

Richard Bull Memorial Park Historical Background

The land now considered Richard Bull Memorial Park was purchased from the Florida East Coast Railway in the 1930's and became the site of the first Town Park and Town Hall after the Town of Atlantic Beach was incorporated in 1926. On May 24, 1944 the park was dedicated in memory of Richard Bull Sr., a pilot in the United States Navy who was killed over the Pacific Ocean during World War II while conducting a reconnaissance flight of an enemy carrier on February 5, 1942. Mr. Bull was later posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox on behalf of President Franklin Roosevelt. Richard's father, Harcourt Bull Sr., was a pillar in the early Atlantic Beach community and was appointed as the first mayor of Atlantic Beach by Florida Governor John Martin in 1926. Harcourt Bull Sr. died as a result of injuries from an automobile accident in 1943, but the Bull family's influence on Atlantic Beach continued with Florence Bull, Harcourt's widow, maintaining various Bull corporations in the city and with George Bull Sr., Richard's brother, developing much of Atlantic Beach including the Selva Marina Subdivisions, Selva Marina Gardens, and Sevilla Condominiums.

Bull Park remained the site of Town Hall until 1991 when city functions and offices moved to the current location of 800 Seminole Road. Following the move, the old Town Hall building was renamed the Adele Grage Community Center in honor of longtime City Clerk Adele Grage. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, a master plan for the park was created and implemented resulting in upgrades to landscaping and playground equipment as well as a new amphitheater area, new parking, and open space for events. In 2002, Adele Grage Community Center was renamed again to Adele Grage Cultural Center following major renovations that added community rooms, a resource center, gallery, verandas and new restrooms.