

This Side of Paradise

A History of Wulfert Point and the Sanctuary Golf Club

Sanibel Island, Florida



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and
the Sanctuary Golf Club

Susan Johnson Cassell

Sanibel Island, Florida
2014

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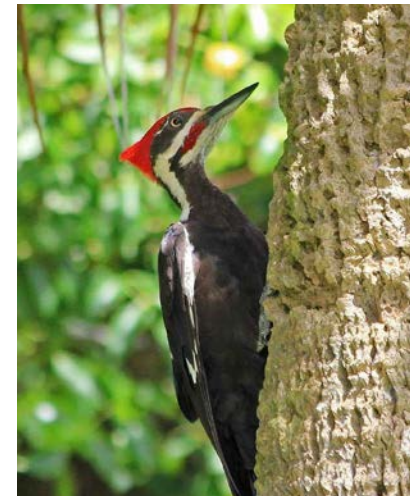
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Acknowledgments

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Sanibel, Florida
2014



Above Wildlife photos by Kyle Sweet
Cover Golf course photos by Nile Young, Jr.





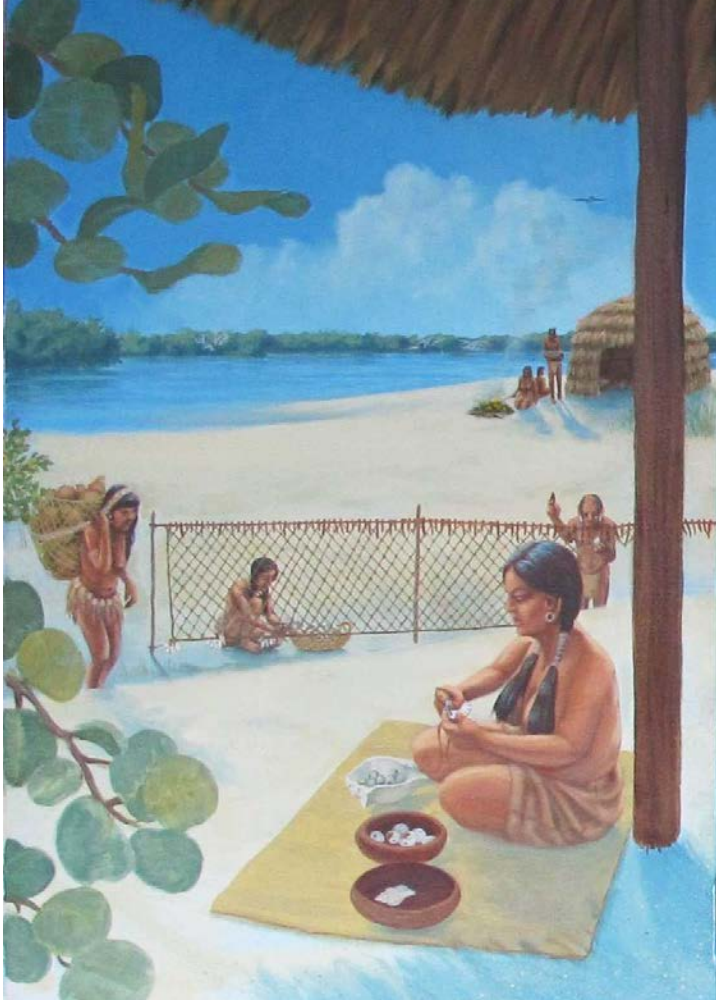
Left The Sanctuary's signature 4th hole (Photo by Nile Young, Jr.)
Above The plaque and bench are part of a small park that is open to the public. It is located near the top center of the aerial photo, to the left of the back tees. (S. Cassell)

The fourth hole of the Sanctuary Golf Club on Sanibel Island is an exceptionally beautiful par-3. Leaving behind the long and treacherous par-4 third hole, you cross Wulfert Road and continue on a cart path shaded by a canopy of mangroves, seagrapes, and palm trees. Emerging into the Florida sunshine, you see the blue-green expanse of Pine Island Sound. When the tide is low, there are hundreds of egrets, herons, ibises, and sandpipers feeding on exposed mud flats. Overhead are more birds – ospreys diving for food, a flock of white pelicans flying in formation, or a single eagle carrying nesting material in its talons. On a calm day, dolphins cavort just off shore. Before turning the corner to approach the tee boxes, you may notice a footpath that goes down toward the water and passes a bench and a large stone with a metal plaque. The plaque commemorates the early history of Wulfert Point, from the Native American Calusa through the farming community of the first decades of the twentieth century.

This book expands on the early history of Wulfert Point and its residents and then moves forward to the development of the Sanctuary Golf Club. Hopefully it will give readers a better appreciation for this unique piece of South Florida and enhance their enjoyment of a course that its architect Arthur Hills has called his “island masterpiece.”

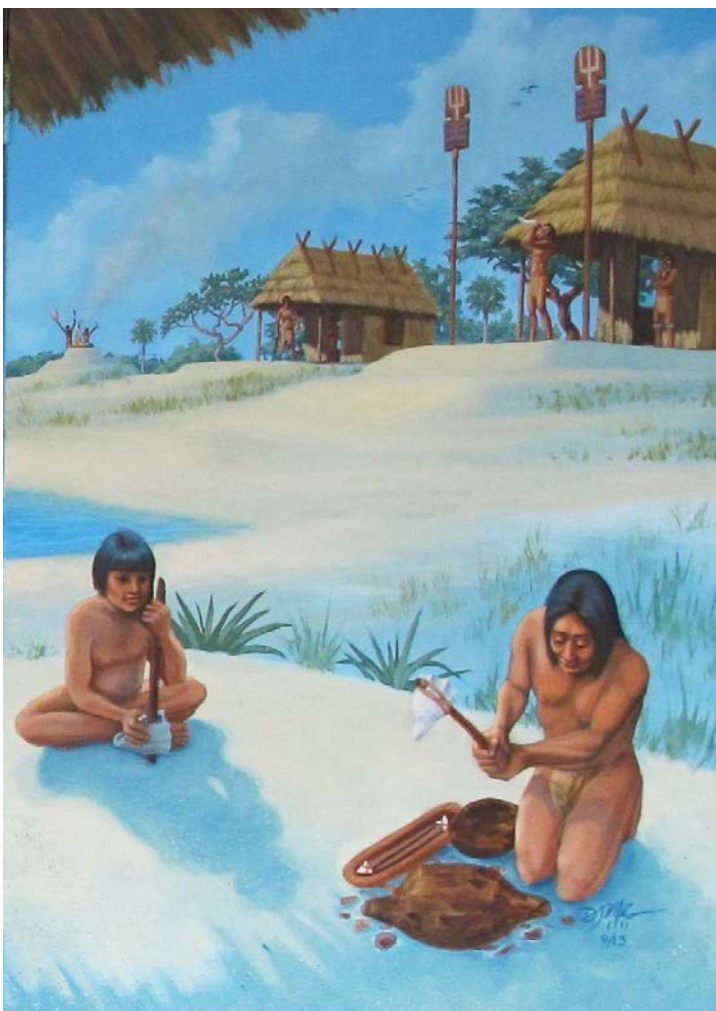


Fort Myers artist David Meo created these artistic renderings of the Calusa village at the Wightman/Kesson site. (Used with permission)

