

April 2019

A Message from the President

Dear VAHS members,



I hope all of you have been enjoying the season as winter changes into spring. Just as the weather is changing, the same is true for the Venice Area Historical Society. At our Annual Meeting on March 19, we carried out the membership transition of our Board of Directors from the past year to the coming year.

Concluding two-year terms were Bill Jervey, Ed Gates, and Tom Bowers. It was an honor to have them on the Board, and we sincerely thank them for their service to the Society as well as to the community. We are fortunate that in the coming year Bill will serve on the Development Committee and continue as an advisory member of the Plaque Committee, and Ed will continue to support the Depot Committee and the

Circus Train Car Oversight Committee.

Our new 2019-2020 Board Members for the next two years are Sue Chapman, a former President and very experienced member of the Society; Carol Bailey-Werth, our long-term Membership Chair and previous Board Member; and Mike Murphy, a longtime supportive member of the Society.

We are pleased that all four officers on the Board will continue serving next year with Betty Intagliata as Vice President, Brenda Holland as Treasurer, Mary Huba as Secretary, and yours truly continuing as President. Thus, VAHS will have an experienced crew to take the Society into the new year.

I also want to extend our appreciation to three new committee chairs: Sue Chapman, who recently took the reins of our Development Committee; Mike Murphy, who will take over as Finance Committee Chair; and Jeana Hilligoss, who will be leading our Education Committee, a position she held a few years ago. All of these experienced individuals provide the kind of leadership skills needed in those positions. My personal thanks to each of them for their contributions to the Society.

We have many other volunteer opportunities to help the Society, such as docent duty at the Historic Venice Train Depot; committee support in a number of different areas; assistance with special events, like the Venice Museums Day coming up on May 18; and participation in the VAHS Speakers Bureau. If any of these volunteer opportunities sound interesting to you, contact me or any Board Member and we will be glad to discuss it with you. Best wishes to all of you for an enjoyable spring season!

Clarke

Clarke Pressly, President

2019 VAHS Events Calendar

***April 16, 2019. 7 PM. "The Seminoles of Florida: Past, Present, and Future."** Presented by David Scheidecker, Research Coordinator, Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Seminole Tribe of Florida.

April 27, 2019. 11:30 AM. HPCsc Heritage Awards Luncheon. Venice Golf and Country Club. Cost is \$45.00 per person. Mail checks, made payable to History & Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County, to P.O. Box 895, Venice, FL 34284-0895. **RSVP by April 19.**

May 8, 2019. 9 AM--5 PM. Field Trip to Calusa Heritage Trail, Pine Island. Meet at Venice Train Depot. Bus departs Depot at 9 AM for an 11 AM arrival at Randell Research Center, site of Calusa Heritage Trail. Lunch is available nearby at your own expense. (We will try to arrange a group lunch at the Tarpon Lodge at your own expense.) Tour begins at 12:30 PM. Cost for tour is \$5 for seniors and \$7 for adults. Tour ends at approximately 2:30 PM. Bus leaves Randell at 3 PM. Approximate arrival at Venice Train Depot is 5 PM. Cost of bus is \$60 per person/round trip. Call Betty Intagliata (941) 412-0151 to register. **Deadline to register is April 10.** Make checks payable to Betty Intagliata, Program Chair. Field trip will be canceled if number of registrants is insufficient.

May 18, 2019. Venice Museums Day. Historic Venice Train Depot. Trolley rides available between Train Depot, Lord-Higel House, and Venice Museum and Archives, and free tours at all locations. At the Depot, the museum and caboose will be open for tours, model trains will be showcased in the Freight Room, and the circus arena miniature will be on display. Free popcorn and water will be available for all, as well as free clown noses and whistles for children while supplies last. Also, a scavenger hunt will be held at the Depot.

***May 21, 2019. 7 PM. "Rising Tides--Shifting Sands--Ancient Sites in Peril."** Presented by John McCarthy, Executive Director of Gulf Coast Heritage Association and Historic Spanish Point, Osprey, FL.

