The History and Layout of Cinnamon Cove

Villas I is one of fourteen (14) sub-associations that make up the Master Association of Cinnamon Cove, a gated community developed by US Homes. The 14 sub-associations represent a total of 770 ownership units in Cinnamon Cove and include three associations of Single Family Homes, seven Terrace associations that include buildings 1 through 12, and four different Villas associations.

The Single Family association known as SF 1 is made up of homes located on the south side of Ginger Lane and both sides of Caravel Circle that runs on the south side of Cinnamon Cove. It includes 46 homes. SF 2 is located along both sides of Coriander Lane in the western part of Cinnamon Cove and also includes homes along the western portion of Caravel Circle from the southern portion of Caravel Circle to Bayleaf Lane. It is made up of 80 living units located in 71 buildings. Of those 71 buildings, 62 are individual homes and 18 are duplex homes. SF 3 is made up of homes along both sides of Spinnaker Way, homes on both sides of Cinnamon Cove Blvd. (from the guard house to Caravel Circle) and the homes along the northern section of Caravel Circle. It is made up of 38 individual homes.

The Terrace buildings are numbered starting with Building #1 that sits just north of the Club house and tennis courts. The buildings are numbered consecutively counter clockwise from Building #1 going around to the last one which is #12. The Terrace 1 Association consists of only Building 1. Terrace 2 consists of buildings 9, 10, 11 & 12. Terrace 3 includes buildings 6, 7 & 8. Terrace 4 includes only Building #2. Terrace 5 includes only Building #5. Terrace 6 includes only building #4. Terrace 7 includes only building #3. We can thank US Homes for the scrambled numbering system. Each Terrace building is actually three separate structures connected to one another by a covered walkway. There is one elevator located in each Terrace in the center of the three connected structures. There are 30 living units in each of the 12 Terrace buildings.

There are four Villas Associations. Villas I is located basically across from the Club House and Building #1. Villas II is located in the north west corner of Cinnamon Cove, bounded by Bayleaf Lane, the west portion of the east-west part of Caraway Lane, separated from Villas III by the north south section of Caraway Lane, and the west portion of the north section of Caravel Circle. Villas III is located in the north east corner of Cinnamon Cove, separated from Villas II by the north south section of Caraway Lane. It is difficult to distinguish between Villas III and Villas IV. But, if you look closely at the wood fence on the east side of Ginger Lane (north end), you can see a slight difference in the wood fence construction. That is the point that separates Villas III from Villas IV which sits to the south of Villas III.

Villas I is made up of 6 triplexes and 6 sixplexes
Villas II is made up of 10 triplexes, 8 sixplexes and 2 fiveplexes
Villas III is made up of 6 triplexes, 4 sixplexes and 2 fiveplexes
Villas IV is made up of 4 triplexes, 2 duplexes and 6 sixplexes

The breakdown of living units by sub-associations is as follows:

SF 1	46 units
SF 2	80 units
SF 3	38 units
Terrace 1	30 units
Terrace 2	120 units
Terrace 3	90 units
Terrace 4	30 units
Terrace 5	30 units
Terrace 6	30 units
Terrace 7	30 units
Villas I	54 units
Villas II	88 units
Villas III	52 units
Villas IV	52 units

Total	770 units

The total number of units in Villas II and Villas IV don't agree with beginning and ending unit numbers. Villas II starts with number 55 and ends with number 144, which adds up to a total of 90 units but there are only 88. Apparently US Homes skipped two numbers when assigning unit numbers. The same thing

happened with Villas IV. Their numbers start with 197 and conclude with 250 which add up to 54 units. Again US Homes skipped two numbers when assigning them to units, and Villas IV has but 52 units.

Units 52, 53 and 54 of Villas I were some of the first units built in Cinnamon Cove along with Building 1 and some Single Family 1 homes. These units were built in 1982 and put up for sale in late 1982. The last Villas I units certified for occupancy on March 15, 1984 were units 7 through 18. Villas III units were under construction in 1987. At one time Cinnamon Cove had it's own sewage disposal plant located where Buildings 4 and 5 are now located. Cinnamon Cove was hooked up to the county sewer system in about 1990 and the sewage disposal plant was dismantled and Buildings 4 and 5 were erected. Cinnamon Cove was not completely built out until about 1992. US Homes had started building the next door Kelly Greens in about 1986-87 before they completed Cinnamon Cove. That, along with the lull in the real estate market, hindered the completion of Cinnamon Cove.