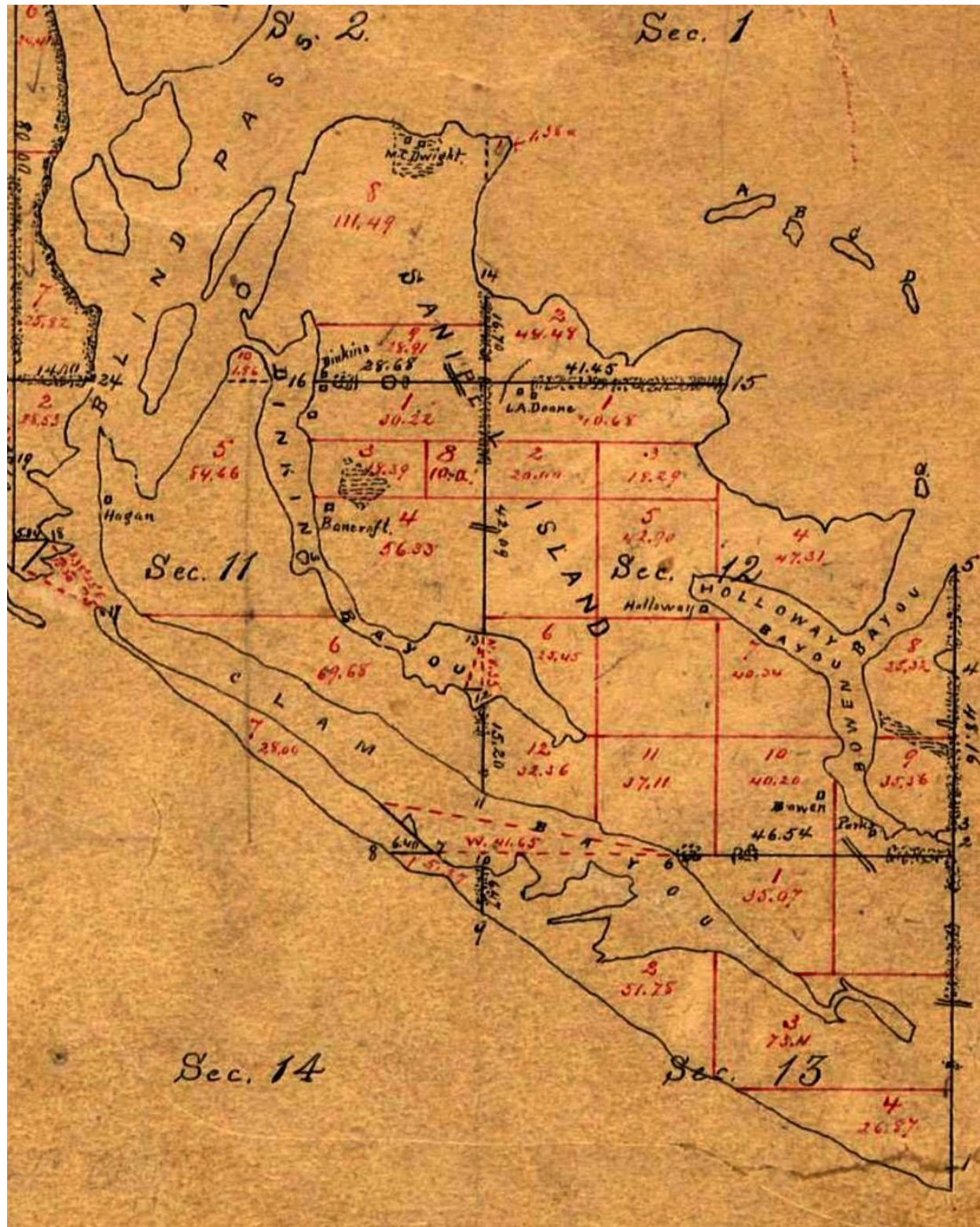


When Ponce de León discovered Florida in 1513, historians believe he sailed past Sanibel into San Carlos Bay. There he found the Calusa, an indigenous tribe that dominated the barrier islands and mainland of southwest Florida, from Charlotte Harbor to Cape Sable. The Calusa were a powerful and highly-structured society that received tributes from tribes across South Florida. The Calusa lived in villages where they built mounds, called middens, from worn-out shells, bones, broken pottery, and other household debris. The middens could reach 30 feet and often had houses atop them. Living off the waters of the estuary, the Calusa wove fishing nets from palm-fiber cord and used shells to make tools. They built great canoes and canals to travel throughout their realm.

The Calusa resisted the Spanish. They attacked Ponce de León in 1513 and mortally wounded him when he returned in 1521 to try to establish a settlement. They continued to oppose Spanish attempts at colonization over the next 200 years, but by the early 1700s, conditions had changed. The Calusa population was decimated by European-borne diseases. Slave raids and massacres conducted by tribes armed by the English took more lives. The surviving Calusa began leaving Florida for Cuba. When Spain finally ceded Florida to England in 1763, the last of the Calusa left. By 1800, the Calusa culture was extinct.



Sanibel contains the remains of several middens, most notably at the Wightman-Kesson settlement at the southern end of Wulfert Point. Three of these middens still stand and are located within the J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Visitors can follow a boardwalk around this site; signage provides information about Calusa life and culture.



This survey shows the western end of Sanibel in 1900. Wulfert Point is located between Dinkins Bayou to the left and Holloway and Bowen Bayous to the right. Homesteaders Dwight, Dinkins, Bancroft, Doane, Holloway, and Bowen are written in black. (US Bureau of Land Management)

Sanibel was uninhabited during most of the 1800s. In the 1830s and again in the 1870s, there were attempts to establish settlements on Sanibel, but these were short lived. Settlers had to contend with swarms of voracious mosquitoes, unpredictable summer hurricanes, and stifling heat and humidity. Fire was always a danger, and isolation must have weighed on them.

Two events in the 1880s drew people back to Sanibel. In 1885, the first tarpon was caught with rod and reel in Tarpon Bay. This set off a frenzy of interest in sport fishing that brought sportsmen to Sanibel. Three years later, in 1888, the Federal government opened Sanibel to homesteading. Homesteaders could claim a parcel of up to 160 acres, and if they lived on it and cultivated it for 5 years, they could gain title to the land. Some settlers chose the east end of the island, where a lighthouse had recently been erected; others formed a settlement on the northwest part of the island, on what is today Wulfert Point.

A post office was established in 1897, and in true Sanibel fashion, there was an immediate disagreement about its name. Jennie Doane, the postmistress, believed it should be named after her and her husband. Another resident, Mason Dwight, who had arrived before the Doanes, thought it should carry his name. When they could not reach an agreement, a postal inspector settled the debate and called it Wulfert. The origin of this name is unknown.

These early settlers were farmers. Their primary crops were citrus and vegetables, and the tomatoes from Sanibel soon became prized for their delicious flavor. Farmers built packing houses to crate their crops and shipped them by steamboat to the railroad in Punta Gorda and from there to northern markets. Because the waters off Wulfert Point are shallow, the settlers ran their crops out to a bulkhead about a mile and a half off shore. There, the crops were picked up by the railroad steamboat that stopped daily at the Wulfert settlement. The steamboat also brought mail, passengers, and supplies and was the community's primary link to the outside world. In 1914, after a channel was dredged, the steamboat was able to load and unload at the Wulfert dock. By 1920, some 10,000 crates of vegetables were shipped from Wulfert each season.



Above Louis and Jennie Doane in their garden. She was the Wulfert postmistress; he was the Wulfert mail carrier.

Below The Gibson family packing house. The Gibsons came to Sanibel to work on the Dwight and Holloway farmland.

(Courtesy Sanibel Public Library)



Oliver Bowen (right) and his wife Mary came to Sanibel from Trinidad in 1887. After his death in 1894, he was buried, as he had requested, in a well on his homestead.

(Courtesy Sanibel Public Library)



The Wulfert post office and dock were located at the end of Wulfert Point, near the present-day 4th green. The dock extended into a channel cut by the county to give boats direct access to the community and its produce.

(Courtesy Sanibel Public Library)



Life in the Wulfert farming community was anything but easy. The first order of business for new arrivals was building a home. Oliver Bowen brought his own lumber, but most settlers used whatever materials were available. In a letter to her grandchildren, Pearl Stokes recounts how her grandparents Amanta and Clementine Gibson arrived by boat in 1900. They “unloaded their possessions and set up housekeeping in the middle of a tomato patch.” They built a dwelling with a floor of shells and a roof of palm fronds. Settlers had to dig wells; they used horses and mules for farming and transportation. There was no electricity, no sewage system, and no telephone service. Salt marsh mosquitoes were a bane.

Despite these challenges, the settlement continued to grow. It boasted a post office, a store, and a school. Early settlers Oliver Bowen, Thomas Holloway, and Josiah Dinkins gave their names to the bayous surrounding Wulfert. By 1920, there were about forty residents. But in 1926 tragedy struck. One of the worst hurricanes in Florida history crossed the state from east to west, causing hundreds of deaths. When it reached Sanibel, it flooded the Wulfert farms with saltwater, destroyed crops, and rendered the land useless for farming. Most of the farmers sold their property and left. By 1930, only 8 residents remained. The Wulfert post office closed in 1935.

After the hurricane, most of Wulfert Point was acquired by Clarence Chadwick, whose Captiva property later became South Seas Plantation. He put in groves of coconut palms and key limes and hired workers to tend the crops. When war came in 1941, Wulfert became a bombing target range. The once-thriving farming community was abandoned.