***October 15, 2019. Betty Intagliata Lecture Series--Topic TBA.**

***November 19, 2019. Betty Intagliata Lecture Series--Topic TBA.**

December 3, 2019. Member Christmas Luncheon. Venice Yacht Club--Sunset Room. *Save the date!*

**The Betty Intagliata Lecture Series is sponsored by the Venice Area Historical Society, with permanent funding provided by the Bill Jervey, Jr. Charitable Foundation. All programs are FREE and OPEN to the public. Programs are held at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, Venice, FL 34292.*

Annual Meeting



VAHS held its 29th Annual Meeting for the general membership on March 19 at Pelican Pointe Golf & Country Club, with 62 members and guests in attendance. The meeting was supplemented by a slide show depicting the status of the Circus Train Car Project, prepared by committee co-chairs George Miller and Mary Huba. Prior to lunch, Depot committee member Ed Gates presented gift certificates to the corps of docents, who routinely



give their time to host Depot visitors (see "Venice Depot Popular with Visitors," p. 4). Members and guests then enjoyed a delicious luncheon buffet.

Following lunch, Mayor of Venice John Holic presented an informative overview of the emerging "Association of John Nolen Communities." He informed the group that there are many cities and municipalities across the country that have benefitted from John Nolen's creative vision of how people should live and work. Mayor Holic graciously answered a few questions from the audience and then returned to City Hall.

Mayor John Holic, Annual Meeting speaker

A business meeting followed the program. It included approval of the minutes from last year's meeting; a financial report from Treasurer Brenda Holland; and a summary of the Annual Internal Audit by Ann Thompson, Audit Committee Chair. The agenda also included a presentation and approval of the proposed new dues structure that will take effect this fall. The last item on the business agenda was the presentation and approval of the proposed slate of board members and officers for the new year (2019-2020), which included three new board members and continuation of all four officers (see "President's Message").

The meeting ended with Mike Murphy leading a fund-raising raffle for gift baskets prepared by Ellie Paxton, Elaine Murphy, Joan High, Betty Intagliata, Brenda Holland, and Sue Chapman. Thank you to all who participated in the planning and success of this annual meeting.

Ellie Paxton, greeter at registration table



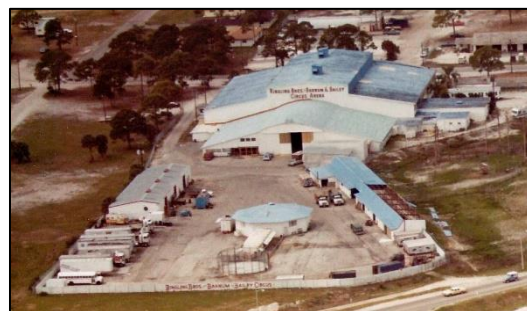
Circus Train Car Update



Interior View of Circus Arena

The 4' x 3' miniature of the Ringling Bros. Circus Arena has been completed! With the addition of exterior signage and a red curtain separating the performance and staging areas, craftsman Bill Dovel has finalized his masterpiece. The current plan is to display the miniature in the Depot on Venice Museums Day on Saturday, May 18, 2019.

With regard to the circus car, final primer has been applied to both sides of the exterior. This was an important step forward. Additional coats of primer and some metal work on the ends of the car remain before painting begins.



Aerial View of Former Ringling Bros. Circus Arena Located in Venice, FL (Razed in 2014)

Psssst! Can you keep a secret?

You may have heard of a secret club in VAHS. It's called the Legacy Club. You don't have to pay dues, memorize a secret password, or use a special handshake to belong. No one will know you are a member except you and your attorney or estate planner.

To join, simply make provisions in your will or estate plan to remember VAHS with a gift. Your gift, left in the responsible hands of the Society's financial officers, will help insure that historic education and preservation continue in Venice. With your help, coming generations will be able to celebrate history through the work of the Venice Area Historical Society.

Psssst! Pass it on!

Venice Depot Popular with Visitors

In 2018, 2,970 visitors toured the Depot. This was the third highest count since tours began. The number of visitors in November (220) was the second highest, and the December count (283) was the highest ever, even with the closing of the Depot on two dates (Dec. 24 and 31). At the end of 2018, a total of 36,532 visitors had been hosted since the Depot was restored in 2003.

Can you help?