On September 13, 1979, US Homes signed an agreement with Barnett Bank of Fort Myers (since purchased by Bank of America) to purchase the land on which Cinnamon Cove now stands. The bank had taken ownership of the land as a result of the bankruptcy of James A. Bernet, who originally had tried to build a community called, "San Carlos Happy Homes Village". At the time of the agreement with Barnett Bank, US Homes paid $50,000 and then took six (6) options

Option 1 to be exercised by May 31, 1980 for 13 acres for the amount of $240,454.50
Option 2 to be exercised by Nov. 30, 1980 for 13 acres for the amount of $250,809.00
Option 3 to be exercised by Nov. 30, 1981 for 26 acres for the amount of $543,036.00
Option 4 to be exercised by Nov. 30, 1982 for 26 acres for the amount of $584,454.00
Option 5 to be exercised by Nov. 30, 1983 for 26 acres for the amount of $625,872.00
Option 6 to be exercised by Nov. 30, 1984 for 27.64 acres for the amount of $686,040.00

Therefore, Cinnamon Cove is made up of 131.64 acres and US Homes paid $2,980,665.50 for the land. Divide the amount paid by 131.64 acres and we see they paid $22,642.55 per acre and dividing the amount paid by 770 units, the amount paid for land per unit was $3,870.99. An unknown is what, if any, infrastructure had already been added by the previously bankrupt developer.

I tried to trace the ownership of the ground Cinnamon Cove was built on back beyond when US Homes acquired it. Things got kind of complicated. James A. Bernet, whose residence of record was the town of North East, Pennsylvania 14628, purchased several different parcels of land in the SW 1/4 of Section 6, Township 46 South, Range 6 East, of Lee County in 1974 and 1976 and apparently put them together to form what he called "San Carlos Happy Homes Village". There is a record that on January 5, 1976 he filed a "Notice of Commencement" with a "Notice of Improvement Intent" consisting of Excavation and Moving of Fill Dirt. There are many entries in the Land Records Books of Lee County for James A. Bernet. The land record transactions for Lee County are on computer and can be accessed via the Internet back to 1988. From then on back to 1974 the records are on microfiche and are indexed by name with both buyer and seller listed together. From there on back they are on microfiche, but you must look up buyers and sellers separately which makes for a lot more work. I do remember driving out McGregor and then onto San Carlos Blvd. in 1968 on our way to Fort Myers Beach, and all this land around here was farm land, but I don't know what they were then growing here. I would say that James A. Bernet had the right idea about developing this area. However, he was probably a little too early with his timing and certainly found he couldn't manage the developing of his ground from far away Pennsylvania.

I then contacted Ed and Tom Kelly, long time land owners and farmers in the Cinnamon Cove vicinity. They bought 80 acres of ground in about 1950 to the north of Cinnamon Cove. They farmed the ground for many years. In 1979 they sold off 20 acres on the north side that fronted on what is now Kelly Road. There was a low spot in their original 80 acres that they could only grow vegetables on in early spring before the rainy season. In the mid 1970s they contracted with a man to dig a lake in that area. This is the lake we can see today that is now part of Coco Bay just to the north of Cinnamon Cove. In 2003 they sold their remaining 60 acres to Coco Bay. The land where Kelly Greens is located had never been in

the Kelly family. It was really scrubby ground with palmetto bushes, snakes and alligators on it. It was never farmed that Ed Kelly ever remembers. Going back further both Kelly brothers remember that Elmo Ballard owned the Cinnamon Cove ground from about the mid 1930s until the late 1940s or early 1950s. Potatoes were grown there extensively along with some other vegetables and gladiolus flowers. Tom Kelly remembered hearing of San Carlos Happy Homes Village, but he doesn't remember ever seeing any construction in the Cinnamon Cove area until US Homes developed it. So, we can only assume that James A Bernet really never got his San Carlos Happy Homes Village project off the ground.

Talking further with the Kelly brothers, I found that they came to this area in 1925 with their parents. Ed and Tom Kelly's Great Grandfather was born in Key West as was their Grandfather and father and then they and their ten (10) siblings. There were seven brothers and five sisters along with their parents that came to live in a house on Pine Ridge Road in 1925. The parents sold their home in Key West and loaded all their belongings on to a Schooner and sailed to Punta Rassa where they were met by the twin's uncle who then took them to their new home on Pine Ridge Road. Back then in 1925 San Carlos Blvd. ran from McGregor Blvd. to Fort Myers Beach as it does now. It was even paved back then. Ed Kelly remembers riding his bicycle along San Carlos and it was always covered with small fiddler crabs. Pine Ridge road was just two ruts of a dirt road. There was a railroad, The Sea Board Coast Line, from downtown Fort Myers out to about where John Morris Road crosses Summerlin Road. That area then was called Truck Land, probably because there was truck farming all around. There was a packing house owned by Lyman Frank at the railroad terminal. The railroad transported farm produce such as potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers and squash. At the place where Nancy's Produce Stand is now located (corner of Summerlin Road and Gladiolus), at one time there was another packing house operation and across Gladiolus to the north was another packing house owned by Tom Bigger and the railroad ran right past his place. Tom remembers the "refrigerated" railroad cars in those days had an "ice bunk" in the end of the car. It would be filled with ice and that is how the produce was kept cool. Tom remembers as a kid during the hot summer days taking his ice pick and helping himself to some of the ice to cool off with. The ice was just going to waste anyway. Summerlin Road was built partly on the old railroad right of way.