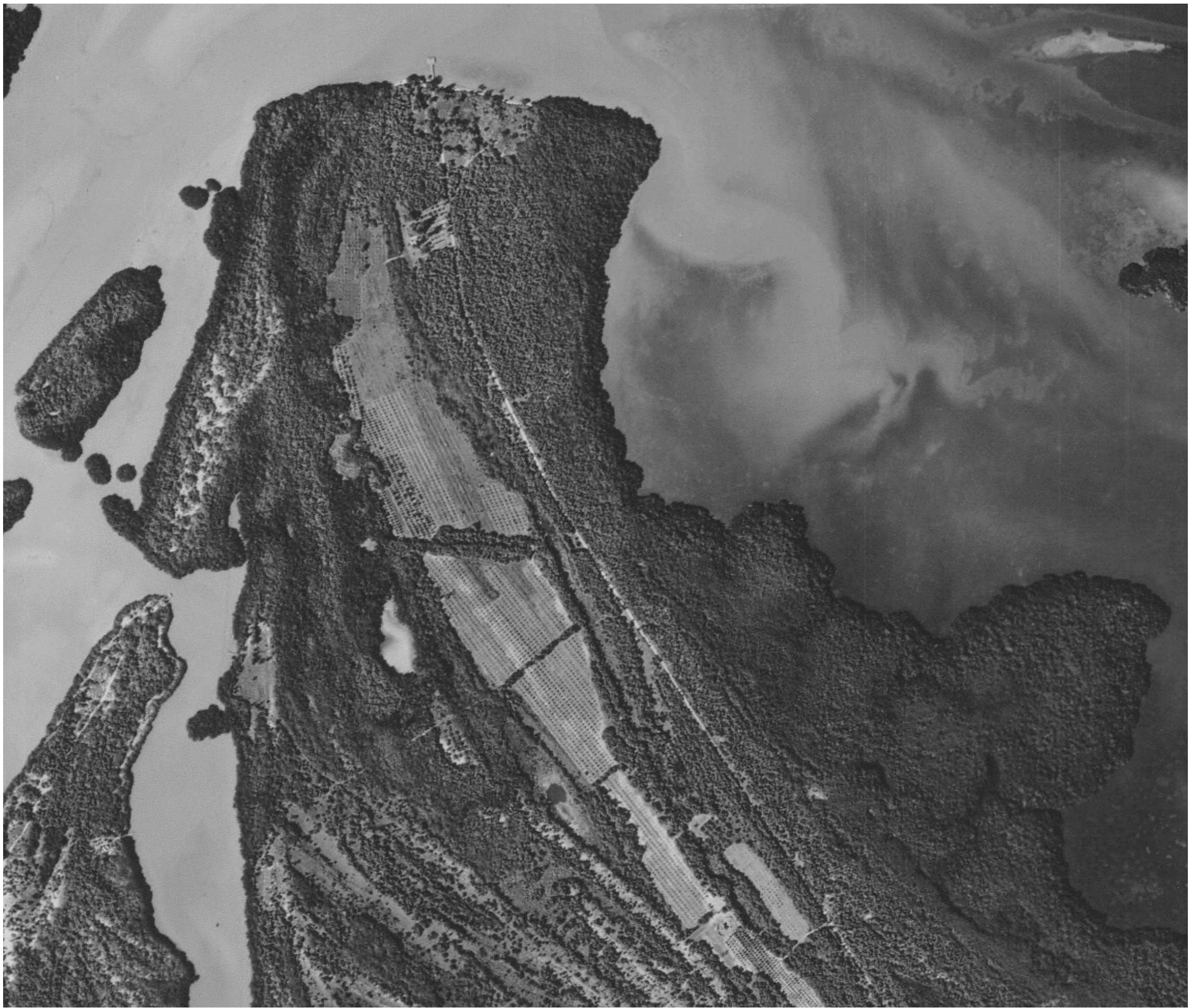


Above Lewis Doane holds mailbags at the Wulfert dock, probably waiting for the boat to arrive.

Below The Gibson family and neighbors gather at the Wulfert dock as a mail or supply boat docks in the early part of the twentieth century.

(Courtesy Sanibel Public Library)





World War II came to an end, and Sanibel began to grow and develop in new ways. Jay Norwood “Ding” Darling was instrumental in creating the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge, later renamed for him. A Pulitzer-winning cartoonist and former head of the US Biological Survey, he used his influence to protect thousands of acres of critical wildlife habitat. The island and county tackled the scourge of mosquitoes by spraying and building dikes. The Island Water Association was founded to provide fresh, potable water. And in 1963, the Sanibel Causeway opened. The causeway replaced the old ferry system and allowed visitors and residents to drive to and from the islands.

Sanibel soon gained the reputation as a desirable place to live and vacation. Wulfert Point had already attracted John and Katerina Oster of Racine, Wisconsin. Oster founded the Oster Manufacturing Company in 1924 and later acquired another company that had patented a liquefier blender. The Oster Company began marketing this as the Osterizer, an immensely successful household appliance. The Osters acquired a small waterfront parcel near the old Wulfert post office in 1925 and bought additional land in the mid-1930s on Clam Bayou and on Wulfert. Standing on the Wulfert land was the family home of the Holloways, one of the early homesteaders. The Osters moved this two-story home to their property on Clam Bayou. They built a number of small cottages next to the house; these were used by visiting family members and were also rented to tourists. Today, the White Heron House is privately owned and has been designated a City of Sanibel historic site.

Above right The Thomas Holloway house was built in 1903. This early photo shows a gathering of neighbors. Postmistress Jennie Doane is at the far right; Captain Josiah Dinkins is in the middle of the group of three men. The Holloways came to Sanibel to help Mason Dwight with his farm while Dwight worked in the store near the Wulfert dock.
(Courtesy Sanibel Public Library)

Below right The Holloway house is now called the White Heron House. A very sturdy structure that has weathered many hurricanes, it was probably built by a ship's carpenter. The single-story back wing was added after it was moved to Clam Bayou.
(S. Cassell)

Opposite This aerial shows Wulfert Point in 1944. The Wulfert dock (top of photo) is still intact. To the right of the dock is an open area that contained several small parcels, one of which was purchased by the Osters. Parallel rows of Chadwick's coconut palms and key limes trees stretch the length of the point.



Wulfert Point in the 1970s

(Courtesy John and Lucy Ruth)



Above Wulfert Road was unpaved, narrow, and lined with heavy vegetation. It ran straight up Wulfert Point and ended near the Mitchells' home.

Below The remains of a barn from the early Wulfert settlement

Above Tom Mitchell and his wife lived in this house on the old Wulfert Road. It is located about where the 2nd tee is today. Their property also included a second, smaller house and a large shed.

Below The Ruths' children standing by the overgrown Wulfert post office

Opposite above Harold Craig and his wife Edie on their boat at Dinkins Bayou. The Craigs lived on Wulfert for over 15 years. When the property was sold in 1988, they moved back to their east-end home. Harold died in Fort Myers in 1995 at the age of 92.

Opposite below John and Lucy Ruth with their children on the Craigs' boat

Thomas and Frances Mitchell of Illinois also came to Wulfert Point. Thomas grew up on a farm in Illinois. He received his doctorate in nuclear physics from the University of Illinois and founded Nuclear Data, a company that manufactured products to measure levels of radioactivity in laboratories and plants. In the 1960s, he purchased nearly 400 acres on Wulfert and built a house where he lived with his wife. A quiet, studious man, he was very interested in conservation. He was a founder of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) and gave generous support to sea turtle research. Early in the 1970s, the Mitchells decided to move to Arizona and began to look for someone to purchase their land.

John and Lucy Ruth of Illinois had never seen Sanibel when they received a call that a large property on Wulfert was for sale. Interested in land investment, John Ruth called Tom Mitchell and traveled to Sanibel to meet with him. Ruth liked the land and made an offer. Although Mitchell was also being approached by large developers, Mitchell decided then and there to sell to Ruth, and they shook hands on the deal. Ruth returned to the Chicago area and invited 5 other investors to join him. They formed Sanibel Bay Shore Associates (SBA), with Ruth as managing partner, and completed the purchase in 1972. Two years later, SBA purchased 20 adjacent acres on Wulfert, bringing the total to 415 acres.

Before the Mitchells left for Arizona, the Ruths asked them to recommend a caretaker who could live on the Wulfert property and watch out for vandalism and fire. Mitchell recommended his friends Harold and Edith Craig. Harold was a retired dentist who had come to Sanibel from Cincinnati in the mid-1960s, after the causeway was opened. He and Edie rented for a year and then bought a home on the east end. He enjoyed fishing, and she was an avid shell collector. They agreed to be caretakers, rented their east-end home, and moved to Wulfert Road.





The original design for the development at Wulfert Point was quite different from what was eventually built. Called Wulfert Woods, it had a Community Center in the middle of the property, with golf, tennis, and retail facilities. The golf clubhouse was in the center of the course, with 9 holes on either side. The old Wulfert Road remained a straight road and was lined with condos and single family lots. A marina was located on Dinkins Bayou.

(Courtesy John and Lucy Ruth)



Harold Craig, standing by one of the wells on the Wulfert property. He and his wife used the mineral-rich well water for drinking and washing.

