

Wigwam Village



I had a former client come back to the studio today to tell me his story. He had purchased an old reel of 8mm film from an antique dealer. The only marking on it was the year 1959. He bought it as a curiosity and brought it to me to convert to a digital form. He became so animated when he was telling us what he saw on the film.

Most of it was uninteresting footage of random scenery but as the camera panned, suddenly, there on the side of what was S. Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando, were a few dozen concrete teepees. He couldn't believe it. "I stayed there as a kid!" he shouted. My wife, who grew up in Orlando, also remembered

them.

Wigwam Village, as it was known, was the brainchild of Frank Redford who, in the 1930s began constructing steel and stucco structures in the shape of Indian teepees and renting them out to curious travelers. It began in Horse Cave, Ky but started cropping up in other locations around the country in short order. A Wigwam village was build in Cave City, KY; followed by a village in New Orleans, LA.

The Wigwam Village in Orlando was the fourth site and by most accounts, the largest. Built in 1948 it consisted of 27 “wigwams” which were advertised as being able to accommodate up to 4 people. It was also billed as “Orlando’s largest motel.”

Subsequent villages were built in Bessemer, AL, Holbrook, AZ, and San Bernardino CA



In Orlando, the teepee structures were situated in a U shape with a giant teepee located at the open end which housed the

registration desk, administrative offices and a restaurant. A pool was constructed later on which was situated in the middle of the lot.

Orlando's Wigwam Village was demolished in 1973 to make room for the East West Expressway. A Vacation Lodge now operates on that site.

So, in summary, my client bought an unknown random reel of film and after converting it to a viewable format realized that, in so doing, he had captured a memory from his youth. And then when sharing that memory with us, he was able to spark a similar memory within my wife. It just goes to show you that we are more connected than we are divided. People should spend more time sharing memories with each other. It draws us closer together.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio of Mount Dora specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of films, videotapes, audio recordings, photos and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#).