



Fall 2017

2017 VAHS Events Calendar

***October 17, 2017. 7 PM. "The John Nolen Plan for Venice."** Dorothy Korwek, presenter, served as Director of Historical Resources for City of Venice from 1996-2007. Korwek has edited three volumes titled *Venice Before 1925* and *Venice Area Old timers Stories* and co-authored the *John Nolen Plan of Venice, Florida*. Korwek served one term on the Venice City Council. She currently serves on the Board for Venice Heritage Inc. and as Treasurer of the History and Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County.

****October 30, 2017. 12 PM. Halloween Afternoon Tea Fundraiser.** Joan High, VAHS member, is hosting this event at Flynn's on Venice Ave., 133 W. Venice Ave. Please contact Joan at 941-484-5826 for tickets. Cost is \$35 pp. Door prizes and raffles will be available. Proceeds benefit the Venice Area Historical Society's Circus Train Car Project.

***November 14, 2017. 7 PM. Program: "An Evening with Mable Ringling."** Sandy Chase, writer and volunteer extraordinaire, will re-enact "Mable Ringling" with a fresh new look. Since retiring from U.S. government work and moving to Bradenton, Sandy has written articles about people and programs for the American Red Cross, Friends of the Sarasota County History Center, Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, and other not-for-profits. Sandy is the owner of WordMasters, a writing and editorial service. Sandy co-authored a novel *The Revolutionary War* set in this area. She also evaluates plays for the Florida Studio Theater's Readers Circle Program.

**The Betty Intagliata Lecture Series is sponsored by the Venice Area Historical Society, with funding provided by the Bill Jervej, Jr. Charitable Foundation. All programs are FREE and OPEN to the public. Programs are held at Mark Manor, Village On The Isle, 920 Tamiami Trail South, Venice, FL 34285.*

A Message from the Vice-President

Dear VAHS members,

I hope you and your families are all safe and sound following Hurricane Irma. We are happy to report that the Depot, Caboose and Circus Car all weathered the storm intact.



The summer lecture series was very successful in spite of having to cancel the September 12th lecture due to the storm. We are hoping to be able to offer this lecture in the future.

We are looking forward to the 2017-18 season beginning with the Betty Intagliata Lecture Series which starts October 17th and a Halloween Afternoon Tea Fundraiser on October 30th, hosted by VAHS member Joan High. Please be sure to check our website www.veniceareahistoricalociety.org for any updates.

On behalf of the entire VAHS Board, I want to thank all of you for your continued support of VAHS. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Brenda Holland

Summer Progress on Circus Car



Steady progress has been made on the Circus Train Car Project over the summer. All hazardous material has been successfully removed from both the exterior and the interior of the car, and VAHS possesses certification documents to present to Sarasota County at the time of donation. Workers at Uni-Glide Trailer Company are now repairing rusted segments on the exterior and opening up windows that were covered during and since the Ringling years.

The Design Committee for the interior has met regularly since spring and has exciting news to share. Sigrid Gebel has agreed to designate the largest residential room The Gunther Gebel-Williams Residence, and Sigrid will work with committee members to decorate the room to reflect the living quarters of the Gebel family when they were on the train. Famous clown Chuck Sidlow who served as Ringling’s Boss Clown for many years, has agreed that the middle-size room can be designated The Chuck Sidlow Residence. Chuck is very excited about the project and has many artifacts to share. Peggy Williams, the first female graduate of Clown College and a subsequent Clown College faculty member, has agreed that the smallest room can be designated The Peggy Williams Residence. The display will tell Peggy’s story of starting in a small room and moving up to a room the size of one-third of a car during her many years with the Circus.

The committee is also thrilled that Tim Wisgerhof has joined the team. Tim is a set designer with the Venice Theatre and a former window designer at Saks 5th Avenue in New York. Tim will work with Sigrid, Chuck, and Peggy to stage the residential rooms in an effective manner for the viewer.

The Design Committee has also decided on a focus for the central exhibit area. The exhibits will address innovations in the Circus that took place during the Venice years, beginning with the construction of the Venice Arena in 1960. A miniature of the Arena (about 3’ x 4’ in size) is currently being created by craftsman Bill Dovel. Other innovations to be highlighted include the purchase of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus by a group that included Irvin Feld; the acquisition of Circus Williams, including Gunther Gebel-Williams; the beginning of two traveling units—the Red and Blue units; the creation of Clown College, an initiative unique to Venice; along with special stories about the relationship between Venice and the Circus, and Venice’s circus legacy.

Thank you to all involved, including Deborah Walk of the Ringling Museum who provided invaluable insights and information. Although the finished product won’t be completed until 2018, we believe it will be worth waiting for!

The Vanished Town and Mill at Woodmere

Three local historians—Brad Jenkins, Chris King, and Kyleelise Homes—recently presented the fascinating story of the “The Vanished Town and Mill at Woodmere” at the third program in the Betty Intagliata Summer Lecture Series in Venice.