Thanks to the professionalism of VAHS's Depot docents, reviews of visits are consistently high on Trip Advisor and Google Maps. However, due to retirements from the volunteer corps over the years, the number of docents is dwindling. Please join this respected group and keep the railroad history of Venice alive! Some docents provide tours to visitors, while others simply work as greeters. No previous knowledge is required--excellent orientation and training are provided.

If interested, leave a message at 941-412-0151, or send an email to information@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org. Thank you for considering this important opportunity to serve the Venice area!



VAHS Welcomes New Members

Todd Burst Carol Marie Davis

Dan and Juli Fialkowski Jim and Karen Gross

Anna Madrona

Civil War Round Table of Venice, FL

Road Scholar Tour Visits Train Depot



A group of “lifelong learners with an unquenchable passion for knowledge” visited the Historic Venice Train Depot on January 7, 2019. That is how the Road Scholar travel company describes those who take part in its trips. The travelers arrived on their bicycles via the Legacy Trail as part of their tour with the theme “Adventure on Two Wheels: History and Culture in Venice, Florida.” Docent George Miller (at left) welcomed them and provided a tour.

This is the fifth year that Road Scholar has offered the Depot tours as part of its travel program, and four separate groups have already visited this season. The travel company, which was founded in 1975 as Elderhostel, later changed its name to Road Scholar. It is a not-for-profit organization that conducts educational travel tours to all 50 states and approximately 150 countries.

Newcomers Club of Venice Visits Train Depot



A Venice Newcomers Club outing brought 58 members to the Venice Train Depot on February 21. This social group is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide new residents with opportunities to form friendships and to experience the many things that the Venice area has to offer. Since the Depot and the Rollins W. Coakley Railroad Park campus provide several venues, the participants were divided into small groups.

Inside the depot, docents Edy Browne (at left) and Linda Dalton tours in Waiting Room 1 and Waiting Room 2. Outside the Depot, Rich Peabody helped guide the groups to the caboose where Clarke Pressly (at right) was on hand to explain the history of the restored car. As a special feature for the participants, this club outing also combined the Depot visit with a Venice Island trolley tour, narrated by Larry Humes.



led

Sarasota County Centennial 2021 Update

In March 2019, the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to support "Sarasota County Centennial 2021." Planning is being done by a Steering Committee comprised of members of the History and Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County; Sarasota County Historical Commission; Sarasota County Library System; Sarasota County Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources; and Friends of the Sarasota County History Center.

Betty Intagliata, VAHS Vice-President, serves as VAHS's representative to the Steering Committee. Currently, the Committee is looking for individuals to speak to clubs and organizations about the Centennial. If you would like to join the planning committee, contact Betty at (941) 484-0769.

VAHS recently became an official partner of Centennial 2021, and in that role, the Society will actively contribute to the celebration. Look for more details about Centennial events in future communications.

In Memoriam: Jackie Le Claire (1927-2019)



Jackie Le Claire, renowned Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus clown, passed away in March 2019, just two months before his 92nd birthday. A celebration of life was held at the First Brethren Church in Sarasota on March 24 where some 200 attendees heard Father Jerry Hogan, the Circus Chaplain, speak of Jackie's life.

Jackie was taught all the elements of clowning from the time he was a toddler. His teacher was his father Jack, an acrobatic clown. Jackie toured many foreign countries with Ringling Bros.

In retirement, he served some 20 years in the Circus Arts Conservatory's "Laughter Unlimited Program," visiting and entertaining nursing home residents.

During the 2007-2008 school year, eighth grade students of Venice Middle School history teacher Barbara Woody, mentored by volunteers from the Venice Area Historical Society, videotaped eight interviews with former performers of the Ringling Bros. Circus. Jackie Le Claire was one of the eight. With the interviews as source material, the students produced a film entitled *Under The Big Top*. VAHS mentors who participated in the project were Brian Heverin, Mary Huba, Betty Intagliata, John Osborne, Penny Phelps, Barbara Smith, and Joan Watson.

Jackie, along with the other circus greats, attended the first showing of the film at the VAHS's May 2008 monthly program. Other interviewees in attendance were Tito Gaona, Sigrid Gebel, Tina Gebel-DelMoral, Chuck Sidlow, Dolly Jacobs, Pedro Reis, and Keith Greene. PALS Partners in Education presented Betty Intagliata, then President of VAHS, and teacher Barbara Woody with a plaque for their "Outstanding Innovative Project."

