



**October 2018**

## **A Message from the President**

Dear VAHS members,



The Fall Season, according to the calendar, is now officially here! Of course, those of us in Southwest Florida know that the snowbird season hasn't really started yet. There are a lot more folks who will be returning to our tropical world after this newsletter arrives. For those who have recently returned, welcome back! Over the next few weeks, we look forward to seeing many more of you, and we hope you've had a good summer. While you were gone, several important ongoing activities have been taking place within VAHS.

The planning process never stops, and many of your Board and committee members have been actively engaged in several initiatives throughout the summer, not the least of which has been the Circus Train Car Project (more on that later). The Historic Venice Train Depot, which relies on VAHS support, has continued to host visitors throughout the summer, including a couple of special events that were held in August and September. Our normal service in the off season is limited to three-hour Saturday shifts. Docent scheduling is thus an ongoing function, thanks to diligent work by Dave Taylor. Of course, his efforts will increase in a few weeks due to the needs of our four-day-a-week seasonal schedule beginning on November 1 and continuing through April. If you'd like to help with this service to the community, I think you'd find it rewarding, not to mention that nifty docent shirt with the caboose logo, plus a bright red bandana. The team provides training and will pair you up with a seasoned docent who'll serve as your mentor.

Due to extraordinary efforts in recent months by Betty Intagliata, our Program Chair, we now have a full season of programs lined up and ready to commence on October 16. We begin the season with an in-character portrayal of the legendary Bertha Palmer by Kate Holmes, an area historian and talented reenactor. This will be followed by a program in November on the Kentucky Military Institute whose winter campus in Venice from 1932 to 1970 was instrumental in helping keep the area alive. Presented by Larry Humes, a KMI alumnus and periodic writer on local area history for the *Venice Gondolier Sun*, this program is sure to be informative and interesting. Beginning in January, we'll have a monthly series through May on the history and influence of the Native Americans who inhabited Southwest Florida in the centuries before settlers moved into the area. Betty invested a great deal of time setting up this series. We owe her many thanks for her efforts

As I noted before, we've also been working diligently to keep the Circus Train Car Project "on track," so to speak. The Board formed an Oversight Committee to work closely with our contractor on a regular basis to review and coordinate efforts on the project. This includes direct use of outside vendors by VAHS, when

productive, to complement the work of Uniglide Trailer Co., our prime contractor. This committee has been meeting with Uniglide representatives biweekly to discuss and assess the project. We need to thank our project leaders, George Miller and Mary Huba, for finding creative ways to maintain a productive pace on this complex restoration project.

In addition, we have been working with Sarasota County to coordinate and produce a new lease for the Depot waiting rooms, the caboose, and the circus car. This new lease will increase VAHS's level of responsibility for Depot maintenance. The increased scope of work seems to be consistent with the County's expectations for other park resources across the County as well, including jointly-managed parks within Venice and other communities.

I hope you enjoy reading about the various activities in which your Society is involved. Of course, I am going to reiterate my theme that this organization works because we have member volunteers who are willing to give their time and/or personal resources to make good things happen. I would encourage each of you to consider being a contributor to the services VAHS provides, if you are not already engaged. Talk to any of our Board members or committee chairs. We'll be thrilled to help you find your niche.

*Clarke*

Clarke Pressly, President

## 2018-2019 VAHS Events Calendar

**\*October 16, 2018. 7 PM. Program: "Bertha Palmer: Queen of Chicago and Legendary Woman of Sarasota County."** Presented by Kate Holmes. Kate has been a Sarasota County resident for over 20 years and has interpreted Bertha Palmer as a living history presentation to over 100 groups throughout the County. She credits her involvement with Historic Spanish Point for giving her a framework for educating and entertaining residents and visitors alike about the remarkable Mrs. Palmer. Kate serves on the Advisory Board of the Historical Society of Sarasota County from whom she was given the title "Volunteer of the Year" for her many speaking engagements.

**\*November 27, 2018. 7 PM. Program: "Kentucky Military Institute: 126 Years of Its History, Including the Venice Years."** Presented by Larry Humes, KMI Graduate. Larry R. Humes is a 1965 graduate of Kentucky Military Institute. During his four-decade career, he worked mostly in journalism and higher-education marketing and communication. Larry wrote for newspapers throughout Florida, and he also served as editor of *The Greentree Gazette*, a bimonthly national magazine targeting higher education administrators. He managed communications for the University of Florida and Rollins College before spending the last decade of his career as a marketing and communications consultant to higher education. Larry wrote a mystery novel titled *Bridge to Nowhere* which was published in 1980.

**\*January 15, 2019. 7 PM. "Paleo-Indian Artifacts at Warm Mineral and Little Salt Springs and Their Importance."** Presented by Steve Koski, Sarasota County Archaeologist.