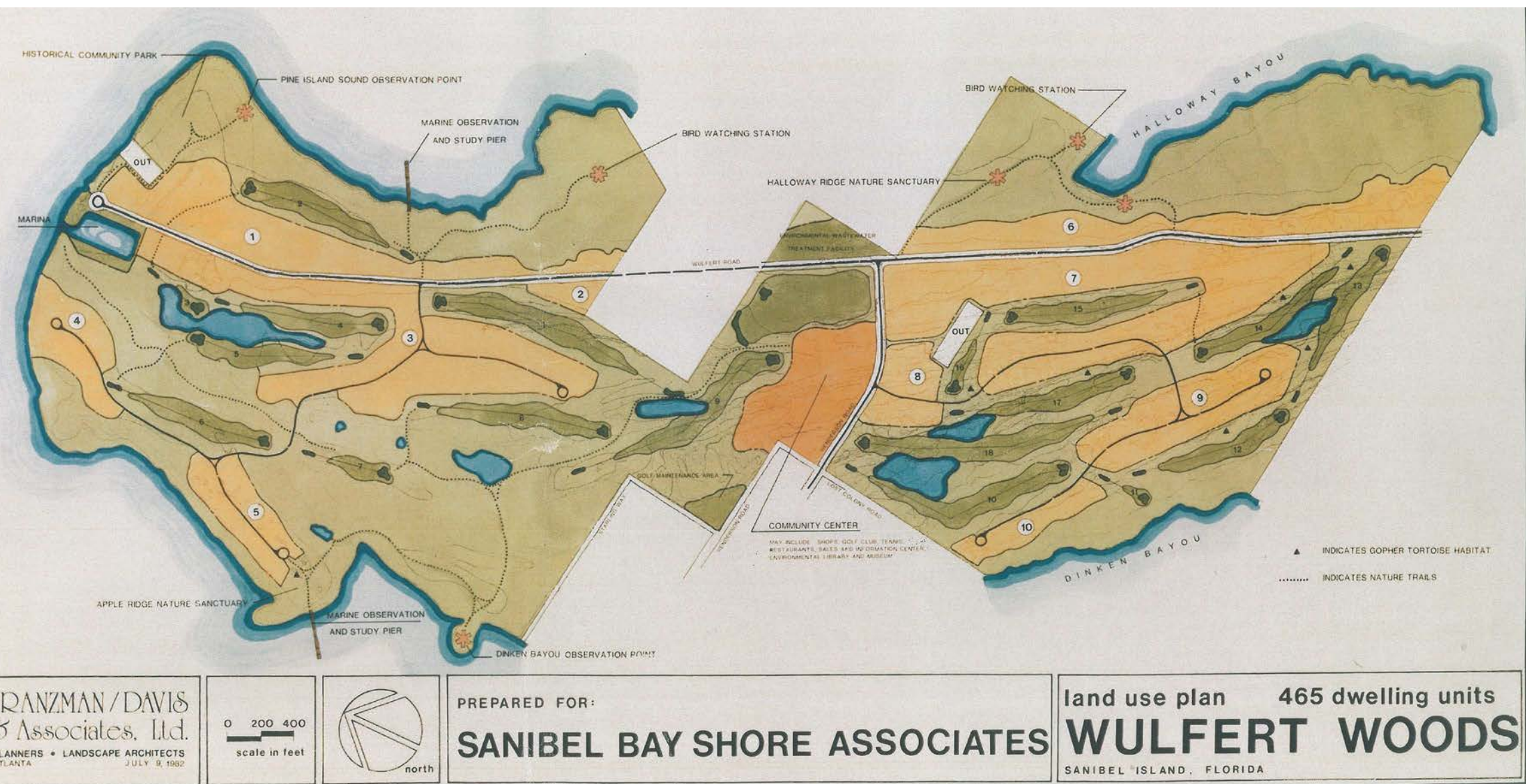
(Courtesy John and Lucy Ruth)

They loved living in this remote corner of Sanibel. They put in big vegetable and flower gardens, built a dock for their boat, and drove their pickup truck around the old key lime orchard. Edie was famous – or perhaps infamous – for feeding the raccoons and gopher tortoises that lived near their house. They used the second house on Wulfert for visitors, including their daughter and the Ruths. The Ruths also explored the property and were fascinated to find the remains of the old dock and post office as well as Indian burial mounds and abandoned farm buildings. Thinking toward the future, they imagined the land being developed into a high-end golf community that would complement the beauty of the surrounding environment.

Getting permission from the City of Sanibel to develop Wulfert was very difficult. Sanibel was experiencing considerable growth in the 1970s, and island residents had become increasingly alarmed about overdevelopment. Wulfert Point, for example, was zoned by Lee County for over 4000 residences. Determined to avoid high-rise condos, sea walls, and densely populated neighborhoods, residents challenged county zoning commission decisions on land use. Finally in 1974, they voted to incorporate. They elected a 5-person city council, who in turn elected Porter Goss as the first mayor. (Goss went on to have a distinguished career in public service as a member of Congress and Director of the CIA.) The newly-formed city published its Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) in 1976.

SBA presented their plan to the City of Sanibel that same year. It included 1600 residential units (far fewer than the 4000 previously zoned by the county), an 18-hole golf course, a marina, tennis courts, a clubhouse, and a retail area. The City rejected the plan, saying that the CLUP allowed only 46-58 residential units. In 1977, SBA sued the City. They pointed out that, at 58 units, the available lot size for one residence would be 310,000 square feet, far exceeding the average lot size on Sanibel and in Lee County. They noted that the mid-island ridge on Wulfert was some of the highest land on Sanibel and some of the most suitable for development.

The lawsuit dragged on for years. A number of Sanibel residents felt that the Wulfert property should become part of the “Ding” Darling Refuge, as the Refuge already owned land near Holloway Bayou. In his autobiography, Charles LeBuff, a refuge employee and city councilman at that time, tells how he supported this idea and assisted with a biological evaluation that verified the existence of an active eagles’ nest on Wulfert. However, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees all national wildlife refuges, determined that they could not take any action to acquire the Wulfert land because of the on-going litigation. SBA continued their commitment to environmental stewardship by conducting extensive studies of the soil, vegetation, hydrology, and wildlife habitats.



The City approved this land use plan in 1982. Housing density was reduced substantially. The marina was moved from Dinkins Bayou to the end of Wulfert Point, at the site of the current 4th hole. (The small out parcel near the marina still belonged to the Oster family.) The mangrove fringe around Wulfert Point included places for nature trails, observation piers, and a historical community park.

(Courtesy John and Lucy Ruth)

Finally, in 1982, the lawsuit was scheduled to be heard by a Lee County Circuit Court judge. A few weeks before the court date, the City and SBA reached an out-of-court settlement that spared both parties a protracted and costly court battle. They agreed to 465 residential units with no hotel or interval ownership. The 18-hole golf course and practice range would be a private facility limited to 565 individual and family memberships. Additional facilities would include a 10,000-square-foot clubhouse, a 26-slip marina, 10 tennis courts, 2 olympic-sized swimming pools, and a 7500-square-foot retail space. The development would leave intact the mangrove fringe around Wulfert Point and could include a public park. With an agreement in place, SBA started looking for a developer.

The Ruths and their partners in SBA were investors and never intended to develop the land themselves. They undertook what became a lengthy search for a developer and finally made the decision in 1988 to work with a small Sanibel firm, BTS Development Corporation. SBA was impressed with the quality of their work and with their success in dealing with the City of Sanibel.



SBA and BTS celebrate the signing of the purchase contract for the Wulfert property. At the far left is Charles Nauts, a lawyer representing SBA. Third from the left is John Naumann. On the far right are Jeff Milton and “Doc” Simmonds.
(Courtesy BTS)

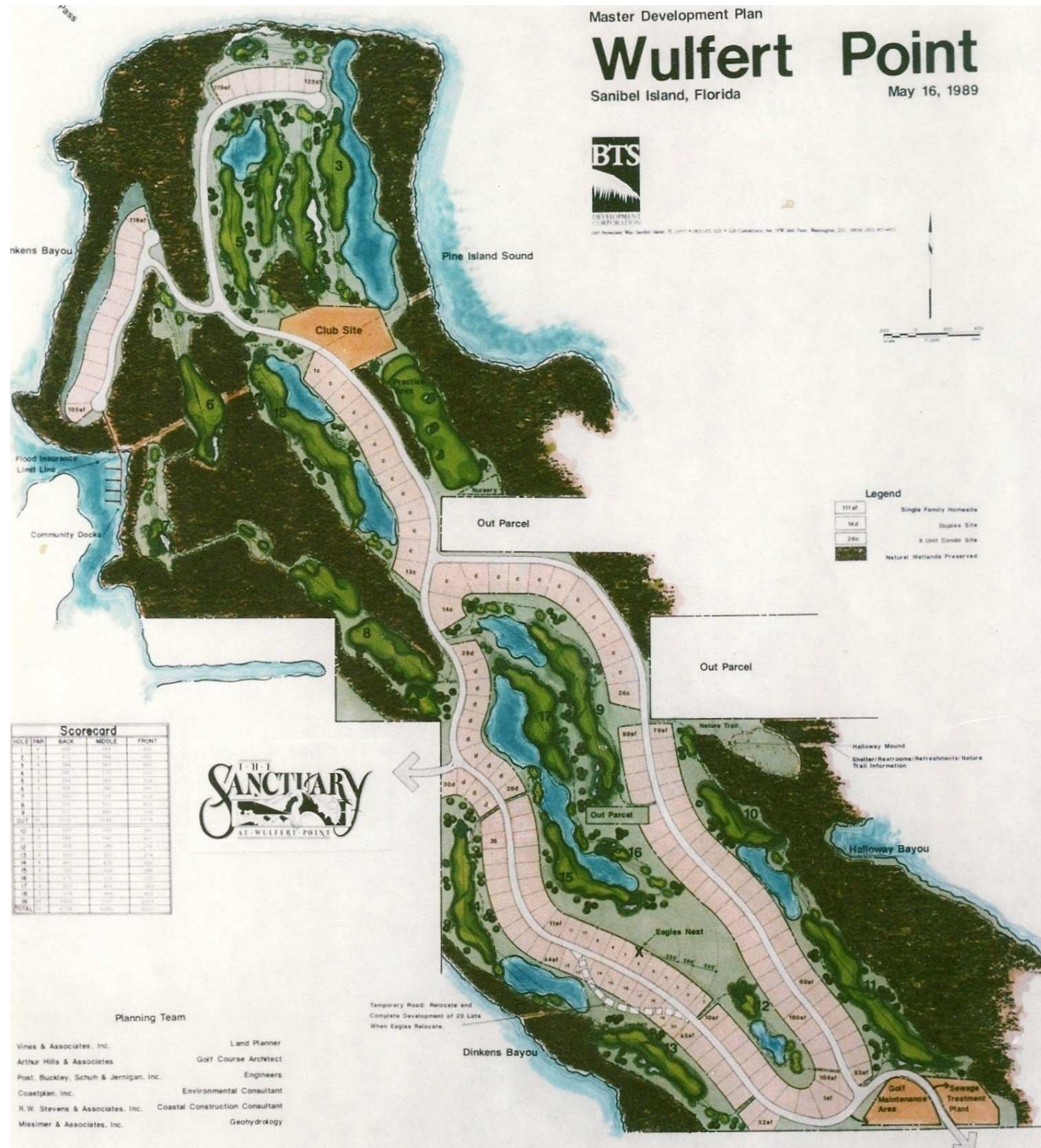
BTS was founded in 1980 by three principal shareholders: William J. Simmonds, John J. Naumann and Jeffrey J. Milton. “Doc” Simmons was a retired oral surgeon who was actively engaged in real estate investment on Sanibel. John Naumann was president of John Naumann and Associates and had considerable experience in real estate marketing and sales. Jeff Milton was a partner in a Washington, DC, law firm. Together they had successfully developed a half dozen luxury condominiums on the Gulf of Mexico. In October, 1988, BTS Associates Limited Partnership was formed, with BTS Development Corp. as general partner and Naumann as president. This partnership became the developer for Wulfert Point.