Later, Jackie gave a solo performance for members of VAHS in which his Red Skelton rendition brought down the house with laughter! Jackie truly was the "Ambassador of Mirth." He will be missed!

"Our Local Treasures: Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring"



On January 15th, Steve Koski, Sarasota County archaeologist, spoke to 200 attendees at the Betty Intagliata Lecture Series, hosted by the Venice Area Historical Society. Audience members were interested to learn about artifacts from 6,000 to 13,000 years ago, discovered by underwater archaeologists at Warm Mineral Springs and Little Salt Spring in North Port.

Shown L-R: Clarke Pressly, VAHS President; Sarabeth Kalajian, Director, Sarasota County Libraries; Bill Jervey, Jr., Program sponsor; Steven H. Koski; Betty Intagliata, Program Chair.

"Calusa Legacy"

On Tuesday, February 19, the Venice Area Historical Society hosted 176 individuals for a free program about Native Americans in Florida, known as the Calusa. Attendees learned how the Calusas' "trash" tells us about their culture, eating habits, tools, and more.



anthropologists. A bus trip to the Calusa Heritage Trail is planned for May 8 (see Events Calendar above for details).

The Calusa lived mainly in the Fort Myers region of today's Florida. Cindy Bear, Coordinator of Program and Services at the Calusa Heritage Trail (Randell Research Center), Pine Island, Florida, shared visuals as well as artifacts. Another guest was Theodore Morris, Sarasota-based artist, who brought a face to the Calusa peoples after studying with state archaeologists and



Shown L-R at left: Carol Bailey, Membership Committee Chair; Theodore Morris, Artist (also shown at right with two paintings); Betty Intagliata, Program Chair; Clarke Pressly, President; Harvey LeBlanc, Refreshments Volunteer; Cindy Bear, Speaker; Bill Jervey, Program Sponsor; Judith LeBlanc, Refreshments Volunteer.

"The Seminole Wars"



On March 26, 172 individuals attended the program by John and Mary Lou Missall on "The Seminole Wars in Florida." John showed photos of the many forts built throughout the state by the U.S. military, along with pictures of battles that took place during the three Seminole Wars. Mary Lou read quotations from individuals who participated in the wars, as recorded in their diaries.

The Missalls have written many books on the Seminole Wars. For an overall, thorough, and readable account, read *The Seminole Wars: America's*

Longest Indian Conflict, published by the University Press of Florida. In this volume, the authors give a good accounting of both sides of the conflict.

Shown L-R above: William Jervey, whose foundation supports the Betty Intagliata Lecture Series; Mary Lou and John Missall; Betty Intagliata, Program Chair; and Clarke Pressly, President of the Venice Area Historical Society.

VENICE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP & VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ ST: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE(S): _____

EMAIL(S): _____

Check your Membership and Volunteer choices:

- ☐ Individual \$30
- ☐ Family \$40
- ☐ Business \$50
- ☐ Non-Profit Org \$25



- ☐ Bronze \$100
- ☐ Silver \$250
- ☐ Gold \$500
- ☐ Donation of \$ _____

- ☐ Greet visitors at the Historic Venice Train Depot
- ☐ Share historical information with visitors at the Historic Venice Train Depot
- ☐ Greet attendees at the Society's Monthly Lecture Series
- ☐ Help with refreshments at the Monthly Lecture Series
- ☐ Help to recruit new members
- ☐ Help to prepare and present programs for children
- ☐ Serve as a day-trip coordinator
- ☐ Prepare and present topics related to local history
- ☐ Assist with the Society's publicity and communications
- ☐ Assist in production of the Society's newsletter
- ☐ Serve on a VAHS committee (*Communication, Development, Education, Finance, etc.*)
- ☐ Assist with fundraising efforts
- ☐ Assist with technology/computers

☐ Skills or talents
I can contribute are:

Make checks payable to Venice Area Historical Society.
Mail this form and check to VAHS Membership,
PO Box 995, Venice, FL 34284. For information, call 941-412-0151.
www.veniceareahistoricalociety.org
membership@veniceareahistoricalociety.org

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