

# THE VENICE EXPRESS



Celebrate history with us

## NEWSLETTER OF THE VENICE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March 2016 - Spring Edition

### 2016 LECTURE SERIES

1920s

TUESDAY • MARCH 22, 2016 • 7PM

#### A Portrait of Mable Ringling

Deborah Walk, Assistant Director of Legacy and Circus at the Ringling Museum, presents a portrait of Mable Ringling. Learn new details while enjoying visuals on the life of Mrs. Ringling.



TUESDAY • APRIL 26, 2016 • 7PM

#### A Portrait of John Ringling

Ron Mccarty, Curator: Ca' d'Zan, presents on behalf of Ringling Museum, a portrait of John Ringling. There will be visuals as well as interesting tid-bits on the life of the great John Ringling.

*Ringling images courtesy of The Ringling Museum.*



TUESDAY • MAY 17, 2016 • 7PM

#### Ann Worthington Manning: The *first* First Lady of Venice

Mary Huba, VAHS Board Member, gives a revealing portrait of Venice's first mayor's wife. Learn how Ann was part of the 1927-28 "let the good times roll" period during the building of Venice... before the bottom fell out. *Image courtesy of Venice Museum and Archives.*



### VAHS ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON TUESDAY MARCH 15TH

The Venice Area Historical Society will conduct its 2016 Annual Meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 beginning at 11AM at the Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club. Reservations for the luncheon may be made by sending a check made out to VAHS for \$25.00 per person, no later than March 8, to Annual Meeting, Venice Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 995, Venice, FL 34284-0995. Following the Keynote speech, "After the Ball Was Over: The Palmer Family in Sarasota County in the 1920s," presented by Dr. Frank A. Cassell, there will be a short business meeting and election of Board members and officers.

### VENICE-NOKOMIS WOMAN'S CLUB 90 YEARS OF CIVIC STEWARDSHIP

In 1926, 18 women in the Venice Nokomis area founded the Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club. The women included the spouses of the men who were building Venice, and they were committed...*continued on page 4*



#### Historic Venice Train Depot Hours

November - May: Monday, Wednesday & Friday  
10AM - 3PM, All Year: Saturday 10AM - 1PM

Last tour 30 minutes prior to closing.

*Tours are led by a dedicated team of Depot Docents.*

*If you are interested in becoming a Docent, or scheduling a group tour, please call 941-412-0151 or email [depot@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:depot@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org)*



## *I have a Dream*

As the Society commemorates its 25th Anniversary, it is tempting to summarize its significant accomplishments and acknowledge the dedicated work of its leaders, members, and volun-

teers through the years. However, it is also an opportunity to consider what we, its members, would like to see happen during the next twenty-five years--to envision the work that needs to be accomplished and the actions necessary to save, preserve, and protect significant sites and artifacts; to develop ways to make these sites and artifacts accessible; and to identify ways to educate the community about their significance.

This past Christmas, I was given a postcard sent from Venice, Florida to Concord, Massachusetts in 1926. (In the Venice Museum and Archives



database of postcards, it is catalogued as #0036.) The card displays the just-built Venice Avenue with new street lights and sapling

trees lining both sides. Its view is of a clear, building-less skyline to the west on a distant Venice Beach—a clean slate of potentiality so to speak. Ninety years ago when the John Nolen Plan was developed, this “clean slate” was only a promise of the city’s future structures, preceding the vision of lead architects Walker and Gillette. What would we do with such potential today? What should we do as we proceed with the Venetian reality of 2016?

Venice has some wonderful stories about a variety of individuals and topics--settler Jesse Knight, homesteaders such as Robert Rickford Roberts and Benjamin Blackburn, the visionary Bertha Palmer, the 1911 railroad’s catalytic role in making Venice possible, the John Nolen Plan, Dr. Fred Albee, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Historic Venice Train Depot, the Venice Army Air Base of World War II, the Kentucky Military Institute, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey

Circus, and the Intracoastal Waterway. What stories will comprise Venice’s future heritage? What will the Venice Area Historical Society’s role be in preserving the area’s heritage in the next 25 years?

