

## New historical park to open soon

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PINELLAS PARK – The new McDevitt Historical Park will soon open to the public.

The park, located off of 59th Street and Park Boulevard, is named after an early Pinellas Park pioneer who helped create the city in the early 1900s.

P.J. McDevitt was Pinellas Park's first mayor. Elected in 1914, he and F. Davis are considered to be among the founding fathers of the city.

The park contains walkways, picnic benches and historical artifacts that were in storage for years. They include an old sugar cane mill, the first electrical board that provided power to local homes and businesses, and even part of the foundation of the old railroad station that was razed in the 1970s.

Much of the work was accomplished by city workers and volunteers. The funding came from individuals and local businesses.

"Nothing was contracted out," Tim Caddell, city government relations administrator, said.

The park is expected to officially open in August or September.

The main and side entrances include large white lion heads that once were part of a fountain of the old Beaux Arts Gallery and Coffeehouse near the present police administration building on 59th Street.

Once known as the Royal Palms Hotel that was constructed in 1911, the coffeehouse building was a favorite stopping off place for political, business and other leaders. The Ringling, Barnum & Bailey Circus used to perform near the hotel. Marilyn Monroe, the 1950s glamour girl, reportedly stayed there while her then-husband Joe DiMaggio was in spring training in St. Petersburg.

The coffeehouse was operated by Tom Reese before it burned to the ground and was razed in 1994. Reese worked as a newspaper artist and in the early 1950s converted the old hotel into the



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The new McDevitt Historical Park near Park Station will soon be open to the public. Besides walking paths and picnic tables, the park contains historical artifacts that symbolize the growth of the city from a small farming community to a major city. The two lion heads at the main entrance came from a long-gone former hotel.

Contemporary Arts School and Gallery. Folk singers, songwriters and poets performed on weekends.

When the building burned down in the 1980s Reese's events were moved to an outside garden, later to a horse barn and finally to St. Petersburg.

The old lion heads were stored for years in a city building and refurbished for the park.

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