**\*February 19, 2019. 7 PM. "Calusa Native Americans."** Presented by Cindy Bear, Coordinator: Programs and Services, Randell Research Center, Calusa Heritage Trail, Pineland, Florida.

**March 19, 2019. 11:30 AM. VAHS Member Luncheon and Annual Meeting.** Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club. Details TBA.

**\*March 26, 2019. 7 PM. "The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict."** Presented by authors John and Mary Lou Missall.

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

**\*May 18, 2019. Venice Museums Day.** Historic Venice Train Depot. Details TBA.

**\*May 21, 2019. 7 PM. "7000 Year-Old Underwater Burial Site off Manasota Key."** Presented by John McCarthy: Executive Director of Gulf Coast Heritage Association and Historic Spanish Point, Osprey, FL.

*\*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.*

## **The Fifteenth Anniversary of the Depot Docent Program: A Retrospective by Betty Intagliata**

On October 24, 2003, the newly renovated Venice Train Depot—the last remaining train depot in Sarasota County—was dedicated by Sarasota County officials. Rollins Coakley, a former President of VAHS, spoke at the dedication. Rollins had attended hundreds of meetings on the County level to help make the renovation a reality. He worked with a number of organizations who supported the renovation such as VAHS, Venice Main Street, and the Venice Chamber of Commerce.

With the departure of Rollins and his wife to Utah to be near their daughter, the mantle fell upon VAHS President Betty Intagliata to articulate a plan for use of the Depot. Betty approached John McCarthy, Manager of Sarasota County Parks and Recreation (the entity that would oversee the Depot), on the day of the dedication and asked him if he would like VAHS to provide volunteer "docents" at the Depot to give tours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 AM to 5 PM. McCarthy asked when VAHS could start, and Betty replied, "Sometime between November 1st and November 12th." McCarthy indicated a lease would have to be developed and that VAHS could accept "donations" but not charge for a tour. Other items could be worked out in a lease.

The VAHS Board had discussed the Society's desire to give tours both inside and outside the Depot as well as of the nearby caboose. (The caboose had been given to Sarasota County by CSX Transportation, but it was totally renovated by the County.) The Board had also talked about eventually giving tours to school children.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VENICE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Docent volunteers in the ticket office of the newly restored Venice Train Depot. The docents, members of the Venice Area Historical Society, give free tours of the depot on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. For tour information, call 484-0769. Pictured from left are Paul Intagliata, Pat Cusick, Betty Intagliata, George Youngberg Jr., Sue Chapman and Joan and Dick Watson.

The first step was to seek VAHS volunteers to become docents. In addition to Betty and her husband Paul Intagliata, the following stepped forward: Patricia Cusick, George Youngberg, Sue Chapman, and Joan and Dick Watson. Their photo was taken in the Depot's Waiting Room 1, and it appeared in the *Venice Gondolier Sun*.

The docents met on November 3, 2003, to outline the historical information that should be cited in any tour, and the first visitors signed the official logbook on November 12, 2003. Some photos and information about the Depot were on display, as was a restored hand car, a vehicle typically used to troubleshoot problems on railroad tracks, and a pot belly stove in Waiting Room 2. The original door to

the Depot ticket office was placed in Waiting Room 2, as was a luggage cart in Waiting Room 1. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers loaned VAHS a number of articles of interest for the caboose.

Over the years, the Depot Docent ranks began to grow. Others who joined the ranks early on were: Dottie Fuhrmeister (deceased), John Osborne (still a docent), Ron Aronson (deceased), Jerry Madden, Jim Middleton (still a docent), Reggie Foote, Judi Foote, Janet Weiss (deceased), Judi Bauer, Jack Bauer, Penny Phelps (still a docent), and others. Of the original VAHS docents, George Youngberg is deceased, and Patricia Cusick moved to Elmira, New York, to be with her son. By the time of the Gunther Gebel-Williams Statue Dedication on December 5, 2005, there were about thirty docents in the docent corps.



Today, there are many new faces among the Depot Docents. Docent George Miller took on the job of creating professionally-done informational panels at the Depot in 2012. VAHS presidents Sue Chapman, Barbara Smith, and Clarke Pressly have overseen the acquisition of many donation items, creating a more interesting place to visit. George Miller and Mary Huba are leading the charge to bring a renovated circus train car to the Depot Campus. They and their committee are working tirelessly towards this goal!

From 2003 to 2018, the work and dedication of VAHS Presidents, Boards, and Depot Docents has been a "building process." Upon this 15th Anniversary, VAHS thanks all our Depot Docents (old and new). VAHS looks forward to the future and its continued good relationship with Sarasota County, and we salute all who have gone before us!