BTS started by increasing the size of the Wulfert property and reducing the number of residences. BTS purchased the remaining lots owned by the Oster family and decreased the number of residences from 465 to 350 and then to 315. (They also had an option to buy a gulf beachfront property called Santiva Cottages, but allowed it to expire.) Recognizing the challenges of developing land on an island with strict building codes, BTS assembled an impressive group of firms to handle engineering, contracting, and environmental issues. They enlisted Arthur Hills, the renowned golf course architect, to design a championship course. Hills was a friend of the Naumann family, and he had just completed a golf course in an environmentally-sensitive area of Bonita. BTS asked Dick Workman, former Executive Director of SCCF, to help with environmental issues. They named the development The Sanctuary at Wulfert Point and incorporated the club in March of 1989 as The Sanctuary Golf Club, Inc. The names were chosen to convey to the community the developers’ commitment to preserving island wildlife and native vegetation.



The original Sanctuary logos, designed in 1989 when the Club was incorporated, featured several colors and a distinctive type font. (Courtesy BTS)





This master development plan for the Sanctuary was presented to the City in 1989. Troon and Baltusrol form a single road, on the right. Wulfert Road is rerouted and curves along the left side of Wulfert Point. Residences and community docks extend along Dinkins Bayou. The clubhouse is in its current location.

(Courtesy BTS)

When the contract for sale became public in 1988, the local press gave it front-page coverage as the largest residential community ever developed on Sanibel. The developers were hopeful to begin construction within 2 years, but a development permit was not issued until the spring of 1992. For nearly 4 years, the City and BTS negotiated and dickered about the details. The development permit application submitted in 1989 called for a number of changes to the 1982 settlement. On the one hand, residential density was reduced, and the retail space and restaurant were eliminated; but the clubhouse doubled in size to 20,000 square feet, the marina grew to 50 slips on Dinkins Bayou, and Wulfert and Henderson Roads were substantially altered. In addition, the City expressed concern about the number and depth of the lakes, the height of the houses, the size of vegetation buffers, and the fate of the resident eagles and gopher tortoises.

Always vocal, Sanibel residents plunged into the debate at public planning meetings and in letters to the editor. Residents of Dinkins Bayou were incensed at the possibility of a marina: they pointed out that the bayou was far too narrow and shallow to accommodate more traffic. Others objected to rerouting Wulfert and Henderson Roads because of their historical significance to the early Wulfert settlement. SCCF warned against the possibility of destroying mangroves and called for a gopher tortoise survey and a larger buffer around the eagles' nest. In a letter to the editor, the Committee of the Islands (COTI) supported SCCF. One person even proposed building a graduated care facility for seniors on Wulfert Point.

Ever so slowly, the City and BTS began to make progress. The marina, restaurant, and retail space were dropped from the plan; the eagle buffer was expanded, at the expense of more than 30 single-family lots; the density was lowered yet again to 288 residential units. (Today, there are 225 residential units, including undeveloped lots.) The City hired Dr. Steve Mullins as their on-site field supervisor. He monitored the effect of the development on wildlife and vegetation and helped with design considerations, including the routing of the bridge through the mangroves between the 7th green and the 8th tee.

T·H·E
SANCTUARY
GOLF · CLUB · INC.

Sanibel Island's only championship golf course is currently in the permitting process with the Sanibel Planning Department.

Anticipating city approvals and formal ground breaking in early 1990.

The Sanctuary Golf Club is now offering limited Charter Associate Golf and Tennis Membership.

These memberships will be restricted to Sanibel & Captiva residents and will be offered only through November 1, 1989.

For details contact William Simmonds at 472-3121 or 1-800/232-6004.

BTS
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

This ad offering memberships appeared in the local newspaper in 1989. It optimistically anticipated a 1990 ground breaking.
(Courtesy BTS)



The final plan for the Sanctuary was approved in 1992. This drawing shows the extensive conservation land given to SCCF (the "Eagle Buffer ") and to the "Ding" Darling Refuge. An Information Center (lower right) was the sales office for the development. The "Out Parcel", a cemetery of unknown origin, is located behind the 9th green. (Courtesy BTS)

BTS finally received a development permit in the spring of 1992. The City approved the construction of 288 residences, a 6724-yard golf course with practice range, a 20,000-square-foot clubhouse, and tennis and pool facilities. The City agreed to rerouting Wulfert and Henderson Roads in part because this would help keep traffic away from the eagles' nest. But the City added a number of other conditions. BTS was required to construct a sewage treatment plant behind the maintenance area; this plant would be turned over to the City. BTS agreed to donate \$250,000 to the below-marketing housing program over the course of 4 years. BTS had to supply a special kind of grass for gopher tortoises. Bouteloua grass from Wulfert was shipped to a company in Mule Shoe, Texas, where it was propagated; the seed was returned to the Sanctuary for planting.

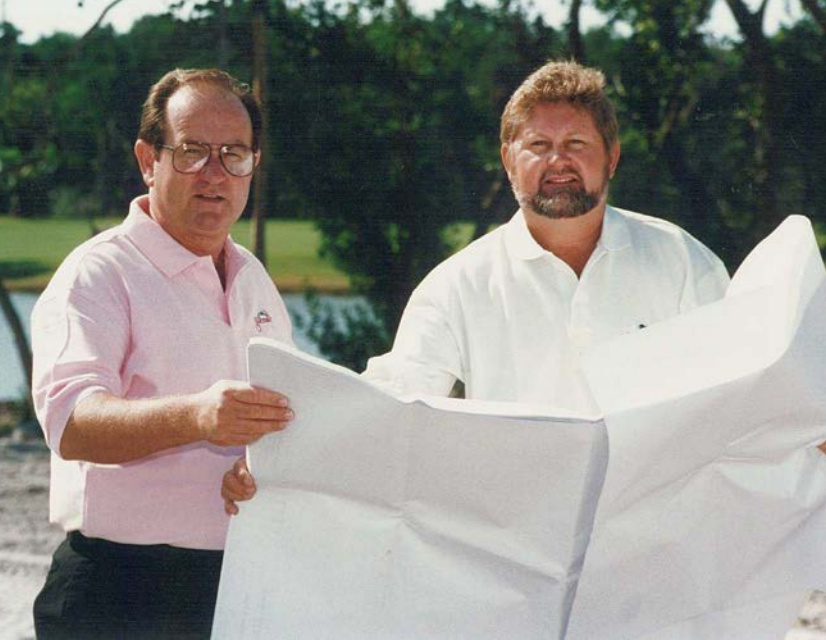
Even more significant were the donations of conservation land. BTS deeded 22 acres to SCCF as the Wulfert Eagle Buffer. About 200 acres went to the “Ding” Darling Refuge and made the Sanctuary the only golf club in the country surrounded by a federal wildlife refuge. Most of this land was mangrove fringe along the perimeter of the golf course; some consisted of interior wetlands between holes 18, 6, 7, and 8. (Signs along the golf course indicate where Refuge property is located.) In return, the Refuge granted permanent easements to the golf club. The Sanctuary has an easement through the wetlands separating the 7th and 8th holes: the Club may build and maintain an elevated golf cart boardwalk and may trim vegetation. There is also an easement for the public park located near the tees on the 4th hole. BTS was given permission to construct a wildlife observation boardwalk or fishing pier through Refuge lands on either Bowen Bayou or Pine Island Sound. Unfortunately this was never built, and the easement expired in 1999. In a sense, then, the islanders who sought to protect Wulfert Point from development got half of what they wanted: more than 200 acres of land were placed in permanent conservation.