I have several dreams for both the community’s and the Society’s short term. Included among them are placing a restored Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Train Car on its existing place adjacent to the caboose, the completion of the Lord-Higel House, enhanced railroad exhibits in the caboose, and a railroad-themed playground in Legacy Park. I dream of offsite office and storage space for VAHS, along with better care, cataloging, and accessibility of the artifacts and documents entrusted to both the City and the Society to insure their future availability (think 100, 200 years). I dream of better documentation of important stories, including my favorite stories about the 14th Air Service Group, Chinese and the Venice Depot’s station agents.

Most importantly, I dream about the Society’s success in garnering the volunteer and financial resources needed to move its work forward. In 2003, the Society assumed important responsibilities on behalf of the community when it initiated oversight of the Venice Depot. The availability and active recruitment of qualified, dedicated volunteer leaders and docents is a crucial component in furthering the Society’s mission. Due to ongoing cost shifting between the public and private sectors, it is also imperative that financial resources are in place to insure the future of the Society’s Depot programs.

The Society’s initial endowment campaign, “Securing the Future,” is a significant way for each of us to contribute to the Society’s future. By donating our own resources as a symbol of our personal pledge to preserve the history of Venice, we can put the “silver” into the Society’s 25th Silver Anniversary. There are many ways to donate—a significant one time gift, an annual donation pledge, a transfer of stock, a codicil in our wills, naming the Society as a beneficiary of life insurance, etc.

What is your dream in preserving Venice history? Let’s join together and insure the future health of the Society and its mission through our personal donations. Let’s secure the future and make this a true 25th Silver Anniversary celebration.

Most importantly, I hope you will join your Society colleagues on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 as we commemorate the Society’s 25th Anniversary at our Annual Luncheon and Meeting. Let’s move forward together and take one giant step into the Society’s future.

*Barbara Smith, President*

# Venice Area Historical Society Calendar 2016

**MARCH 15, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 11AM**

Pelican Pointe Golf & Country Club

VAHS Members Luncheon and Annual Meeting

*Program:* "After the Ball Was Over: The Palmer Family in Sarasota County in the 1920s"  
Speaker: Dr. Frank A. Cassell

**MARCH 22, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 7PM**

Mark Manor, Village On The Isle

*Program:* "Mable Ringling" Speaker: Deborah Walk

**APRIL 26, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 7PM**

Mark Manor, Village On The Isle

*Program:* "John Ringling" Speaker: Ron Mccarty

**MAY 3, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 2PM**

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, Venice

*History Forum:* "Reconstruction: 1863-1877"

**MAY 17, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 7PM**

Mark Manor, Village On The Isle

*Program:* "Ann Ruth Worthington, The First 'First Lady' of Venice" Speaker: Mary Huba

**JUNE 7, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 2PM**

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, Venice

*History Forum:* "Farming on Shares: 1865-1960"

**JULY 5, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 2PM**

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, Venice

*History Forum:* "Black Life in the South: 1900-1960"

**AUGUST 2, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 2PM**

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, Venice

*History Forum:* "Miss Scarlet's South"

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2016 (TUESDAY) AT 2PM**

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, Venice

*History Forum:* "Dixie Becomes America or Vice-Versa"

**All Programs are FREE and OPEN to the public.**

## NON-PROFIT MEMBERS SPRING 2016

Colonial Dames of America, Chapter 30  
Friends of the Legacy Trail  
Jelks Family Foundation  
Pelican Pointe Garden Club  
Pelican Pointe Women's Association  
Senior Friendship Center  
The Questers, Bertha Honore Palmer 1355  
The Questers, Historic Spanish Point 1477  
Venice Area Garden Club  
Venice Musicale  
Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club



L to R: VHI President Larry Humes, VAHS President Barbara Smith, VM&A Director Larry Hagler, Speaker Clay Henderson, Esq., and Program Chair Betty Intagliata pose after the interesting program presentation "Economic Value of Historic Preservation."

## CONTRIBUTE YOUR TALENTS TO VAHS

Contributing your talents to VAHS is a way to help the Society move into the future. Please consider being part of VAHS's team. We serve the public and have fun at the same time, and we would love to have you join us! Please contact [membership@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:membership@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org) to discuss volunteering some time.

