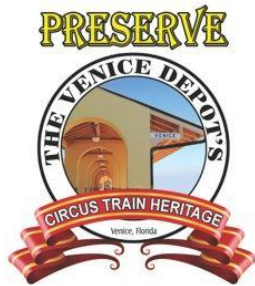


Winter 2017

## Circus Train Car Arrives in Venice!



On Thursday, December 22, 2016, the *Short Leaf Pine* rail car arrived in Venice. The former Ringling car is the centerpiece of VAHS's efforts to "Preserve the Venice Depot's Circus Train Heritage," a project that was kicked off two years ago in December of 2014. As noted on the car's brake housing, its last brake check was in Venice in 1993 when it was part of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The circus wintered in Venice from 1960 to 1991, and some Ringling equipment remained in Venice for a time after that.

The exterior of the car will be refurbished at Uni-Glide Trailer Company, owned by Bob Dills and located at the corner of Seaboard and Spur Avenues in Venice. The interior will be reconstructed to represent the living quarters of circus performers. A central exhibit space will showcase the historic relationship between the circus and the railroad, both in Venice and across the nation. When the car is completed, it will be placed on the tracks next to the caboose on the campus of the Historic Venice Train Depot. It will be donated to Sarasota County, and VAHS will give tours to the public.

On December 9, 2016, VAHS purchased the car from the Florida Rail Road Museum (FRRM) in Parrish, Florida. VAHS subsequently contracted with Johnson & Sons House Moving to move the car from Parrish to Venice. How did Johnson & Sons transport an 85-foot train car, weighing 100,000 pounds, 43 miles over land? The process did not involve tracks or cranes.

Instead, the Johnsons used jacks to raise the car for removal of the wheels. Then, orange metal girders were placed under the car and attached with chains. Three dollies, one underneath the front of the car and two in the back, each with eight rubber tires, were positioned and set up underneath the girders. All of this took place on Wednesday, December 21, at FRRM's Willow train yard.





Early the next morning, at approximately 6:30 AM, the Johnsons and their workers arrived at the Willow yard. It was a foggy morning, and there were final preparations to be made such as attaching and securing all the equipment.

Work progressed steadily, and by 8:44, the rear dollies were finalized. At 8:54, an OVERSIZE LOAD sign was attached to the back of the car, and at 9:07, the car was pulled onto Willow Road by a front loader. By

9:13, the car was attached to the Johnson & Sons truck with a counter weight behind the cab, and the air brakes and electrical connections for brake lights were secure. Thirty minutes later, at 9:43, the move began. By then, the skies were sunny and bright.

The wheels, which were discovered to be unexpectedly heavy, were left behind. They will be brought to Venice separately after the New Year.



The truck pulling the *Short Leaf Pine* traveled to Venice along routes 301 and 41 with some segments selected on the spot. Brett Johnson's pick-up truck led the way with escort lights flashing. Traffic was surprisingly light, and astonished drivers were cooperative when the truck and rail car passed through red lights from time to time. Although the trip was expected to take about three hours, it took less than two, arriving at Uni-Glide before noon.

Several project supporters were on hand to greet the car, and Board member Bill Jervey brought champagne, wine, and treats to toast the event. The rail car straddled Spur Avenue for a period of time, and then it was pulled onto Uni-Glide property. Johnsons' workers continued toiling throughout the afternoon, raising the car up on jacks, removing the dollies, and building supports to hold the car in position for the renovation process.



If you wish to see the *Short Leaf Pine* in position at Uni-Glide, travel down Seaboard Avenue, turn east on Spur Avenue, and keep looking to the right.



For more pictures of the move to Venice, see slideshow at [www.veniceareahistoricalociety.org](http://www.veniceareahistoricalociety.org). Stay tuned for more information as the process of refurbishing the car unfolds.

## 2017 VAHS Events Calendar

**\*January, 17, 2017. 7 PM. “Reconstruction: What It Meant To Do and What It Failed To Do.”** James M. Denham, Ph.D., Professor of History at Florida Southern College and Director of the Lawton M. Chiles Jr. Center for Florida History.

**\*February 21, 2017. 7 PM. “Hayes-Tilden Election of 1876: Compromise and Consequences.”** James C. Clark, Ph.D., Lecturer, History Department, University of Central Florida.

**February 25, 2017. 11 AM. Sarasota County Heritage Awards Luncheon**, hosted by the History & Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County (HPCsc) at Venice Golf and Country Club. Tickets \$40. Reservations for the luncheon may be sent with your check, made payable to HPCsc, to HPCsc, P.O. Box 895, Venice FL 34284-0895. List reservation name(s) in the memo line.

