever since. Collier, Haldeman, Pulling, Fleischmann: these are the names we have come to recognize in our community, but why? Who were these people?

Palm Cottage's Walking Tour of Olde Naples answers these questions and more every Wednesday morning during a delightful stroll through the streets and alleyways of Naples' historic district.

Learn about the origins of the Naples Pier, the first houses built in the area, and the cast of characters who used to inhabit this remote coastal town. Tour guide John Mayer grew up in Naples and knows the stories that bring history to life.

Who had the biggest parties? Who hid alcohol during Prohibition? Find out these juicy bits of gossip as well as fun facts like how visitors arriving at the pier on the ferry from Fort Myers could locate residents' houses (by the patterns painted on the houses' roofs).

Visitors may find that this is the perfect way to get to know the area. The parking lot behind Gattles and Tommy Bahama's, for example, once was the site for the historic Naples Hotel, which was torn down to make way for the lot.

Now a fishing and recreational hot spot, the Naples Pier once served as the main point of arrival to Naples. The railway from up north went as far as Fort Myers so travellers had to take a ferry from that city, ending up at the pier. In addition to historical information, the walking tour offers a chance for residents to re-connect with the beauty and simplicity that brought them to Naples in the first place. Charming cottages, wild orchids, indigenous palms and more come together in a concert of sub-tropical loveliness that is our town. The morning ends with a tour of Palm Cottage itself, which once served as overflow lodging for the Naples Hotel. The top floor hallway is lined with historic pictures for a look at the area as it appeared in the early days of Naples.

Walking tours of Olde Naples start at 10 a.m. every Wednesday morning. Reservations are required. For more information call 261-8164.



Joanne McDowell, left, and Carolyn Curry on the walking tour of Olde Naples. Both ladies are from Indianapolis and winter in Naples. Curry is assisting her church in working with the local Habitat for Humanity.