In 1992, SCCF received a donation of land from the developer to protect an eagles' nest. Some years later, the eagles abandoned the nest. After the 2004 hurricane, SCCF cleared the land of invasive Australian pines and opened more area to gopher tortoises. The tract was renamed the Wulfert Gopher Tortoise Preserve.

From the left are city planner Ken Pfalzer, SCCF Executive Director Erick Lindblad, SCCF President Ruth Deuber, developers Jeff Milton and John Naumann, and field supervisor “Doc” Mullins.

(Courtesy BTS)



Left Column

Top Project manager Paul Scoggins (left) supervised the construction of the Sanctuary Golf Club.

Middle Plaque commemorating the groundbreaking

Bottom The developer's first sales office was a double-wide trailer. It was located on Troon Court, near the cart path leading from the 11th hole. A private home is there today.



Right Column Clubhouse interior

Top The formal dining room had partitions that created private dining areas. Doors (back of photo) led to an outdoor patio.

Middle A gracious entry area welcomed members and their guests.

Bottom The clubhouse veranda featured a beautiful wood bar where golfers gathered after their round.



Photos courtesy BTS

BTS began marketing their development in April with a well-publicized ground-breaking celebration. Under a large yellow-and-white tent, about 100 members, friends, prospects, investors, reporters, and community leaders enjoyed refreshments and learned what the Sanctuary at Wulfert Point was all about. Art Hills was on hand to describe the golf course. He quipped that the course was designed by the process of elimination: “You can’t put it here; you can’t put it there.” Naumann commented on the arduous permitting process that had involved myriad city, state, and federal agencies. But, as he went on to note, “We like to say they gave us a rough time, and they did, but we are better for it. We’ve got a community that is not only sensitive to the environment, but I think meets the needs and requirements of the city of Sanibel and its residents.” Naumann, Milton, and Simmonds also formed a new limited partnership, Wulfert Holdings, Ltd, to succeed BTS as the developer of the Sanctuary.

Building the course began immediately. Starting at the maintenance area, construction crews bulldozed through dense vegetation and started work on Troon Court, the 12th hole, and the new road bed for Wulfert Road. Tim Sever was hired as the Sanctuary’s golf superintendent. The first nine holes, numbers 9 to 17, were completed in the spring of 1993, and the rest of the course was finished in September. Work on the clubhouse also began in the spring of 1993, and it opened the following year.

At the same time, homes sites were staked out along Troon Court and Wulfert Road, and a sales office was set up on Troon. The developer selected 4 companies as authorized home builders; their designs were subject to review by the Sanctuary’s Architectural Review Board. Each builder put up a model home. Prospective buyers could follow a visit to the sales office with a tour of the Troon neighborhood and an opportunity to talk to builders. When a sale was made, the buyer of a residence was required to purchase an equity golf membership, which at that time cost \$25,000.



Art Hills, speaking at the Sanctuary ground-breaking celebration (Courtesy BTS)

Aerial images of the development of Wulfert Point and the Sanctuary Golf Club



This 1988 aerial photograph of Wulfert Point shows the undeveloped land (top center) that would become the Sanctuary Golf Club. The thin white line going from the lower right all the way to the upper middle is the old Wulfert Road. Just before it ends, there is an open area where the Mitchells and then the Craigs lived.
(Courtesy Jon Heinrich)



Wulfert Holdings began building the Sanctuary in April, 1992. The old Wulfert Road is still visible, as the white line going from the lower center, through an open area that is the start of the maintenance department, to the upper right.
(Courtesy BTS)



By November of 1992, much has changed. The new Wulfert Road, on the left, is paved and winds past the beginnings of holes 13 and 14. The 12th hole is completed just above the maintenance area, on the lower left. Lakes on 14, 17, and 9 are in the middle of the photograph.
(Courtesy BTS)



By 1994, the golf course and club house are built. Most of the Troon Court lots have houses (lower right.) The SCCF Eagle Buffer separates Troon from Baltusrol.
(Courtesy BTS)

Hole	Gold Tee	Blue Tee	White Tee	Red Tee	Men's Hdcp	Par	Ladies' Hdcp
1	399	389	379	282	9	4	11
2	354	346	324	279	13	4	13
3	410	401	384	301	5	4	7
4	197	190	183	147	17	3	17
5	349	337	321	285	11	4	9
6	532	524	509	435	3	5	3
7	205	196	188	152	15	3	15
8	392	355	339	305	7	4	5
9	566	528	490	456	1	5	1
OUT	3404	3266	3117	2642		36	
10	373	359	325	293	10	4	12
11	398	379	353	342	14	4	14
12	170	159	149	100	16	3	16
13	409	396	367	329	8	4	10
14	532	507	494	446	2	5	2
15	409	393	363	339	12	4	8
16	164	152	142	115	18	3	18
17	440	430	410	314	6	4	6
18	507	497	482	427	4	5	4
IN	3402	3272	3085	2705		36	
TOT	6806	6538	6202	5347		72	





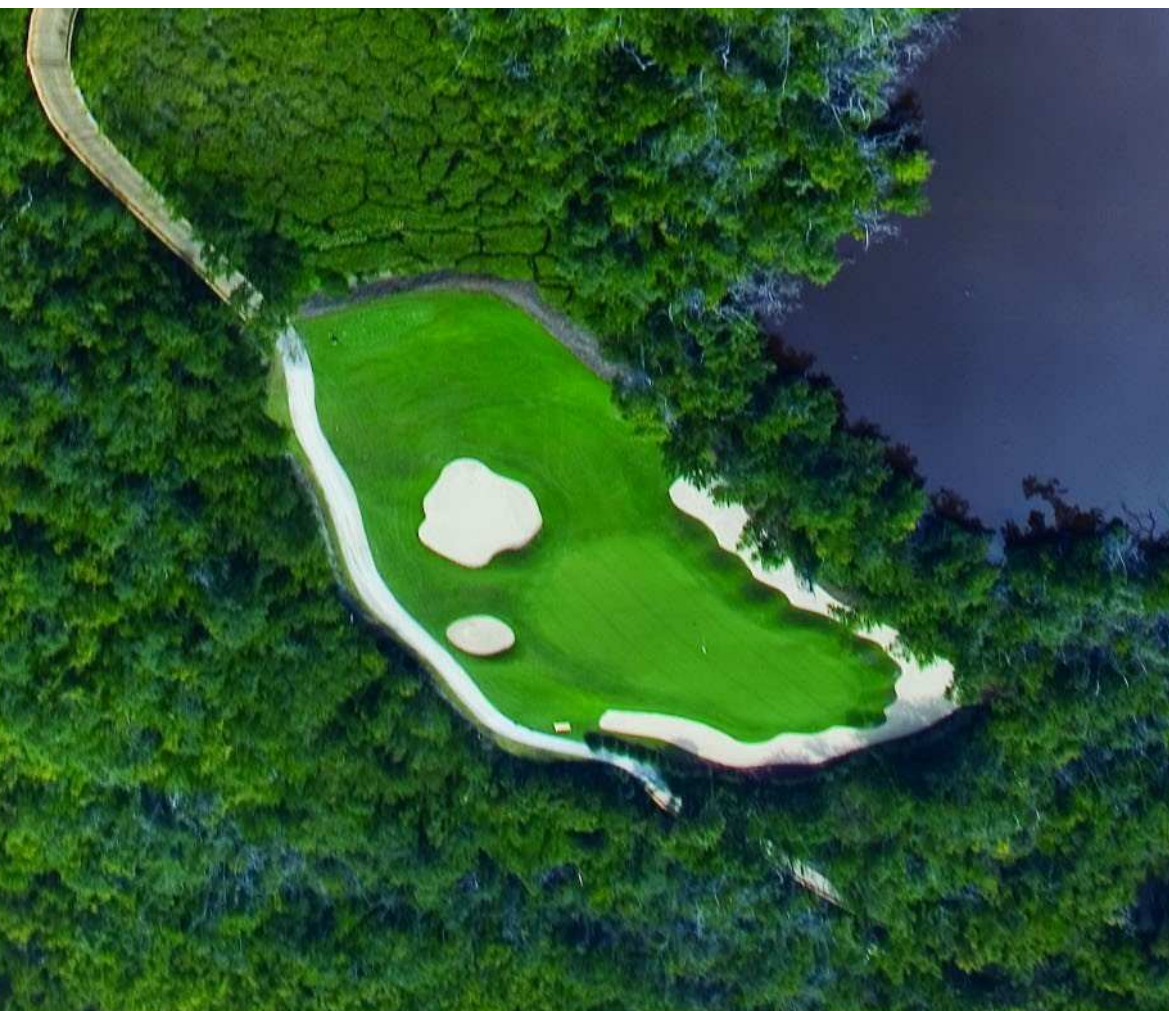
The Sanctuary's golf program got underway in 1993. The developer persuaded Art Smithwick, Director of Golf at Fiddlesticks Country Club in Fort Myers, to join the Sanctuary. An experienced professional, Art went right to work developing a golf program. He set up weekly events and tournaments from a temporary pro shop located near the 9th tee. He was a stickler for detail: the pro shop was run efficiently, the golf carts were lined up perfectly, he and his staff wore dress shirts and long pants even in the hottest weather. Members quickly became accustomed to seeing Art, clipboard in hand, signing up players for upcoming events. He instilled in his staff a very high standard for professionalism, courtesy, and service, and many of his assistants went on to become directors of golf.

