

129 N. Halifax Ave. Property

In the early 1900's, Ransom Eli Olds, manufacturer of the early Oldsmobile automobile, participated in the first auto race on the beach. During this time he summered in Daytona Beach from his winter home of Lansing, Michigan. He acquired riverfront property on North Halifax Avenue and built a three-room frame retirement home for his parents.

After the death of his parents, the house became the Olds winter home. He enlarged the house in the early 1920's because, according to local lore, Olds believed it was bad luck to tear down a house.

The new home was built around the original frame to become a three and a half story structure of wood frame, coquina rock, brick, hollow tile and stucco. The roof was made of imported Spanish tile.

The house had an entrance and a 25 by 45 foot living room with a fireplace and open cypress beam ceiling. The living room was said to have been the largest living room, in a private home, in the area. There was a dining room, study, sewing room, bedroom with bath, kitchen and three pantries plus a breakfast room and solarium.

The second floor had 7 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, a sundeck and a playroom. The third floor had 2 finished rooms and a large storage area. The full basement included one bedroom and bath, a rumpus, game room, laundry and workshop.

Between the house and the river was a separate building that housed a 40 foot indoor swimming pool, dressing room and an attached boathouse with a 186 foot pier. Again, local lore said that there was an escape tunnel from the main house to the boathouse but evidence of this was never found.

A separate two story garage had a two bedroom apartment on the second floor and one bedroom on the ground floor. The grounds were watered with a sprinkler system from a deep well.

Olds lived in his Halifax Avenue villa until 1949. His daughter, Mrs. Clarence S. Roe of Ormond Beach, sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Howard Dayton. The house was sold again in May of 1957 to General and Mrs. Fulgencio Batista, President of Cuba for \$82,500. The Batista family took title of the Daytona property under Mrs. Batista's maiden name, Martha Fernandez. With the purchase of the Daytona home, the Batista's now owned 400 feet on Halifax Avenue. The Batista's owned and lived in a home to the north on their many visits to Daytona in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Their son, Roberto, was born in Daytona during that time.

Batista planned to relocate his family to Daytona when his term as President ended. After Fidel Castro overthrew Batista's regime, the U. S. government would not permit the family's move to the United States.

In 1957, the Batista's deeded the northern portion of the Halifax Avenue property and their home to the city of Daytona as a Cuban Museum. In 1964, the southern portion, the Olds' property, was listed for \$70,000 but was sold for \$35,000 with the understanding that the property would house a church. The entrance became the narthex, the super-sized living room became the nave with the iconostas and

sanctuary, the ground floor bedroom was converted into the social hall, the other rooms were remodeled into the priest's office and meeting areas. The second floor was used as classrooms and storage.

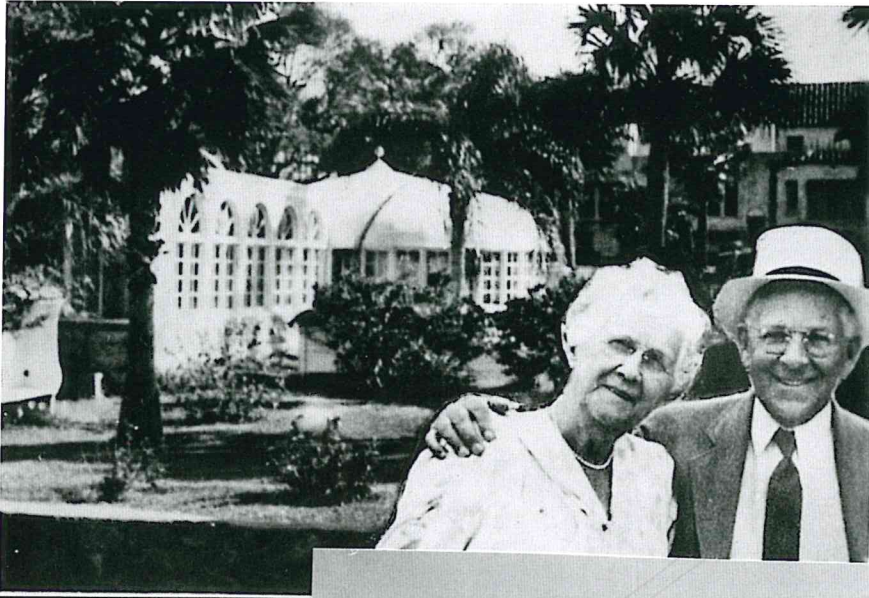
The pool, boathouse and garage were leveled in 1970 and a new red brick and glass community center was built on the bank of the Halifax River. Icons were placed in the community center for Sunday services. During the week the icons were removed while the center was used for church meetings, classrooms, church functions and weekly bingo fund raisers. The center was the largest and most beautiful banquet room in the area and was in great demand by the local community. With the rentals of the community center and the weekly bingo the additional funds were available for the construction of the new church.

The Olds' house had served the community well and the land was cleared in anticipation of the new church. Construction began on the new red brick and gold domed St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in 1974. On October 16, 1977, His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos consecrated the new church at 129 North Halifax Avenue.

