



**CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

Meeting Date: July 2, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

From: B. Francis, City Manager

Subject: Grady House

Background: At the February 5 Council Meeting, the City Council approved a year extension for the demolition of the Grady House so the City and the Pine Castle Historical Society (PCHS) could plan to move the house. In speaking with the State Historic Preservation Office, SHPO recommends that this house not be moved since it is in its original location and the historic significance of a homestead would be what is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. Moving the house would jeopardize this. The Grady House was built circa 1885 by Noah H. Grady. Mr. Grady had come to the area to sell insurance to citrus growers because the business was booming. There were back to back freezes in 1884 and 1885 and Mr. Grady moved. The house was then rented and in 1906, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Q. Lancaster moved in. He was the first elected Mayor of Belle Isle and for many years the house was called the Lancaster House. The Grady House is considered one of the houses, if not the oldest house in the Pine Castle and Orlando Area.

The City and Cornerstone Charter Academy have no further use for the structure; however if the house was repaired and restored to its former condition, it could play a major role in the development of the Pine Castle Historic District and also play a significant educational role for students in all area schools.

Being on the PCHS, I've had the opportunity to discuss the Grady House at length with the other board members. At the last PCHS meeting, the Board was interested in Belle Isle donating the Grady house to PCHS, the school moving the fence, and Belle Isle either making the repairs to the house as decided at an earlier meeting of the council or turning over the money with the house and PCHS is responsible for fixing the home. The PCHS passed a motion to request the City leave the house on its homestead and that the City Council donate the Grady House to the PCHS.

Staff Recommendation: Although classroom space is at a premium at CCA, CCA is exploring other options to expand the campus; therefore to carve the Grady House and its small area out of the property should not be detrimental to CCA's plans. Therefore it is recommended that the City donate the Grady House to the PCHS, but retain ownership of the property at this time and partner with the PCHS to repair and restore the Grady House.

Suggested Motion: I move that direct the City Attorney to prepare the documentation necessary for the donation of the Grady House to the Pine Castle Historical Society and I further move to leave the Grady House in its current location so the homestead could be placed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

Alternatives: Do not donate the house and continue with the original plan to have the house moved.

Fiscal Impact: TBD based on cost to repair the Grady House.

Attachments: Grady House Historical Information Sheet

For years the Founder's House (Grady/Lancaster House) was the center for cultural activity in Pine Castle, Belle Isle, Conway & Edgewood

Pine Castle quick to help Center for Arts

By ALEX BEASLEY
Staff Writer

Some things just seem to bring out the best in people. For executive director Suzanne Nichols and the people of Pine Castle, that thing is the Pine Castle Center for the Arts. It is through donations, grants, fund-raising or volunteer work, people go out of their way to help the center.

"We aren't very big, and you can never really do the things you really want, but we make the most of it," Miss Nichols said. "So the volunteer fund-raising and donations are invaluable to Suzanne Nichols."



Miss Nichols isn't in it for the money. Her \$11,500 annual salary will hardly make her rich. She just shows the work and she is doing it for a good reason: to help others to follow.

And follow they do. The Pine Castle Arts League, a group of women volunteers, provides help that the center otherwise could not afford. Our guardian angels, Miss Nichols, 28, said with a smile. The arts league helps organize Pine-ner Days, a two-day cultural event that the center has put on for the community for the past seven years. The league also holds fund-raisers

and donates the money to the center. Fund-raisers also are put on by the South Orlando Rotary Club, which painted some of the buildings all without charge.

A group of Boy Scouts, under the guidance of Scoutmaster Ed Smith, donated its time to paint the interior of the Crawford Building, recently donated by the Pine Castle United Methodist Church.

Money to move the building to the center's property was received from the Edgth Bush Foundation in 1990. It is not the first time the foundation has helped the arts center. "We get a great deal of help from the foundation," Miss Nichols said. In the past four years the center has received two \$15,000 matching grants, which matched money that the center had raised.

The center also has received a \$10,000 grant from the foundation to improve programs and facilities and is operating on another \$7,000 grant from the foundation.