From 1917 to 1928, Woodmere, Florida thrived in the area of the recently-closed Dome Flea Market on State Route 776. Woodmere was a company town for the Nocatee-Manatee Crate Company, and according to the 1920 census, it was populated by over 600 residents. The complex included a four-story lumber mill, a variety of housing types (single, shared, dorm, and tent), a dining hall, a movie theatre, and schools and churches for both black and white residents. Residents were “hailed” on the railroad to Sarasota on Saturday nights for shopping and recreation. Woodmere was abandoned after 11 years when all the nearby pine trees had been cut and milled. Two fires also contributed to its demise.



Brad Jenkins provided information about the lumber industry, the operation of saw mills in the Southeast U.S., and Woodmere in particular. Chris King, owner of The Dome, presented a locally-produced video of Woodmere’s history and facilities. Kyleelise Holmes dramatized the reflections of Frances Butts, an early resident who arrived in Woodmere by car at age 15 with her family. Her father was a fireman—a point of pride with Frances—and the family lived with a boarder in one of the town’s single family dwellings for four years. Shortly after arriving, Frances married an older laborer who was a Deacon at the Baptist church. Ms. Holmes’ presentation was based on an interview with Frances Butts conducted by Diana Harris when Frances was 93.

The Betty Intagliata Summer Lecture Series is sponsored by the Venice Area Historical Society (VAHS) and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice (UUCOV), with funding provided by The Bill Jervey Jr. Charitable Foundation. The final program in the series, “The History of the African-American Community of Laurel,” will take place on Tuesday, September 12, at 1:30 p.m. at UUCOV, 1970 Pinebrook Road.

VAHS Partners with Woman’s Club



The Venice-Nokomis Woman’s Club (VNWC) recently sponsored a four-hour blood drive in honor of Carolyn Redlin, former president of both VNWC and VAHS. Carolyn is currently receiving medical care at the Atlanta center of Cancer Treatment Centers of America. VAHS members George Miller and Mary Huba opened and staffed the Depot for the event, providing organizers and donors a place to sign up and visit while waiting to enter the mobile lab parked outside. The picture shows (L-to-R) Ann Shoup, VNWC President, George Miller, Mary Huba, and Lise Mills, organizer of the drive. VNWC provided a cake with the inscription, “Venice, FL. Love

you, Carolyn. Suncoast Blood Drive. September 19, 2017.” VAHS sends continuing best wishes to Carolyn!

Meet Tom Bowers

Tom Bowers is Chair of the VAHS Education Committee. He and his wife Sheila moved to Venice from New Castle, Indiana about nine years ago. In Indiana, Tom was an elementary school principal, and Sheila was an elementary teacher. Tom’s mother-in-law, Dorothy Brewer, also lives in Venice, a place that her family started visiting in the 1970s.

Tom is impressed with the character of historic Venice leaders such as Dr. Fred Albee, Bertha Palmer, John Nolen,



and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. They set an example of leadership and civic responsibility that Tom feels should be preserved and communicated to our youth. He joined VAHS because he feels the Society has set high standards for achieving this objective. He would like to expand the first grade visits to the Depot to older students to enhance their understanding of local history and civic stewardship. Tom invites anyone interested in this objective to join the Education Committee.

Tom is a year-round Depot docent and training to be a docent at the Ringling Museum. He is also an avid volunteer in the Sarasota Coastal Cleanup Program. Thank you, Tom, for your contributions to the Society.

John Ryan, CEO Venice Chamber of Commerce

As a member of the Venice Chamber of Commerce, VAHS wishes to acknowledge the passing of VCC CEO John Ryan on August 12, 2017. The Board offers its condolences to John's family and colleagues. We will all miss him.

VAHS Welcomes New Members

Welcome to Norbert Beauchemin, Berta and Bill Claiborn, Pamela MacFarlane.

Volunteer Opportunities Available

Are you interested in serving on the VAHS team? If you or someone you know has expertise and interest related to one of the needs listed below, please speak to a VAHS Board member, call 941-412-0151, or email president@veniceareahistoricalociety.org.

Membership Committee. Individuals needed to assist with the following: proactive recruitment of members and volunteers, maintaining the Society's electronic database of members in Wild Apricot software, and making recommendations to the Board regarding membership issues.

Executive Assistant to the President. One person needed for clerical tasks such as picking up mail, accessing phone messages, and similar duties as assigned.

Special Events Committee. Two or more individuals needed (a) for program planning (securing venues, selecting menus when needed, preparing decorations, etc.) and (b) to arrange for VAHS participation in community events such as Sun Fiesta, Shark's Tooth Festival, Holiday Parade, etc. Duties include completing applications in a timely manner, planning participation activities, and implementing plans effectively.

Monthly Program Refreshment Team. Two or three people needed to purchase, set up, and serve light refreshments (e.g., non-alcoholic beverages and cookies) at each of the Society's seven Monthly Lecture Series programs. (VAHS assumes the costs.)

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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