## VENICE-NOKOMIS WOMAN'S CLUB—90 YEARS OF CIVIC STEWARDSHIP

*continued from the front cover.*

to an essential aspect of implementing the Nolen plan—making Venice an attractive place to live, a community. Mrs. Fred Albee served as President on three different occasions in the first 15 years.

The Club's goal was to foster civic and educational projects and only incidentally to be a social organization. At one of its first meetings in 1927, Frank Parker Stockridge addressed the group on the topic of "What Makes a Community." He suggested that the Club should assist in the schools, supervise recreation for children, keep a clean community, be involved in politics, and most importantly, welcome newcomers. For 90 years, the Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club has taken their mission to heart. In March 2016, the Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club will celebrate its anniversary with an Afternoon High Tea.

The Club's first project was to establish a lending library. The library started with a financial donation by Dr. Fred Albee, was operated by the membership, and was located in the Club's facility. One of the Club's early activities was to solicit from the Governor of each member's home state or Canadian province a copy of his favorite book. The Governor's Book Shelf graced the library for many years. The Club's library was the only one in Sarasota County until the late 1950s. Over 6,000 books were given to the Venice Public Library when it opened in 1965.



The Club had a committee structure of 12 committees. The civic and music committees were responsible for the cultural and general well-being of the community. The music committee arranged speakers and offered musical, theatrical, and artistic events to the community. It hired the first black band to play at the weekly community dances. The garden committee was a forerunner of current organizations like VABI, dedicated to improving the appearance of Venice.

The Club sponsored the annual flower show and provided assistance to homeowners in designing and planning their gardens.

As recently as 2015, the Club contributed a fountain to Venice for the America in Bloom competition.

Other early cultural projects included an exchange program with Alaskan Eskimos children. After Captain MacMillan lectured on the Eskimos, the Club raised \$100 and pledged costumed dolls and scout knives as gifts for an Eskimo Christmas party. In 1928, a radio hook-up enabled the children at their respective parties in Alaska and Venice to share their festivities via the airwaves. In 1929, the Club helped local Camp Fire Girls send Florida history books that they created in school to a Camp Fire chapter in Mexico. The Club also helped establish a local Boy Scout troop.

The Club operated as an ad hoc welfare society to provide for the needs of others in the community. Members scoured the area to locate people in need. The Club minutes are populated with motions approving monies for individuals and causes, saving clothing, and creating food baskets. A donation was made to provide furniture for the first parsonage in the area. Available jobs were listed in the Clubhouse. Pews were built in a building in Venice Quarters (apparently an area where African Americans resided) so the facility could be used as a church in the evenings. The Club started annual Christmas parties for white children and "colored" children. Each child received a gift, candy, and fruit.

Many other activities were directed toward the education of local children. In the early '30s, the Club voted to pay three months salary for the public school teachers. Later, Mrs. Bruce Hudson was instrumental in bringing books to the "colored" children living in Venice Quarters and teaching those children to read. Tablets and pencils were provided to each child, and clothing was provided to those in need. The hour-long bus trip to the black schools in Sarasota contributed to absenteeism, and daytime hunger was prevalent among the students. The Club donated a bell to sound a wakeup call and began a lunch program to provide the children with lunch money.

Societal changes during the 1900s were reflected in the Club's activities and organizational structure.



*continued on Pg. 5*

## VENICE-NOKOMIS WOMAN'S CLUB—90 YEARS OF CIVIC STEWARDSHIP *continued from Pg. 4*

During World War II, both the Red Cross and British Relief organizations met in the Club's facility. A sewing group was established to aid the relief efforts. An evening division was established in the '50s, and the members staged a number of successful variety shows to fund their pet project, a dental clinic for children.

The organization has raised funds for civic causes in a variety of ways. Luncheons, duplicate bridge contests, afternoon teas, rummage sales, dances, and variety shows have been hosted over the years. A bingo party in 2015 resulted in a significant donation to VAHS's Circus Train Car Project. In recent years, \$7,000 in scholarships has been given annually through Venice High School's Bright Futures Program for post high school education. The Club also provides annual financial support to Hope, a horse used in the Instride equine therapy program for challenged children.

Thank you Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club for your continuing commitment to the Venice community and the preservation of its heritage!



