

## First history book about Port St. Lucie encompasses 50 years

By Cathy Reeder

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PORT ST. LUCIE — In 1961, when Port St. Lucie was incorporated, the cattle outnumbered the cowboys. By 1970, there were only 330 people. In 2010, there were 164,603.

That's a lot of people who might like to know the history of this place they call home.

City officials knew that four years ago when they started planning the City's 50th anniversary celebration for April 2011. So they planned an official history book of the city.

The result, a 200-page coffee table book, "Port St. Lucie at 50: A City for All People," will be unveiled April 25 at 7 p.m. at the City Council meeting to kick off the City's 50th Anniversary Celebration Week.

It was produced by the Port St. Lucie Historical Society and written by Nina Baranski, the city's former communications director. She will be on hand all week to sign copies.

Full of pictures and history, it will help residents appreciate their city in a new light, she said.

She interviewed dozens of movers and shakers and people whose businesses grew over the decades with the city. Double-checking what they told her took a lot of time, she said.

"There were a lot of people more than willing to share, but then you had to make sure it was right, you had to go to public records," she said.

Those records were provided by current and/or former clerks of court, city attorneys, city engineers, the police department, the city council, local newspapers and officials with early hotels and the city's developer General Development Corp.

Her biggest surprise? How small the city budget was at first.

"They really just paid the sheriff to cover the city, about \$100,000 a year," she said. "They'd stash the rest in a bank account for the city. They'd put away \$1 million a year."

Developer GDC still owned the roads and the utilities then, Baranski said. Even the first park, Sportsman's Park, was developed by the Optimists, a civic group, not the city.



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