

Davis Islands, Then and Now – The Davis Islands Bridge, the Mirasol and the Davis Islands Tennis Courts
by Rodney Kite-Powell

Another in an occasional series...

The bridge to Davis Islands. The Mirasol Hotel. The tennis courts at the Davis Islands Country Club. Few locations are (or were, in the case of the tennis courts) as iconic and emblematic of Davis Islands.

The original Davis Islands Bridge was dedicated in 1929. Construction of the bridge was part of the deal David P. Davis made with the city in order to develop Davis Islands. The bridge took four years longer to complete than anticipated, and the dedication ceremony provided a symbolic end to the city's ties to D. P. Davis (Davis died at sea in 1926).

The 1920s era bridge could not keep up with 1950s era traffic, so the city decided to demolish the old bridge and construct two bridges connecting the Islands to the mainland. The new, wider bridges were finished in the 1960s, and though less attractive, they provide for easier access on and off the Islands.

The Mirasol Hotel is one of the original hotel buildings built on Davis Islands. It was also the tallest, and largest, residential structure on Davis Islands until the arrival of the condominiums on Adalia and Columbia in the 1980s. The Mirasol's unique location – facing Davis Boulevard and backing up to a yacht basin connecting to Hillsborough Bay – allows visitors to access the building on foot, by car or by boat.

Of all the original features on Davis Islands that are no longer in existence, the old tennis courts are perhaps the most missed by Islands residents and visitors alike. Countless people learned how to play tennis on the courts of the Davis Islands Club. The clay courts also were home to numerous tournaments, the most popular being the annual Dixie Cup. The seemingly exponential growth of Tampa General Hospital doomed the courts. New courts were opened south of the original location, named for one of the more notable alumni of the original courts – former Tampa mayor Sandra Freedman.

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