



Issue # 351

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## RESTORING THE OLDEST HOUSE IN NAPLES

### **HISTORIC PALM COTTAGE IS ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY!**

Science and patience. That's what it's taking to save one of the crowning features of Historic Palm Cottage™ - its beautiful original Dade County Pine floors. The wood planks, crafted from the exotic wood no longer permitted for commercial use but popular in the 1800s, buckled throughout the Cottage's first floor after Hurricane Ian delivered his blanket of muddy, mucky water.

Though spared structural damage, it was clear very early on to Naples Historical Society President & CEO Elaine Reed that exceptional professional expertise would be needed to get the Cottage back to its original glory. "The Society is the steward of this magnificent building, and a restoration project of this type needs to be addressed thoroughly and correctly."

That's where the expertise of John Brechel of Classic Carpentry came in. First came the science. Drying the wood was paramount, but was complicated by the initial lack of air conditioning and the presence of high humidity. Undaunted, John and his crew got to work on their plan. First, cabinetry in the library and kitchen was carefully removed to be cleaned and put back in place at a later date. Next, each wooden plank throughout the entire first floor was removed by hand and then strategically stacked to allow air flow from fans to dry the wood completely. Fortunately, A/C returned quickly to aid in the drying process.



Now comes the patience part. Only when the planks are completely dry can the floor work resume. At that time, a new subfloor and moisture block layer will be installed, and finally each Dade County pine plank will be laid down, one-by-one, to once again welcome history-loving guests to the Cottage.

This last part is pure science, explains John Brechel. “If we act with haste when moisture levels aren’t lower than they are currently, or when the wood isn’t acclimated to the temperatures in the Cottage, the floors will buckle again whenever the temperature gets warmer or colder than it is when we put the wood back in its place.”

We’re getting there, as are many, many others in our community who are struggling to restore the houses they cherish. We shall keep you updated on this and other ongoing Society restoration projects as we continue to look to the future while preserving our past.



John Brechel (*top photo*) and some members of the Classic Carpentry Team during Historic Palm Cottage restoration project.



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**The Society is the Central Voice of Naples History.**  
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## Contact

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### OUR MISSION:

**Naples Historical Society is dedicated to preserving Naples history and heritage for the community and future generations to enjoy.**

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