



PHOTO/TOM MEDLEY

## First Baptist Church of Harbor Oaks

First Baptist Church of Harbor Oaks, 5730 Ridgewood Ave., Harbor Oaks, was founded in 1975 with 21 members. The church, which now has 197 members, has had the Rev. George Robertson as pastor since 1982. Robertson said the church was built as a hotel for rich vacationers from the North. Its mahogany staircase, from a Northern mansion, is reputed to have been used by President Abraham Lincoln. During the 1950s and '60s the Spanish-style building was used primarily as a restaurant, before it was bought by the Florida Baptist Convention.

# Harbor Oaks church sets birthday celebration

By ROBERT HUNTER

HARBOR OAKS — First Baptist Church of Harbor Oaks will celebrate its 20th anniversary Sunday, April 23. The birthday is counted from April, 1975, when the church advanced from "mission status" to a fully constituted church.

Every pastor and associate pastor who served this neighborhood church from its mission startup in 1971 to the present, is expected to attend the celebration, said the Rev. George Robertson, who has been senior pastor since 1983.

The following former pastors will be on the two-hour program, which starts at 10 a.m. April 23.

■ Jay Prater, mission pastor, 1971-74, now living in Jonesborough, Tenn.

■ Dean Hampton, 1974-79, now pastor of Bella Vista Baptist Church, Edgewater.

■ Art Edwards, 1979-82, now living in Harvey, La.

■ Charles Swingle, associate pastor, 1985-89, now living in New Smyrna Beach.

■ Gene Hauser, associate pastor who resigned recently to enter Florida Baptist Theological College at Graceville. Hauser, in his early 40's, accepted the call to the ministry about a year ago. He had been general manager of the DeLand Nissan dealership.

Principal speaker at the 20th anniversary service will be Dr. Vernon Brown, who was pastor of Daytona Beach First Baptist Church, which started the mission that became First Baptist of Harbor Oaks. The Rev. Brown, now retired, lives in Bessemier, Ala.

Dr. George Allison, Halifax Baptist Association director, also will speak at the celebration.

**Rev. Robertson** hopes that the 100 percent homecoming of former and associate pastors will stimulate a full house attendance on April 23.

nounced purchase for a reported \$85,000 of seven acres of property, including a distinctive two-story building known as McKee's Castle.

In the "Castle," a chapel was fashioned from an area that was a bar and restaurant, known as the Bavarian Village.

In 1992, it was discovered that the building was unsafe because of termite damage. With repair virtually impossible, it was decided to raze the building. Some in the neighborhood, not knowing the circumstances, were upset by the demolition, but were assured by the church leadership that the proper course had been taken. The building was razed in December, 1992.

The first committee of deacons, elected in 1974, were as follows: W.B. Robinson, chairman; Albert Seals, Frank Gatton, Clint McKinney, and Charles Hicks. McKinney still is active in the church.

The aforementioned transforming of a bar into a chapel in the "Castle" has a parallel in this church's past. A news item of July 14, 1970 reported that a bar owner, whose establishment was adjacent to the land bought for the church,

**JES**

SONDAY MORNING  
WORSHIP  
8:00 & 10:30 A.M.

SONDAY EVENING  
6:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY  
BIBLE  
TEACHING  
7:00 P.M.

FRIDAY  
YOUTH  
7:00 P.M.

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SONDAY MORNING  
EVENING 1  
WEDNESDAY

WORSHIP  
BIBLE STUDY  
COUNSELING

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SONDAY MORNING

Dr. **George** Allison, Halifax Baptist Association director, also will speak at the celebration.

At its start, the mission church, which now has a handsome building on the west side of U.S. 1, had its meetings at the home of Ida Hansen, on the east side of U.S. 1. Based on descriptions, the first meetings may have been in a stucco house now bearing the number 5919. An April, 1976 news story about the church, reported that Mrs. Hansen, a member of the Daytona Beach church, sold her Harbor Oaks house and lot to be used as a meeting place for the mission.

In January, 1971, O.L. "Jack" White, chairman of the First Baptists' Mission Committee, an-

14, 1970 reported that a bar owner, whose establishment was adjacent to the land bought for the church, objected to a church encroaching on his drinking establishment. A district zoning board approved the church's application. The board said that although it could not approve a bar next to a church, it could approve a church next to a bar. White told the bar owner at the meeting that it would be appropriate to close the bar at church service time and "come to church."

The church membership is 131. **Rev. Robertson** hopes that the 100 percent homecoming of former pastors and associate pastors will stimulate a full house attendance on April 23. Seating capacity is 300.

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