

The Parrish House

by Pat Burdette

The year is 1882. Along the Indian River near Merritt Island, Florida, a ship from England anchors where wood and stained glass doors are unloaded. The grinding sound of a sawmill invades the silence which is punctuated by the clanging of hammers. Workers keep a wary eye on the Indians traveling the Seminole Trail to South Florida. Likewise, the Indians keep an equally wary eye on the settlers as they prepare evening muck fires to repel the hordes of hungry mosquitoes.

Three years later, in 1885, the three-story Palmetto Lodge is completed as a hunting and fishing lodge

for Judge Barnes of New York. The Queen Anne-style lodge had 12-foot raised paneled ceilings and wainscot, three stained glass doors eight feet tall and one set of double stained glass doors 10 feet high. Scrolled transom accents from an English church read “To Shelter Thee” and “My Queen.”

In 1932, Henry Parrish, Jr. purchased the estate, considered the finest home in the town of Cocoa, and it became known as the Parrish House. The current owners—Henry and Judy Parrish, she is Mayor of Cocoa, have decided to develop the water front property into luxury condominiums, but as the historic



The building setting where it was constructed in 1885.

house is such a part of the area's history, the family decided to move the house and preserve it. The Parrishes selected Modern House and Building Movers of Orlando to relocate their prized possession.

The structure once had a detached kitchen that is now attached, making the overall length of the structure 84 feet, with a width of 45 feet. Foundation blocks were hewn out of coquina rock, as were the bases of two large brick fireplaces. Digging under the structure proved to be difficult as the ground is made up mostly of coquina rock. A neighboring area is known as Rockledge, and now I know why.

First, we placed our W14 x 211 main beams at 25 feet on center, with our W8 x 67 cross beams positioned on either side of each rock pier. Then we placed four cribs and jacks and began pressuring them. As the structure rose, we put more pressure, then more jacks, until the structure finally lifted off the foundation at 240 tons.

The back cribs were fairly well balanced at 70 tons each. The front cribs carried 100 tons, with 60 tons on the kitchen side and 40 tons opposite. Using the center point



Lumber from a church in England provided for 12' foot ceilings, stained glass doors and inscriptions.

formula, we determined the balance point to be 2.5 feet from the center of our bolster. At the time, the longest drop bolster I had could accommodate the 26 feet between the main beams, but not the 100-ton load.

Using some steel from another beam we were fabricating, we placed a double W12 x 120 beam over the top of the bolster and se-

cured the ends with

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History of the Parrish House

Construction began in 1882 and was completed in 1885

Some of the wood and trimmings used in the construction were salvaged from a church that was being dismantled in England. The remaining wood used was obtained from a local Merritt Island, Florida mill. Merritt Island pine is famous for the fact it is extremely hard, making the use of nails useless. Even termites choose not to make it a part of their diet.

The Parrish House was originally known as the Palmetto Lodge, built by New York Judge Barnes as a hunting and fishing lodge.

Some of the interior wood trimmings include 12' raised paneled ceilings and wainscot, three 8' stained glass doors and one set of double stained glass doors 10' high. Scrolled transom accents from the English church read "To Shelter Thee" and "My Queen".

At the time of construction, the lead carpenter earned \$2.50 a day and laborers earned \$1.00 daily.

The Seminole Trail passed the house, along the Indian River, and was frequented by Indian families who would knock at the door to trade their goods.

Cocoa was a remote location at the turn of the century and only became a resort area in the 1920's with the completion of Henry Flagler's railroad from Jacksonville to Miami. The main industry along the coast was citrus and seafood. The area increased in population and, homes and businesses with the building boom of the 1950's and 60's that saw construction of the Space Center in nearby Cape Canaveral.