



NEWS RELEASE

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Landmark Clearwater Beach Restaurant Celebrates its 97th Year

CLEARWATER BEACH, Fla., May 31, 2023 - Wednesday, May 31st marks the Palm Pavilion's 97th year in business announced Ken Hamilton, president.

Incorporated in 1926 by five partners, the Palm Pavilion's main purpose then was "...to operate a bathing pavilion..." According to Susan Emmons the daughter of Jesse Smith one of the founders, in the early days the Palm Pavilion was open daily and comprised of a bathhouse with changing rooms and towel and wool bathing suit rentals, a dance floor with jukebox music, a skee-ball alley, a picnic area on the sand and a kitchen. Hamburgers, ham sandwiches and hotdogs on grilled buns were served. Sodas and beer in bottles were kept cold in bins with ice, as refrigerators were not yet available.

It is not known how the men met; how the bathing pavilion concept evolved; or how the location was selected. "It's possible they met during World War I, said Hamilton. "Smith came here from Louisville, KY; it is believed others may have been from places where such facilities were well established. With the first bridge to the island opening in 1917, perhaps someone from Clearwater was among the group and collectively they saw an opportunity."

Records show Smith, whose leadership spanned 38 years, and his wife became the owners during the 1930s. Patrons Howard and Jean Hamilton purchased the Palm Pavilion from them in April 1964, continuing business as usual with many of Smith's employees. By the 1980s swimwear was being worn to the beach so the bathhouse was removed. The focus shifted to food and beverage service.

Continuing to adapt to changing vacation habits - away from evening meals in a visitor's motel room, the second generation of Hamiltons made plans to stay open past 5:00 p.m. and expand the dining business while maintaining the pavilion's original architectural charm. In the mid-90s, the menu was expanded to the limits of the shoebox-size kitchen. The deck was also widened to accommodate outside dining and weekend entertainment. It was so successful that in the year 2000 the outside seating area was further expanded. The kitchen was replaced with a larger, modern kitchen capable of handling a full-service menu.

Today, the Palm Pavilion Beachside Grill and Bar overlooks an expansive beach and the Gulf of Mexico. The menu features appetizers, salads, burgers, wraps, sliders, sandwiches, tacos of all types, seafood, steak, smoked ribs and desserts. In keeping with its history, hot dogs and its famous beach burger are also featured.

According to the state of Florida, this is the oldest operating beach pavilion in the state of Florida. Research shows this designation also encompasses the entire southeastern U.S. For more information, visit www.palmpavilion.com.

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There's no place, like this place, anywhere near this place, so this must be...the place.SM

Editor's Note: Images are available upon request.

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