Pictured above right are Venice Area Historical Society Depot Docents, December 5, 2005, at the Dedication of the Gunther Gebel-Williams Statue. First Row: Joan Watson, Dick Watson, George Wilson, Karen Williams. Second Row: Betty Intagliata (Pres. VAHS), Reggie Foote, Dick Hale, Sal Iavaroni, Fia Iavaroni, Judi Bauer, Dot Furhmeister, Jeanne Madden, Penny Phelps, Jerry Madden, and Janet Weis. Back Row: John Osborne and Ron Aronson.(Photo by Docent Paul Intagliata.)

### Circus Train Car Update

Exterior work has continued on the car over the summer. Most recently, as shown in these photos, the “skin” that covers the steel roof has been replaced with two layers of vinyl (white covered by gray), providing a 10-year warranty. The underlying steel roof was found to be in excellent condition, even though some surface rust was observed.

Painting has been delayed because of the almost-daily rains over the summer. This fall, the side of the car near Uniglide’s building, along with the far end of the car, will be painted. Later, the other side of the car and the end near the street will be painted.



The high-performance paint to be used is manufactured by the same company formerly used by Feld Entertainment—Pittsburgh Paint Group (PPG). The color of the paint is appropriately called Ringling Silver!

## Centennial 2021—100 Years Since Sarasota Became a County



Betty Intagliata serves on the History and Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County (HPCsc), representing VAHS. One topic that has come before the Coalition this year is the upcoming 100th anniversary of Sarasota becoming a County.

Sarasota officially separated from Manatee County on July 1, 1921. The Centennial celebration will take place January through December 2021, once the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners approves the idea, hopefully before the end of 2018.

In the Spring of 2017, Rob Bendus, Manager of the Sarasota County Department of Historical Resources, proposed the idea for a Centennial celebration to the Sarasota County Historical Commission. The Commission liked the idea and put together an outline with Goals and Objectives for the celebration. However, because the Commission is small, the members felt that the HPCsc should be asked to look over their proposals and consider leading the effort, if HPCsc felt it worthwhile. The Commission turned to HPCsc because it represents some twenty history, preservation, archaeology, and other like-minded organizations throughout Sarasota County.

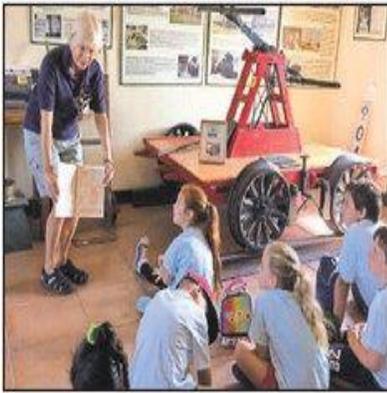
Dr. Clifford Smith, President of HPCsc, asked its members to take on the responsibility of planning for a "Centennial 2021." He asked Dr. Frank Cassell to set up a Steering Committee and become its chair. Dr. Cassell agreed to be Chair and appointed Dorothy Korwek as Vice-Chair and Betty Intagliata as Corresponding Secretary. To date, there are twelve dedicated people serving on the Steering Committee. Some are from the HPCsc, and others are from various Sarasota County departments, such as Libraries; Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources; and others.

The Steering Committee has met monthly since May 2018 to come up with a good plan to present to the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners. The plan defines the Mission, Goals and Objectives, Website, Logo, Honorary Board, Finances, etc. The emphasis is that ALL parts of Sarasota County should be involved in a host of ways. No one should be left out.

If a member of VAHS would like to serve on the Steering Committee, knowing that it meets year-round once per month at Historic Spanish Point in Osprey, please contact Betty Intagliata, Corresponding Secretary, Steering Committee, Centennial 2021, 941-484-0769.

### Campers Visit Depot

What did you do over summer vacation? This is a question that we all remember as children when we were tasked with writing about memorable summer experiences. This opportunity was available recently to forty-five students accompanied by four staff members from Meadow Park Summer Camp in Port Charlotte. On the morning of June 4, 2018, the campers in grades K-5 arrived at the Historic Venice Train Depot and were greeted by Venice Area Historical Society volunteers. The students were divided into groups and rotated among four "stations" that were set up for them. VAHS volunteer docents conducted activities at each, and Fran Valencic, social columnist with the *Venice Gondolier Sun*, was on hand to photograph the event.



At the first station, Dave Taylor and Linda Dalton provided background information relating to Waiting Room 1 and Waiting Room 2 of the Depot. (Pictured at left is Linda Dalton, VAHS Docent, with campers.)

Students then moved to a second station near the Freight Room. There CeCe O'Connor and Jeana Hilligoss conducted a tightrope-walking simulation for student participation. Also at this station was Sheila Bowers who was located near the Gunther Gebel-Williams statue. She presented information and activities related to busy freight deliveries and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. (Pictured at right is CeCe O'Connor, VAHS Docent, with campers.)