## THE BANYAN HOUSE RECEIVES HISTORIC PLAQUE

VAHS officially recognized the historic value of The Banyan House with the installation and formal dedication of a plaque on February 16th. The Banyan House, located at 519 South Harbor Drive, was originally built in 1926 as a home for Robert Marvin, the manager of The Venice Company's local office. The Venice Company was the subsidiary of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) that sold real estate in Venice during the city's development in the 1920s. The house was constructed of stucco-covered clay blocks with a clay tile roof in the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture. The residence was later called the Banyan House in recognition of the Banyan tree reputed to have been donated by Thomas Edison and planted in 1928.

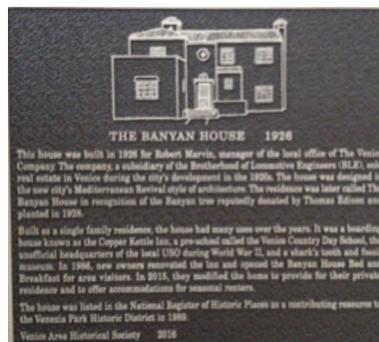
Under its various owners, the house has served as a boarding house known as the Copper Kettle Inn, a nursery school known as the Venice Country Day School, the unofficial headquarters of the USO during World War II, a shark's tooth and fossil museum, and, at times, a hurricane shelter.

In 1976, the house was sold once more and later converted into a bed and breakfast. In 1986, new owners renovated the inn and, the following year, opened the Banyan House Bed and Breakfast for area visitors. In 2015, they modified the home to provide for their private residence and to offer accommodations for seasonal renters. In 1989, the house became part of a listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource to the Venezia Park Historic District.

The Society formally recognizes the physical features that represent our community's past, including commercial, residential, and public structures as part of its role of supporting the preservation of the historic character of the Venice area. The Plaque program begun in 1996 is funded by the Ehrhart Family Foundation to create plaques for buildings within the historic areas of the city. The Preservation link on the VAHS website, [www.veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.veniceareahistoricalsociety.org), describes the program and all plaque recipients.



The Banyan House - 1926



The Banyan House Plaque 2016



The Banyan House - 2016

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Sharing your email indicates your willingness to receive electronic announcements about VAHS activities.

Check if you would like to receive announcements forwarded by VAHS from other historical organizations.

## Check your Membership and Volunteer choices:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual..... \$20            | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Org..... \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family ..... \$30               | <input type="checkbox"/> Bronze ..... \$100       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business (4 or less) ..... \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver..... \$250        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business (5-30) ..... \$100     | <input type="checkbox"/> Gold ..... \$500         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (31+)..... \$300      | <input type="checkbox"/> Donation of \$ _____     |

- Greet 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
- Assist in production of the Society's newsletter
- Serve as a day-trip coordinator
- Share historical information with visitors at the Historic Venice Train Depot
- Prepare and present topics related to local history
- Assist with the Society's publicity and communications
- Serve on a VAHS committee (*Style Show, Development, Education, Finance, etc.*)
- Assist with fundraising efforts

**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.**

The Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, non-profit corporation and has registered with the State of Florida to solicit donations. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. Ch 32089 Renewal due 4/12/2016

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS SPRING 2016

Joanne Anton  
Sidna Mitchell  
James Neff

Janice Shull  
Steve Shull  
Dave Taylor

### MEMBER PROFILE: CAROLYN REDLIN

After exploring both coasts of Florida in pursuit of a place to retire, Carolyn Redlin bought a house on the island in 2005. The small-town appeal of Venice, the ambiance of Venice Avenue, and the cultural opportunities in Sarasota convinced her that Venice was the place for her. Carolyn retired from her job in Maryland in 2009, and she joined VAHS in 2012.

Born in Pennsylvania and raised in the San Fernando Valley of California, Carolyn spent her high school years performing with her church musical troupe. Family illness redirected her focus to work, starting with a variety of positions in medical offices. Her favorite position was assisting a dermatologist and learning to transplant hair and suture. These medical experiences provided a basis for her eventual career--providing integrated healthcare delivery systems to the medical industry, primarily medical schools. Carolyn has lived all over the United States and has spent a great deal of time traveling for work.



