

SATELLITE BEACH, FLORIDA
"WHERE PROGRESS PREVAILS"



This history is provided to the residents of Satellite Beach to preserve the rich legacy of community left by those who founded and have enriched the City.

Before development, the area now comprising Satellite Beach consisted of saw palmetto and oak scrub. The shores of the Banana River were lined with a mangrove swamp. As late as 1871 the entire area now known as Satellite Beach was government-owned public land. It was not until 1923 that the last public land remaining in the area of the City came under private ownership. During those five decades many people and companies bought and sold land, and three subdivisions which exist today were platted. However, nothing permanent was built, although several individuals gained title to land by maintaining primitive homesteads for at least 5 years. Even after World War II, there were deer, bear, and panther in the area. This all changed in the early 1950s when the large number of people helping test long range rockets at Cape Canaveral needed somewhere to live. Housing was at a premium.

In 1951 Stephanie Snaith, a widow, built the first home in the City. Later that year Louis G. Olson, an attorney in Eau Gallie, built a home on Cinnamon Drive he rented to Nick Castora, who worked for a missile contractor. The location of the house was so remote, and lacking in utilities, even electric power, that Mr. Castora lit bonfires to guide visitors to his home. By the end of 1957 there were about 50 homes and one restaurant in the future city. Mosquitoes and other insects set up a din at night. Rattlesnakes were prevalent. There were no fire department, local police, community recreation program, paved roads, or drainage.

Satellite Beach as a municipality goes back only to 3 August 1957 when, by a margin of 45 to 11, residents voted to incorporate as the Town of Satellite Beach. Evelyn Price, the secretary to the attorney who drew up the City's original charter, won the \$25 prize in a contest to name the new city. The move to incorporate, led by Percy Hedgecock and

financed by Mr. Olson, was precipitated by the desire to prevent construction of a large trailer park. The first ordinance passed by the new Council limited zoning to single-family dwellings and commercial uses – no trailer parks. Percy Hedgecock was the City's first mayor, serving five consecutive terms until he retired from the position in 1973. In 1964 Phyllis Koerner won a \$25 savings bond for her City slogan, "Where Progress Prevails."

The new community had a healthy sense of self-sufficiency. The original city building, a civic center, was built by contributed contractor labor and materials between 3 August and 21 December 1957 at a cost to the City of about \$6,500. It was finished and furnished by volunteers. The Garden Club, established in 1960, planted and maintained City landscape areas. Fire protection has involved volunteers since the formation of the Satellite Beach Volunteer Fire Department in 1961. When the City's first elementary school, Surfside, opened in 1962, teachers and volunteers moved in furniture so the school could open at the start of the school year. The interior of the original library (now City Hall) was finished in 1967 by volunteers, who then donated over 6,000 volumes to begin its collection. In 1968 the City's original recreation center next to Olson Field was built on a tennis court with \$40,000 earned from Little League concession stands and the aid of Public Works. In 1977 the volunteer fire department bought and donated to the City the land on which the Fire Station now stands. In 1968 a 34-acre tract west of the Grand Canal was given to the City by a developer from South Florida. It now is Samsons Island Park. In 1971, through the concerted, personal involvement of the City's Mayor and the Woman's Club the County bought Pelican Beach Park. In the 1980s the City hosted many national softball championship tournaments and fielded six national champion softball teams, earning the title "junior softball capital of the world". In 1994 the City received the first annual Florida Excellence in Coastal Management Award for work on Samsons Island. Since then the City has placed over 1/3 of its oceanfront into public open space and volunteers continue to provide more than 10,000 hours each year to youth and public service programs.

The City continues to be a place “Where Progress Prevails”.

For a more complete history, visit www.satellitebeach.org.