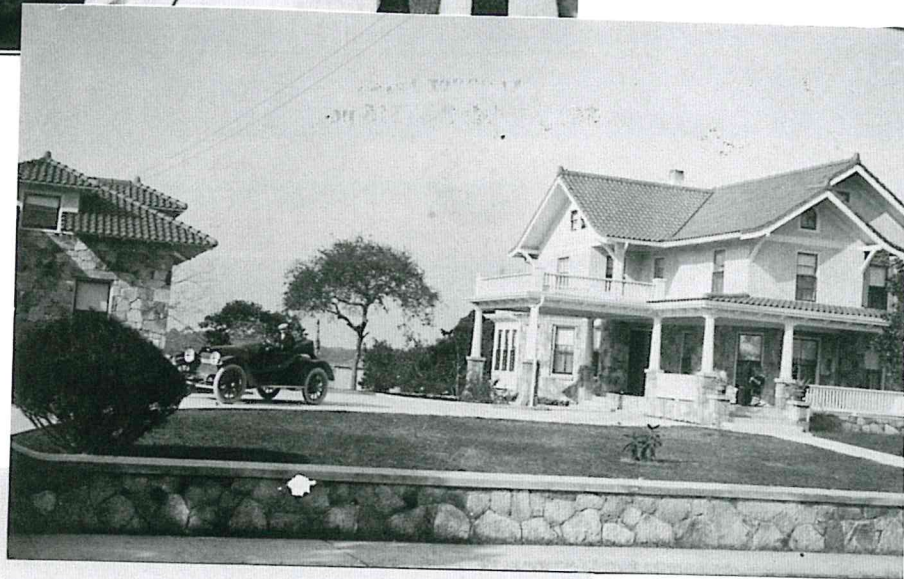
As a note of interest, it was recently announced that the Oldsmobile will no longer be produced.



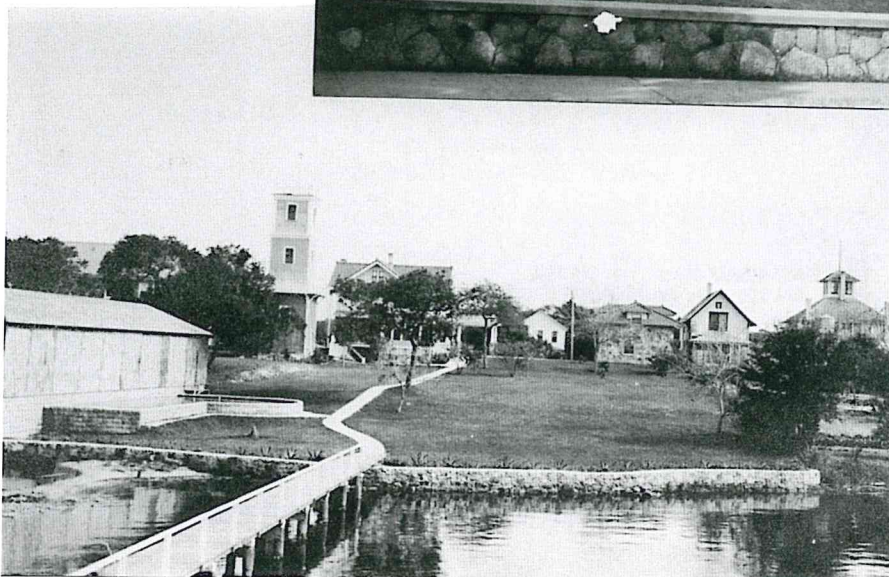
The Olds House



Mr. and Mrs. Ransom E. Olds standing near their boathouse and pool west of their home.



Halifax Avenue view.