In Venice, Carolyn has volunteered in a variety of ways. She has been Membership Chair of Venice Newcomers, she is on the Board of Venice Main-Street, and she will complete her term as President of the Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club this April. As President, she has expanded the club's membership and networked it with other Venice organizations, including VAHS, through corporate memberships. This has expanded the club's mission of civic stewardship throughout the community. Last spring, the club hosted a Bingo Party and raised over \$6,000 for the VAHS Circus Train Car Project! Carolyn also participates in Newcomers of Venice Alumni.

In her spare time, Carolyn enjoys reading, playing cards and renovating her home. She is passionate about preserving the best aspects of Venice, including its appearance and history.

## VAHS AND UUCOV PARTNER TO PRESENT SUMMER HISTORY DISCUSSION FORUM

Beginning in May and continuing through September, the Venice Area Historical Society and Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice (UUCOV) will partner to present a History Discussion Forum focusing on Reconstruction. The monthly meetings will take place on the first Tuesday of the month at 2 PM in the sanctuary of UUCOV, located at 1971 Pinebrook Rd. in Venice.

Suggested readings for the May and June sessions, most of which are available at the Sarasota County Library and Amazon, are listed below. Readings for later sessions will be distributed in May. Each session will have a discussion leader and will address the overall topic. Participants may select the sources they wish to read before the discussion.

### May 3, 2:00 PM “Reconstruction, 1863-1877”

Foner, Eric. *A Short History of Reconstruction, Updated Version*, 2015.

Stampp, Kenneth. *The Era of Reconstruction*, 1967

### June 7, 2:00 PM, “Farming on Shares, 1865-1960”

Agee, James and Walker Evans. *Cotton Tenants: Three Families*, 2013.

Agee, James and Walker Evans. *Let Us Now Famous Men*, 1939.

Jenkins, Bradford. “So I Sung to Myself.” *Southern Exposure* (Spring, 1979).

Maharage, Dale and Michael Williamson. *And Their Children After Them*, 1990.

### July 5, 2:00 PM, “Black Life in the South, 1900-60”

### August 2, 2:00 PM, “Miss Scarlet’s South”

### September 6, 2:00 PM, “Dixie Becomes America or Vice-Versa”

## IN MEMORIAM



Frank Henderson, age 72, passed away on February 12. Frank served on the VAHS Board for five years. He was a long-time Depot docent who oversaw scheduling of the docents and made invaluable contributions to the Circus Train Car Project. VAHS will miss our valued member, leader, and friend.

## THE DEPOT ENVIRONMENT IS TRANSFORMED

The scenery around the Venice Train Depot has been enhanced for us all. The adjacent 10-acre industrial site, housing a concrete factory and a lawn of concrete 10 feet deep, has undergone a major transformation. The rubble has been removed, broken up, and recycled, and Legacy Park has been created.



The park includes a half-mile multi-use trail, a picnic pavilion, restrooms, kayak and canoe access, an observation tower, and restoration of the Hatchett Creek shoreline. The park was dedicated on February 1 with representatives of the County, the City, and local civic groups in attendance. It is owned by the City and will be maintained by the County. According to Kathleen Weedon, the City Engineer in charge of the project, the renewal efforts have already produced positive results in that increased numbers of otters and osprey have been observed on the site.

Many parties came together to make the park a reality. Florida Forever purchased the property. Four community trusts, many grants from public and private sources, and allocations from Venice and Sarasota County have provided the financing for the property’s development. A second phase is planned for this year to include a train-themed playground, a demonstration garden, and additional landscaping.



## PAUL RUDOLPH EXHIBIT IN SARASOTA

The exhibit “Paul Rudolph: The Florida Houses” will be on display until April 1 at the History Center Museum located at the Chidsey Building, 701 North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Paul Rudolph, a protégé of Ralph Twitchell, was a member of the Sarasota School of Architecture. The Friends of the Sarasota History Center became custodians of the permanent and rotating exhibits of Sarasota’s history and pre-history in late 2015.

The Chidsey Building also houses a research facility, the Florida Studies Room, and is equipped with Wi-Fi. The exhibits are open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10-4 and on Saturdays from 10-2. Please call (941) 361-2453 for additional information.



Everyone loves the  
Historic Venice Train Depot



Venice Area Historical Society  
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Venice, FL 34284-0995