At the next station, George Miller welcomed the students to the caboose, the last car on every train. Once the students crowded inside, he introduced them to the function of this unique car and explained its special features.



At the final station were Tom Doherty and Tom Bowers who provided background about the Depot and its surroundings, including information about the Intracoastal Waterway, the Legacy Trail, and Legacy Park. (Pictured is Tom Bower, VAHS Docent, Board Member, Chair of Education Committee.)

VAHS is fortunate to have a corps of dedicated docents and volunteers who provide so many learning activities free of charge to the public and who welcome others who would like to contribute to the programs. If you are interested in helping to provide experiences for children and groups who wish to visit the Depot, please call VAHS at 941-412-0151.

(Photos by Fran Valencic, VAHS member.)

## Collecting Venice Artifacts to Preserve Venice History

*by Reggie Foote*

Arriving in beautiful Venice, Florida, in June 2003, my wife Judi and I were awed by all aspects of our chosen retirement town. For 25 years, we had resided abroad in locales such as Singapore, Korea, India, and Sweden. For 35 years, I had worked for Pratt & Whitney, the famous manufacturer of piston and jet engine products, where I was a Regional Manager of the Commercial Engine Division, overseeing several foreign offices responsible for and to major airlines that purchased aircraft powered by our products. The largest were Singapore Airlines, Korean Air, Air India, and SAS.



Fresh to Venice, we wanted to know as much as we could about the city's history—to feel more a part of it. We decided to join the Venice Area Historical Society (VAHS), led at that time by Betty Intagliata who, like us, was originally from Connecticut. Beginning in November 2003 as two of VAHS's first docents at the newly restored Venice Train Depot, Judi and I just kept learning more about Venice. We enjoyed many opportunities to share with visitors what we had learned from those who loved history and a few who had actually made history.

(Reggie Foote is pictured with his collection.)

Around this time, the internet was expanding, and on emerging websites such as eBay and Craigslist, I began to notice that there were many Venice historical items up for sale and auction. This was when the idea of saving Venice-related history came to me as a way of giving back to the community. Venice already had a special place in my heart for many reasons, not the least of which was the opportunity it provided to attend year-round car shows. A lover of vintage and antique vehicles and a member of the Venice Regional Chapter of the Antique Automobile Club of America, I found Venice to be a gold mine.

One by one, I bought, or bid on and won, original documents, photos, and artifacts of Venice. There was so much available that would get lost to the world, if not saved to keep close by. Flea markets, tag sales, and garage sales also provided a trove of history.

After a year or so of accumulating memorabilia, I decided to donate all I had collected to the Venice Museum and Archives at the Triangle Inn where items could be stored and made available to anyone seeking information about what happened in earlier times. My donation included simple items like post cards, original photos, and items from the bonanza provided by the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Ringling Bros. had its Winter Quarters at the Venice Arena from 1960 to the early 90s.

At that point, Ringling Bros. and its famous star and animal trainer, Gunther Gebel-Williams, took me in another direction—saving artifacts and memorabilia related to the Venice Arena and the years the Circus wintered in Venice. Since then, I have developed a collection with three distinct parts—the Venice Arena, Ringling Bros. in general, and Gunther Gebel-Williams. The “centerpiece” is a rare 15-inch high white glazed ceramic statue of Gunther. The collection includes many different Venice Arena show posters of all sizes and shapes, many framed, to hang and display. The items have been on our home walls and shelves, as well as in closets, and I recently decided that the time was right to donate the Circus Collection so that it can be shared with a wider audience.

As a member of VAHS, I have been aware of the Society’s project to bring a retired circus train car to the Venice Depot where it will be placed next to the restored caboose that has been there since 2003. The circus car, once fully refurbished, will illustrate how circus performers lived while on the circus train, and it will include museum displays about Venice’s circus history and circus legacy.

With that in mind, I contacted George Miller and Mary Huba of VAHS who were kind enough to stop by our home and peruse the eclectic collection. While they knew that I wanted to donate some items for possible display in the new circus car museum, they were somewhat astounded when I offered to donate, with no strings attached, the entire collection that I had put together over the past 15 years, in one fell swoop. My hope is that these items will help tell the story of Venice’s circus years.

May Venice residents, young and old, present and future, plus the multitudes of visitors from near, far, and abroad, have a glimpse of a special period of time when the Ringling Bros. Circus came to town and created a new chapter in the history of Venice.

(Pictured L-R are George Miller and Reggie Foote.)



# 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.veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.veniceareahistoricalsociety.org)  
[membership@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:membership@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org)

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