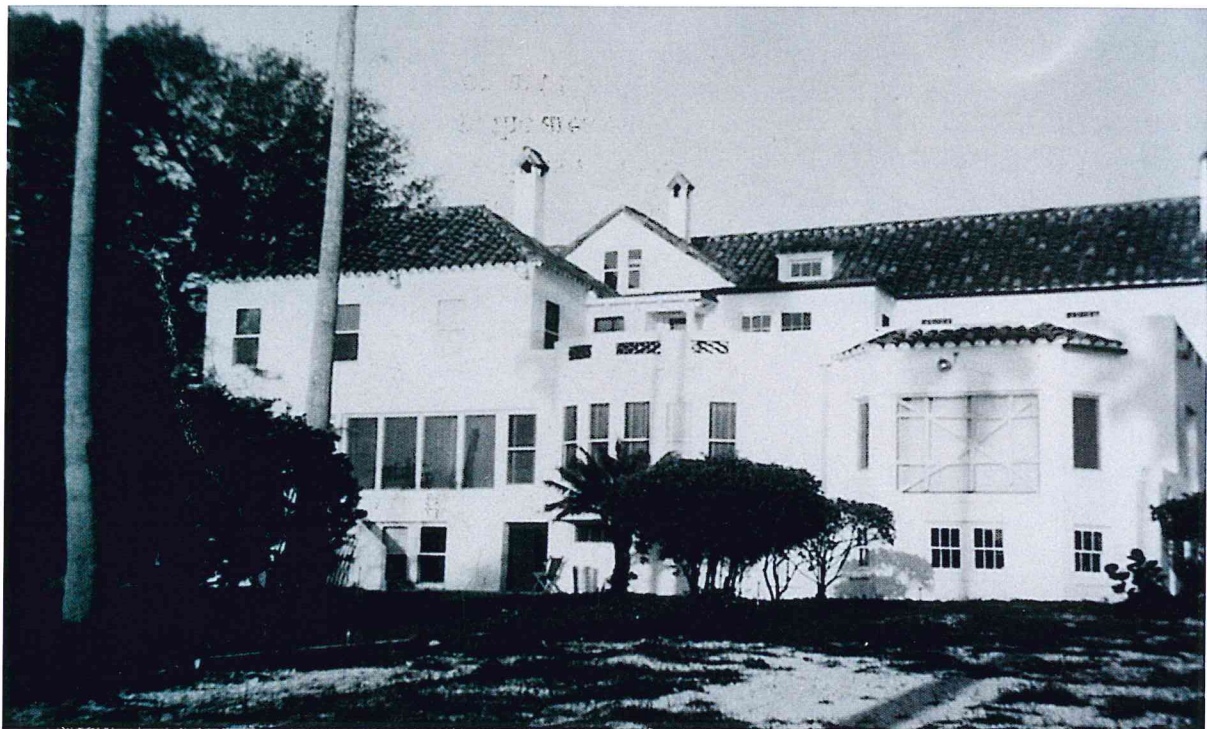


Viewing the property from the Halifax River.

The Olds House Becomes Batista House



Halifax Avenue view of the Batista Home soon after it was purchased by the church.



West view of the Batista home.

Batista Social Years



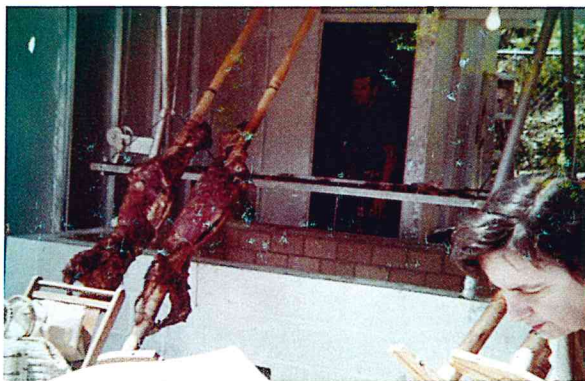
George Michaelos and Fr. John.



Evangelos and Koula Carratt, Diane Billias, Fr. John, X, Julia Melachrino, X, X, Mary Michaelos, X, X.



Jim Forest preparing the lambs on spits at the pavilion for the first community Agape Picnic. Assisted by Harold Creticos, X, Steno Augustine, Chris Theos standing. Not photographed: Costa Magoulas, Gabriel "Bill" George and Michael Forest.



Also helping, John Kalas in the shed and Sophia Forest.



John Kalas and Jim Forest leave for well deserved rest time.

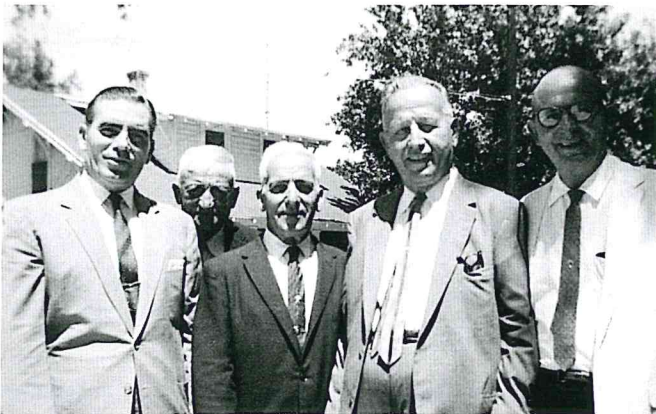
Batista Social Years



Gentlemen's Cake Baking Contest: Fr. John, the Champ Steno Augustine and Chris Theos.



Stacy and Steno Augustine with Steve Xynidis.



George Karpodinis, visitor Nick Poulos, George Brianas, Peter Athas, Sam Stratos.



Fr. John by the John Michaelos Memorial at Daytona Memorial Park (formerly Bellevue-Cedar Hill Memory Garden).



Fr. James Karalexis completing the baptismal ceremony for James Leras, held by Michael Forest, godfather.

Batista Social Years



Paul Joanos, Eva Joanos (Kypreos), Emanuel, Mike and Jimmy Joanos.



Panorea Panos (Papalambros), Jim Forest, Sophia Forest, Charles Panos, Angie Forest.



Fran (Billias) Lempesis, Michael Billias, Sylvia (Billias) Pappas, front Diane and George Billias.



President Theodore Kypreos



William Kampiles.



Ronnie Canakaris.



Altar boy: Johnny Spirides at (Batista house) St. Demetrios.