Opposite The original 1993 scorecard features four tee locations, from the back gold championship tees to the forward red women's tees. The colors were be changed after turnover.

Left top Art Smithwick addresses golfers before an event. The white and yellow building was the club's temporary pro shop, and next to it was a practice putting green. This building later became the Snackery and was moved to its current location on the 10th tee in 1996.

Left middle The pro shop moved to its permanent home in the clubhouse in 1994. Assistant Pro Ed Lockard (left) posed for a publicity photo. Ed went on to become the Sanctuary's second director of golf.

Left bottom Participants in the 1994 Ladies Senior Club Championship, a 2-day individual stroke play event, with gross and net winners.



The golf course has undergone a number of changes over the years, and these began almost immediately after it opened. In the summer of 1994, the 7th hole, an intimidating par-3, was made a little easier. The large bunker that wrapped around the area in front of the green was partly filled in. Tee shots that carried the mangrove wetlands without reaching the green could now land safely on grass, and players no longer had to face a long sand shot to the green. (Greenside bunkers still guarded the green.) Two summers later, the green on the fourth hole was moved closer to Pine Island Sound. The new location and the removal of several trees opened up spectacular water vistas.

Building the Club facilities continued through the rest of the 1990s. Tennis courts opened in 1994; two years later, the tennis building and pool were completed. Christie Bradley was hired to lead the tennis program, and she started the first round robins, mixers, and exhibition games. The clubhouse was completed in stages during 1994, and a gala opening of the entire building took place in February, 1995. Members became more active in the Club and initiated programs that continue to this day, including Ladies Bridge, Couples (now called Dinner) Bridge, and Book Club.

The number of equity members increased substantially, growing from 154 in 1993 to over 250 in 1996. When the membership reached 250, Club documents called for the establishment of a members' Advisory Committee to serve as a liaison between the members and the Club's Board of Governors. (The Board consisted of Jeff Milton, John Naumann, and Greg Kapfer.) So, in the fall of 1996, Naumann announced that five equity members had been selected to serve for a year and had begun meeting with the Club's management. The following fall, a new group of five members were chosen for the Advisory Committee.

In March, 1998, the Board of Governors held an informational meeting for equity members. Anticipating the turnover of the Club in October 31, 1999, the Board announced the creation of 5 new committees: Golf, Greens, Tennis, Clubhouse, and Entertainment. These new committees, along with the Advisory Committee, would work with the Board in an advisory capacity. In addition, the Board recognized the need for a Turnover Committee. They proposed to amend the Club documents to allow for the election of this committee and invited interested members to submit their names and qualifications. The Board proposed to oversee the election of this committee.

However, the Advisory Committee strongly believed that the Turnover Committee needed complete independence from the Club's Board and should be chosen without the Club's involvement. They wrote to the Club's membership and proposed a two-step process to establish the Turnover Committee and its charter and to select the five Turnover Committee members. The Club's membership overwhelmingly approved the process and elected the five-member committee in June, 1998. The Board of Governors officially recognized the Turnover Committee shortly thereafter.

Opposite left The 7th hole, before and after changes to the large bunker
Opposite right The 4th hole, before and after moving the green
 (Top photos courtesy BTS; bottom photos by Nile Young, Jr.)

Turnover Festivities

Club members celebrated the turnover with a weekend of activities. On Saturday, golfers participated in the "You Can't Call This Golf" tournament. It challenged 140 intrepid players with new ways of playing, including putting blindfolded and driving with socks on their hands. Tennis players had their own "Not Ready for Prime Time" event. Sunday evening brought the first Governors' Ball, where 215 enthusiastic members enjoyed dining and dancing.



The Turnover Committee – Terry Lautenbach, Chair, John Britton, Art Cassell, Bill Harrison, and Bill Kish – was an exceptional team with a wealth of experience in business, management, law, finance, construction, human resources, and information technology. All of these skills were called upon to tackle the job of negotiating a turnover agreement with the developer/Board of Governors. Over the next 16 months, the Turnover Committee members met with the Club’s Board and key managers. They performed a detailed inventory of the Club’s assets and a thorough examination of its finances. They gathered and organized complex membership records. They learned the details of the Club’s operations, staffing, and budgeting. The Club was officially turned over to the equity members on time, and the final settlement between the Club and the developer was concluded in April, 2001.

The newly-elected Board of Governors took office on November 1, 1999. It consisted of the five Turnover Committee members plus 4 others. Bob Berendt, Bill Brodbeck, and Stokes Fishburne were equity members who had worked on committees during the turnover. John Naumann, the ninth board member, represented the developer, who by agreement with the Turnover Committee was given a seat on the board for a one-year period.

The Sanctuary Board of Governors, 1999



Top President Terry and Carole Lautenbach, Vice President Art and Susan Cassell, Secretary John Britton, Treasurer Bill and Jane Harrison
Bottom Bill and Peg Kish, Bill and Jan Brodbeck, Stokes Fishburne, Bob and Sara Berendt



The golf course has areas designed to accommodate wildlife. An alligator basks on a protected space by a water hazard.



General Manager Ken Kouril presents a donation to Al Hanser of the Community Foundation of the Islands.



Men and women from the Club compete each year in the Hope Hospice Tennis Challenge.



Club members participate in bird counts led by Superintendent Kyle Sweet (upper right).



The Community Challenge is supported by sponsors from all over the islands. Head Golf Pro Drew Donnelly stands by the trophy table.



Tennis Pro Christie Bradley, the 2009 and 2010 United States Professional Tennis Association National Clay Court Singles Champion, organizes the charity event.



Above Dedicated Club members volunteered to “Adopt-a-Hole” and remove vines from overgrown areas on the golf course.

Below The Club continues to offer bridge lessons and games for players of all skill levels.



The new Board encouraged members to take an active role in the club by participating in committees. Dozens of members signed up and went to work organizing new social activities, enhancing the golf and tennis programs, reviewing and revising the Club’s by-laws, improving the golf course, setting financial policy, and developing membership programs. The Board solicited input from members and employees by beginning annual surveys. These surveys continue to help the Club improve its policies and services.

President Terry Lautenbach believed the Club needed to develop closer ties to the Sanibel and Captiva community. To this end, he established a Conservation Committee to work with the Club’s neighbors SCCF and “Ding” Darling. Recognizing the importance of environmental stewardship to all residents of the islands, he encouraged the Club to complete the rigorous certification process to become an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 2003. Today, the Club’s Wildlife Committee partners with island conservation organizations to offer bird counts, wildlife walks, speakers, and other activities to members and their families.

Terry also directed the Club to conduct its first Community Outing in 2001. The Club invited workers from the City of Sanibel and its police department, the Sanibel and Captiva Fire Districts, the Island Water Association, SCCF, CROW, “Ding” Darling, and the US Postal Service to the Club for a round of golf followed by a barbecue. This annual event is the Club’s way of thanking service workers for their invaluable contributions to the islands.

About the same time, the Club began two annual charitable events. The Club hosted its first Sanctuary Community Golf Challenge in 2003. The Club’s major fundraiser, this tournament always sells out and receives generous sponsorships from many businesses and individuals. It has donated nearly \$1 million to the Sanibel-Captiva Community Foundation (later to the Charitable Foundation of the Islands) to assist local residents and non-profit organizations. The tennis program hosts its own charitable event, the annual Hope Hospice Tennis Challenge. Beginning in 2003 and benefiting the Fort Myers Hope Hospice, the tournament draws players from all over Lee County and has raised more than \$100,000.

Enlarging and Refurbishing the Clubhouse



Formal dining room, under construction



Exterior of the formal dining room



Veranda, under construction



Formal dining room

Photo by Nile Young, Jr.



Lobby

Photo by Nick Adams



Veranda

Photo by Nick Adams

As the club membership grew, the Board of Governors began five years of expanding and enhancing the Club's facilities. The first major project was building a fitness center. There had been plans to have a fitness facility in the lower level of the clubhouse, but low ceilings and lack of windows made that space unattractive. Instead, the Club decided to expand the tennis building to accommodate both tennis and fitness. During the summer of 2001, the verandas on two sides of the tennis building were enclosed, the locker and retail areas were reconfigured, and the resulting space was filled with state-of-the-art exercise equipment.