Other sources of revenue in the form of memberships, from the center's own book store, Pine Castle Training, Art, which provides the center's register and its bookshop. Even a funeral home is helping out. The Pine Castle Memorial Chapel Funeral Home offered a fire-proof and air-conditioned home here for the center's use. Miss Nichols said one of the center's goals is to provide the community with a cultural center that will improve the quality of life. If actions are any indicator, the community is saying thank you.



Pine Castle Center of the Arts depends on community help.



Three women, Marie Toy, Sherry Sherwood, 58, at the house where Toy and Sherwood, who lives nearby, and Sherwood were childhood friends, and they would like to preserve the Grady's character.

ORLANDO SENTINEL 2001

This article shows childhood friends Marie Toy and Sherry Sherwood in front of the house across Waltham from the Grady House. This house, where Marie was born, is also an historic house and was built in 1908.

In the article she and Sherry were quoted as saying they hoped that Pine Castle's historic character could be preserved. Today their sentiments are shared by many others!

Several preservationists inspected the house and said it was in basically sound condition.

Grady/Lancaster House

Built by Noah H. Grady, 1885
Home of Belle Isle's 1st Elected Mayor, Arthur Q. Lancaster
Known as the oldest house in Pine Castle/Belle Isle

The first resident of the Grady House was undoubtedly its builder, Noah H. Grady. Mr. Grady came to the Orlando area in 1884 to engage in the insurance business when the citrus industry was booming. Unfortunately there were back to back hard freezes in 1884 and 1885 and he left in 1896.

Historian Steve Rajtar said, "At about the turn of the century, the Grady House was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Carol, then in 1903 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tanner moved in. In 1906, Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster acquired it and it became known as the 'Lancaster House'."

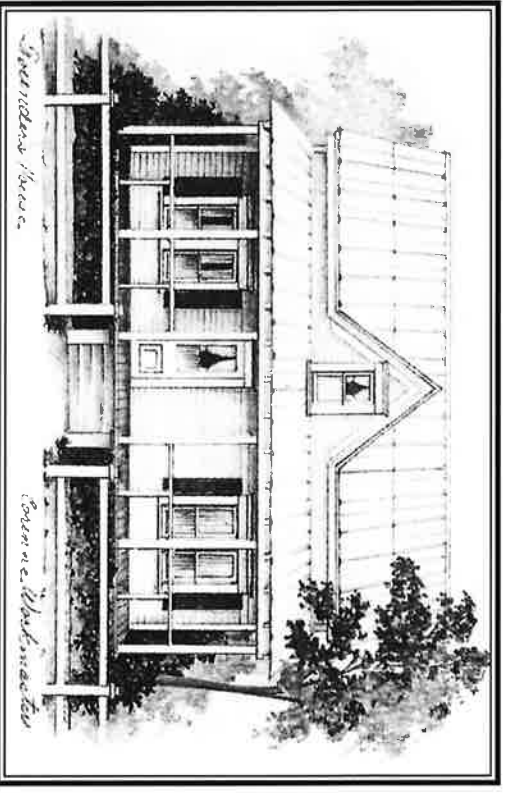
It was sold in 1919 to Mr. and Mrs. Don Harris. It continued to be known as the Lancaster House until it was purchased by the Arts Center.

There are a number of accounts about the house in several issues of the annual Pioneer Days Magazines.



Arthur Q. Lancaster, 1874-1940
First elected Mayor of Belle Isle

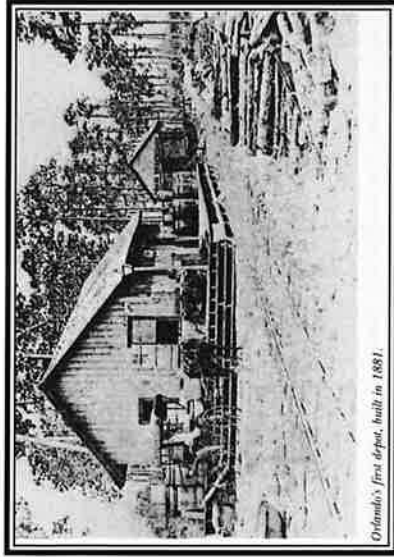
Grady/Lancaster House becomes the Founder's House



In 1972 the house and connecting property were purchased by the Pine Castle Center of the Arts and the house became known as the "Founder's House" in honor of its primary sponsors, some of whom were Florence and Ben Fishback, Irene Day, Shirley Cannon, Jack Holloway and the Edyth Bush Foundation.

