

[Back to article](#)



Printed on page A1

## ROBINSON MEMORIAL PARK

# Amos Robinson, city officials open pavilion at park

### Dream fulfilled

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Published: Friday, December 18, 2009 at 4:01 a.m.

WINTER HAVEN - Thursday morning saw the culmination of Amos Robinson's 20-year dream as he and Winter Haven city officials held an opening ceremony at the John Henry and Bertha Robinson Memorial Park.

The Polk County Builders Association Foundation, the city of Winter Haven and other donors pitched in to build a pavilion on the property after Robinson, its owner, faced deepening fines on code enforcement citations for unpermitted water and electricity, as well as other code violations.



*Paul Crate / News Chief*

Amos Robinson cooks lots of food on Thursday to make sure there is more than enough for all who attend the dedication of the John Henry and Bertha Robinson Memorial Park located on Avenue T, N.E. across from the Winter Haven Recreational and Cultural Center. Thursday, December 17, 2009.

Robinson, 65, and his friends used the property as a gathering place

for years, and Robinson hoped to create a park on the land. The property had been a junkyard until Robinson, his friends and other volunteers cleaned it up in 1991.

Robinson stood at a podium set up near the new pavilion Thursday, his head bowed.

"I feel like crying," he told the small crowd of city officials, commissioners, Polk County Builders Association representatives and well-wishers who gathered for the new structure's ribbon-cutting ceremony at the park on Avenue T, N.E. in Florence Villa. He thanked the city of Winter Haven, the Polk County Builders Association and others who helped build the pavilion and set water and utility lines.

Winter Haven Mayor Jeff Potter also spoke at the event, reminiscing about the 1991 cleanup effort on the property, organized by the News Chief and aided by city officials.

"Lo and behold, this little piece of property brings the community back together again," Potter said.

In June, members of the Polk County Builders Association Foundation read a News Chief article about Robinson's predicament with code enforcement. They offered to build a permanent structure at the park and help Robinson meet city code.

Gary Clements, outgoing president of the foundation, praised the "spirit of cooperation" involved in the project among local contractors, city government and the park's neighbors.

This summer, Robinson met with city officials and members of the Polk County Builders Association. At the time, Dave Dickey, the city's community development director, said the collaboration led the city to lift the more than \$10,000 in fines the property had collected for code violations. The city also waived permitting fees for new construction.

The entire project was estimated to cost \$18,000, but it's still under way. In addition to the new pavilion with a bathroom and storage closet, Robinson said future plans include an extended patio area on

the pavilion, a gravel parking area and sand filler to level the entire property.

Robinson named the park in memory of his parents, John Henry and Bertha Robinson.

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This story appeared in print on page A1

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