

## Tourism

Tourists were slow to discover the Beach--it was the end of the road, no bright lights and not many places to stay. However, when we first arrived, quite by accident in 1943, there were four hotels, the Gulf Shore Inn, Beach Hotel, The Pelican and the Commodore. These are still in operation and have expanded and refurbished keeping up with all modern comforts yet retaining their original informal charm.

There were no motels but several cottage courts flourished. Doc Wilson's San Carlos Lodge (now Adenours) was on San Carlos Island while Silver Sands, Side O'Sea and the Beachcomber were on Estero. There may have been another one or two but not many.

Incidentally, accommodations owners were caught in the rent freeze of 1942 and summer rates were in effect all year around. Although this was a hardship during the winter months, it was offset somewhat by the fact that there were no vacancies in the off season. With the military installations nearby, priority was given to service personnel and their families and travelers were very fortunate if they could find a place to stay in housekeeping units.

In those war years people owning trailers were unable to get gas enough to come this far south so the hotels and courts took care of the few visitors who came. The people who did find our islands were so charmed by the place that they returned and brought friends and relatives with them.

Many of these decided to stay and make their homes here. This has made for a slow but steady growth both in homes and accommodations. Now our Islands have hotels,, motels, cottage courts and rental cottages, ranging from the picturesque to the lavish, which can take care of some three thousand visitors. Mid-winter finds us "bustin' at the seams" and every year more people are discovering that, with our almost total air conditioning, Florida summer vacations can be very pleasant, too.