Ed remembers that at one time there was a road that ran from Bunche Beach to San Carlos Blvd. just north of The Channel Mark restaurant. A hurricane came through one time and cut a pass that now separates San Carlos Island from the mainland there at the Channel Mark. That is how it was named "Hurricane Pass". San Carlos Island was not originally an island, but was part of the mainland before that hurricane.

There were seven Kelly brothers. Another brother was Emmett Kelly, but he was not the famous clown by the same name. Emmett also owned 80 acres of ground. His was just to the east of the ground Ed and Tom owned and it ran east to San Carlos Blvd and it ran from Kelly Road to the south just past the big gas station once called The Dodge Store. The Bank of America, Marti's restaurant, the Holiday Park Condo Association and the old Dodge Store sit on the ground Emmett once owned. Ed says that Emmett was a good golfer, one time winning the Fort Myers city championship. Ed says that he and his twin brother, Tom, never had time to play golf. They first worked for Emmett on one of his farms, and soon realized they needed to own their own farm, so that is when they purchased their 80 acres in 1950. Less than half their 80 acres was tillable ground. The rest was swampy scrubby and full of rocks, so they rented a large parcel of land east of US 41 and farmed it. Their main crop was winter potatoes. This was one of the few areas of the country that could grow potatoes in the winter. They also packed their potatoes themselves and hired a broker to sell them around the country.

Working on he farm was a far cry and totally different from anything their father had ever done. The weather was a big factor that seemed to be the controlling element that could make or even break the spirit of a lesser man. Summer time with it's stifling heat, high humidity and sudden downpours was enough to discourage even a seasoned farmer. Hordes of mosquitoes showed no mercy in their blood sucking frenzy. Sandflies by the millions added to the misery of outdoor life. Spraying for mosquitoes

had not even been thought of in those early years. A person would either sweat it out or leave. "We stayed for a long time" quotes Ed Kelly.

Punta Rassa is located on the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River and at the end of Summerlin Road and is about five miles from San Carlos Blvd. Right after the Civil War Jake Summerlin, for whom Summerlin road was named, built a wharf at Punta Rassa and began shipping cattle to Cuba. Cattle were driven to Punta Rassa along the route now known as McGregor Blvd. In 1874 Jake built a large frame Florida like home along side the river near his wharf. His cattle shipping business thrived until about 1880 when competition from Texas and Central America began to squeeze his business and eventually he left the area. A thriving fishing industry became the new business of Punta Rassa. His house later became known as the Towles House. The twin's mother's brother, Victor Santini, and his wife, Bessie, and their four sons, Norman, Milton, Fabian and Leo lived in the old Towles House. The twins sometimes spent a week visiting and fishing with their cousins. The Santinis made their living from fishing. A Fish House was built by a Fish Marketing Company on pillings out into the river. It was used by fishermen who would bring their catch to be iced down and held for later shipping to market. The old homestead withstood many storms and hurricanes through out the years only to succumb to the bulldozer as Punta Rassa was once again transformed and became a tourist resort.

Ed and Tom both have six children, three boys and three girls each, spread around the country from Seattle to Boston. Their youngest sister had 13 children including two sets of twins. At one time there were seven family homes on their 80 acres just north of Cinnamon Cove. In the early 1940s, their parents moved to a house on Twin Palms between Whiskey Creek and Colonial, just off McGregor Blvd. The twins didn't know why the parents moved there, because their father continued to help his brother-in-law, Leonard Santini, farm. When Santini sold his farm, the father spent 10 years working for his son, Emmett, farming his land. All this work was performed many miles south of the parent's home, but there was not much traffic on McGregor back in those days.

- The twins' mother, a Santini, was born in Key West, but raised in Chokoloskee, once an island near Everglades City, which has since been connected to the mainland. Her Santini family were fishermen in the area. They also made charcoal from Buttonwood and sold it in Key West. Her brother, Leonard Santini, was the first one of the family to come to this area and bought some ground and farmed. He was an astute business man and he purchased more land. Eventually he purchased the southern quarter of Fort Myers Beach (then known as Crescent Beach) and Santini Plaza bears his name. Before coming to the Fort Myers area, the twin's father worked for the Naval Ship Yards in Key West. His father (the twin's grandfather) owned a small dairy there but his main source of income came from cigar making. He was the first white American cigar maker in Key West. The Kelly twins didn't know what their Great Grandfather did, but hearsay has it that he was a Pharmacist who either jumped ship or was ship wrecked on Key West.

For many years the twins traveled to Key West to spear fish and catch lobsters by hand. Lobsters would migrate from the Carolinas to Key West in the summer and that is when the Kellys would travel there, camping out and catching and eating fish and lobster. Today, they say the area is too crowded by fishermen. Until it got so popular it was easy to find and catch lobsters by hand. The Kelly twins have witnessed many, many changes to what was once their personal paradise. Most of these, the result of progress, have changed the pristine fishing and hunting grounds they once knew, to the fast track of traffic, long lines and waiting.

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