Next, the Board of Governors turned their attention to the clubhouse and golf course. The clubhouse was proving to be insufficient for the needs of the growing membership. The principal problem was that there was not enough space to accommodate a large party in the formal dining room and, at the same time, allow members to dine in the grill. As more and more members were holding or sponsoring large functions that brought revenue to the club, other members were inconvenienced by having the grill room unavailable to them. The small kitchen struggled to handle large numbers of diners; office and meeting room space was inadequate; and the employees' locker and dining areas were unacceptable.

The golf course also needed attention. The course was originally planted with Bermuda grass, which grows very well in the summer heat, but goes dormant when the weather grows cold. To keep the course attractive and playable in the winter, the Club had been overseeding with rye grass, which thrives in cooler weather and then dies back in the late spring. But after 10 years of expensive overseeding, the Bermuda grass was growing thinner. In some areas, undesirable hybrid grasses were taking hold and compromising the quality of the course. To make matters worse, the water used for irrigation had a high salt content that was not suitable for Bermuda grass.

In 2003-2004, the Board of Governors, led by President Bill Brodbeck, developed a strategic plan to address these issues. They traveled to other clubs and brought in consultants and architects. They held dozens of meetings with the Club's committees and members to seek their input and support. Finally, at the 2004 annual meeting, they brought their plan before the membership. They proposed to expand and upgrade the clubhouse and to replant the course with paspalum grass between May and October of 2005. This was an ambitious undertaking, but one that the Board felt was in the best interest of the Club. The members agreed and voted by a substantial majority to proceed.

The Board began by putting in place a management committee to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan. Headed by President Leo Larkin, it included former and future Presidents Bill Brodbeck, Jon Heinrich, and Gerry Risch, Governor Ralph Clark, and Club General Manager Ned Welc. They spent more than a year fine-tuning the plan, getting required permits, and working with vendors. In May, 2005, the Club closed and moved its administrative staff to a trailer in the parking lot. The next six months saw a flurry of activity. The Bermuda grass was killed by fumigation; a number of improvements were made to the course layout (with the advice and counsel of Art Hills); and the course was replanted with sprigs and sod of paspalum. The clubhouse was completely gutted. The outside verandas surrounding the building were enclosed to provide additional space for a complete second kitchen, employee facilities, elevators, meeting rooms, and bar areas. A new HVAC was installed on the roof. Finally, the inside was refurnished and decorated.

There were plenty of hurdles along the way. The causeway bridge connecting Sanibel to the mainland had developed cracks and was closed to heavy vehicles during the day. Trucks partially loaded with building materials could cross the bridge one at a time and only at night. The City of Sanibel levied unexpected impact fees and required an additional "grease pit" for the kitchen. Hurricanes Charley and Wilma in 2004 and 2005 slowed work. The Club added a number of member-suggested extras, like updating the men's and ladies' locker rooms.



Hurricane Charley caused extensive damage to the course in 2004.



In 2005, Bermuda grass was covered with huge sheets of plastic and fumigated.



Once the plastic was removed, sprigs of paspalum were planted.



The sprigs grew and covered the course with lush paspalum grass.

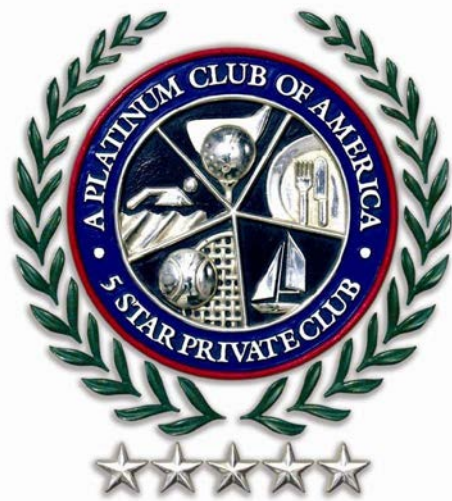
Regrassing the Golf Course



Nonetheless, the new facilities opened on time. On a drizzly November 1, the course was opened, and members filled the tee times. They warmed up on the expanded practice areas, and they tried out the paspalum course with newly lasered yardages. Later that week, the refurbished clubhouse welcomed members with a grand opening.

These new facilities have proved to be a great success. The Sanctuary has become the venue of choice for members' weddings, receptions, and private parties. Members who are active in local non-profits have used the Club to hold fundraisers that have raised millions of dollars for charity. These charity events have solidified the Sanctuary's standing as a vital member of the island community and have brought new members to the Club.

With its world-class golf course, unspoiled natural setting, superb cuisine, and casual elegance, the Sanctuary soon received coveted national awards. In addition to earning the Audubon Certification in 2003, the Club was recognized in 2011 by *GolfWorld* magazine as having one of the Top 100 best pro-shops in the United States. The following year, the American Culinary Federation awarded the Club its Achievement of Excellence. The Sanctuary was one of only eleven organizations so honored for its unparalleled food and beverage program. Several of the Club's chefs have won individual awards in culinary competitions. In 2012, the Club received the prestigious Platinum Clubs of America Award as one of the Top 10 Residential Club Communities in the country. Finally, in 2009 and again in 2013, *BoardRoom* magazine chose the Sanctuary as one of its Distinguished Emerald Clubs of the World.





Wulfert Point is a special place that has witnessed many changes over the centuries. The indigenous Calusa were followed by a farming community and later by groves of coconut palms and key limes. The land was all but abandoned for a time, but was ultimately acquired by people who appreciated its natural landscape and the diversity of its wildlife. They envisioned building a golf community that would complement the beauty of its surroundings. That vision became the Sanctuary Golf Club.

Now, as the first quarter century since the Club's incorporation comes to an end, the Sanctuary is well positioned for its next 25 years. The enthusiastic membership continues to grow, the golf course is more stunning than ever, and the relationship between the Club and the Sanibel community has never been better.

The best is yet to come.



Golf course and wildlife photos by Kyle Sweet



Sanctuary Club Champions



Standing Director of Golf Brett Kist, Ken Robinson, Andy Andrews, Charlie Sheetz, Diane Knight, Sheridan Snell, Melissa Gauntlett, Susie Freund
Seated Dick Snell, Molly Barbee

Not pictured Sharon Tucker, Monica Taylor, Joanne Mewbourne, Bruce Odlaug, Tom Williams, Tom Qualey, Paul Yeakel

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 1994 | Andy Andrews | 2004 | Dick Snell, Sharon Tucker |
| 1995 | Bruce Odlaug, Susie Freund | 2005 | Bruce Odlaug, Sharon Tucker |
| 1996 | Andy Andrews, Monica Taylor | 2006 | Paul Yeakel, Sharon Tucker |
| 1997 | Dick Snell, Joanne Mewbourne | 2007 | Tom Qualey, Sharon Tucker |
| 1998 | Bruce Odlaug, Joanne Mewbourne | 2008 | Dick Snell, Sheridan Snell |
| 1999 | Tom Williams, Sharon Tucker | 2009 | Paul Yeakel, Molly Barbee |
| 2000 | Ken Robinson, Sharon Tucker | 2010 | Charlie Sheetz, Diane Knight |
| 2001 | Dick Snell, Joanne Mewbourne | 2011 | Dick Snell, Molly Barbee |
| 2002 | Dick Snell, Sheridan Snell | 2012 | Dick Snell, Molly Barbee |
| 2003 | Charlie Sheetz, Sharon Tucker | 2013 | Bruce Odlaug, Melissa Gauntlett |

**The Sanctuary Management Team
2013**



The Sanctuary Golf Club

Founders

John Naumann
Jeffrey Milton
William Simmonds

Presidents

Terry Lautenbach
1999-2001
Robert Berendt
2001-2003
William Brodbeck
2003-2004
Jonathan Heinrich
2004-2005
Leo Larkin
2005-2006
Warrin Meyers
2006-2008
Gerry Risch
2008-2010
Robert Chrenc
2010-2011
Jeffrey Springer
2011-

Directors of Golf

Art Smithwick
1993-2005
Ed Lockard
2005-2012
Brett Kist
2013-

Course Superintendents

Tim Sever
1992-1996
Howard Povey
1996-1997
Kyle Sweet
1997-

Director of Tennis and Fitness

Christie Bradley
1994-

General Managers

Peter Tchernitz
1997-1998
Lee Pires
1998-1999
Rudy Seurattan
1999-2000
Steve Ernst
2000-2002
Ned Welc
2002-2007
Ken Kouril
2007-

Executive Chefs

Joe Vallini
1994-1996
Brian Batiz
1997-1999
Tru Phan
1999-2000
Jared Harris
2000-2005
Bob Fusco
2005-2008
Mark Brown
2009-



In the early evening, a flock of ibises flies by the clubhouse on its way to roosting areas.

Photo by Nile Young, Jr.

Additional Reading

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