Pine Castle Historical Society, Inc., 631 Wilks Avenue, Orlando, FL 32809
www.pinecastlehistory.com
Printed at Ambrose the Printer

Original Construction of the Grady/Lancaster House



Orlando's first depot, built in 1881.

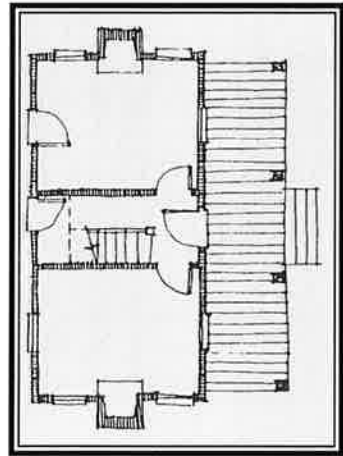
The photo at the right shows the exposed vertical siding under the horizontal clapboard.

The Grady House was built with vertical "board & batten" siding like "the" Pine Castle and Orlando's first railroad depot.

With only primitive sawmills, and an abundance of large pine and cypress trees, most early Central Florida buildings used this construction.



Original floor plan of the Grady/Lancaster House



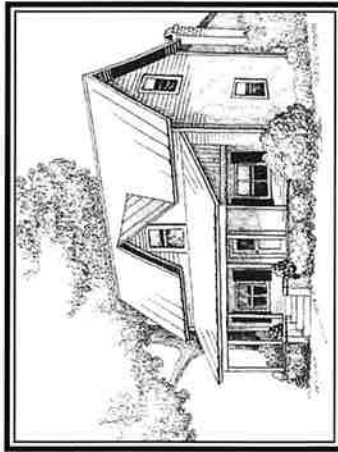
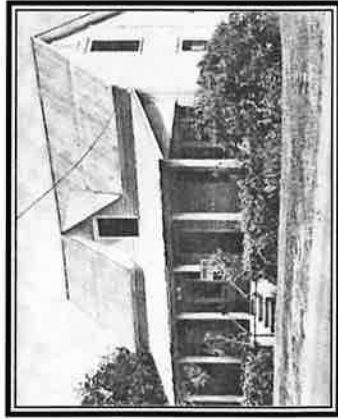
"I-HOUSE" FLOOR PLAN

This house form was essentially a narrow two-story version of the dog-trot house with the breezeway enclosed and stairs built leading to the sleeping rooms above in attic-like spaces. The "necessary room" was an "outhouse." Fireplaces and chimneys were located at the gable ends (the Grady House had no fireplaces).

As with other early vernacular Florida houses, shady porches stretched along the front and a detached cooking and dining structure was to the rear.

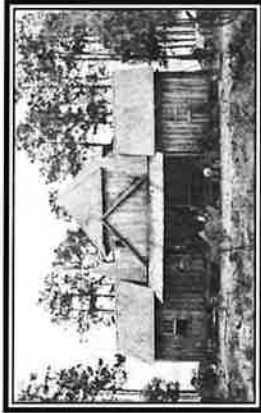
At a later date the detached kitchen and connecting breezeway were removed and three rooms were added, including an indoor bathroom. At some point a small garage was built.

The later additions can be seen in the drawing below, which was based on the photograph which does not show the additions.



Historic Pine Castle and Belle Isle

Today Belle Isle is home to several famous historic sites, "the" Pine Castle, Pleasure Beach, Scotchman's Beach, Crittenden's Dock, Orlando Yacht Club, The Florida Spa, Bear Head Farm, and Daetwyler Nursery (which once compared with Cypress Gardens.) And still standing are a number of historic homes in addition to the Grady/Lancaster House.



"The" Pine Castle 1874



Pleasure Beach 1923



Bear Head Farm 1884



Daetwyler Nursery 1930s - 50s

Mayors of the City of Belle Isle

The Grady/Lancaster House was named in honor of Belle Isle's first elected Mayor, Aruther Q. Lancaster (second from left). The first temporary mayor was Charles Hoffner, for whom Hoffner Avenue is named.