**February 26, 2017. “Waterway Cruise”** narrated by John McCarthy. **CANCELLED.**

**\*March 21, 2017. 7 PM. “Convict Leasing and Peonage: A History and Legacy.”** Jack E. Davis, Ph.D., Professor of Environmental History and Sustainability Studies, University of Florida.

**March 29, 2017. 11:30 AM. VAHS Luncheon and Annual Meeting.** Pelican Pointe Golf and Country Club. Tickets \$25. Reservations for the luncheon may be sent with your check, made payable to VAHS, to VAHS Annual Meeting, P.O. Box 995, Venice, FL 34284 0995. List reservation name(s) in the memo line.

**April 9, 2017. “Venice Celebrates Circus.”** Venice Performing Arts Center, 1 Indian Avenue, Venice, FL. Films, Dinner, Auction, Variety Show. Times and ticket prices TBA.

**\*April 18, 2017. 7 PM. “After Slavery: Black Sharecroppers in the South, 1865-1940.”** Brad Jenkins, Retired Chair of the History and Political Science Department, Guilford Technical College; and Dan Hadley.

**\*May 16, 2017. 7 PM. Program: “White Sharecroppers in the South and the End of Sharecropping.”** Brad Jenkins, Retired Chair of the History and Political Science Department, Guilford Technical College; Dan Hadley; and Equity Actor Grace Grote.

*\*The Betty Intagliata Lecture Series is sponsored by the Venice Area Historical Society, with funding provided by the Bill Jervey 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.*

## 2017 History Opportunities in Sarasota County

**Now through January 27, 2017.** Venice Museum and Archives Exhibit, “**Burnin' Rubber-Auto Racing in Venice 1953-1960.**” Open Mon-Wed, 1-4 PM.

**February 24-25 and April 30-May 2, 2017.** National History Day Judging Opportunities at the County Level (February 24-25) and State Level (April 30 to May 2 in Tallahassee). The 2017 theme is “**Taking a Stand in History.**” Middle and high school students do original research on the topic. Email [Jennifer.jaso@sarasotacountyschools.net](mailto:Jennifer.jaso@sarasotacountyschools.net) if you would like to participate.

**February 28-April 4, 2017. Tuesdays only, 9:30-11:00 AM.** Pierian Springs Academy, “**The History of African American Life in Sarasota.**” Instructor James Brown at Argosy University. Fee is \$95. Contact Barbara Smith for carpooling.

**March 8, 2017. 10 AM.** Friends of Warm Mineral Springs, “**The Future of Warm Mineral Springs.**” Venice Ramada Inn.

The Coalition Calendar on the website of the History and Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County, [www.historicpreservationsarasota.org](http://www.historicpreservationsarasota.org), lists additional County history events. The Coalition is a coordinating body of the County’s public not-for-profit and governmental historic preservation groups. Check it out.

## Venice Celebrates Circus--April 9, 2017

Save the date! VAHS and the Venice Institute for the Performing Arts (VIPA) are collaborating to present “Venice Celebrates Circus,” a series of community events on Sunday, April 9, 2017, honoring the Venice Depot’s circus train heritage at the Venice Performing Art Center (VPAC).

The first event will be a FREE afternoon showing of the 1952 movie classic *The Greatest Show on Earth* in VPAC, capacity 1000. A tented lawn dinner will take place on VPAC’s grounds and will include a live silent auction. In the evening, the Venice Concert Band will perform at VPAC, and a documentary about the Circus Train Car Project, including footage of the *Short Leaf Pine*’s move to Venice, will be shown.

The times and prices of the dinner and concert are still to be determined.

“Venice Celebrates Circus” is in part a fundraiser for the Circus Train Car Project. To help decorate the car’s interior and provide funds for maintaining the car, please send donations to: Circus Train Car Project, Caldwell Trust Company, 1400 Center Road, Venice, FL 34293.

*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 (800-436-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. Ch 32089 Renewal due 4/12/2017.*



## Turpentine Industry in Venice



\*Photo courtesy of the Venice Museum and Archives.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the turpentine industry had moved from North Carolina to the virgin pine stands of Florida where longleaf and slash pines were slashed and sapped to death for their turpentine. It would take less than 50 years for Florida to lose over 80% of these trees. It takes six to ten years to kill a tree by bleeding it of sap. The distilled sap produces turpentine, resin, pine oil, tar and pitch that are then used to produce varnish and paint.

In the Venice area, there were at least three camps. Woodmere was located near the current intersection of Jacaranda and 41. Another camp was west of the Seaboard Air Line Railway tracks in Venice where Hall and Harrison leased 2.5 acres from F.R. Knight. The third, the McCloud Camp (also called the McKeithan Still) was located northeast of the tracks and Laurel Road. These areas employed primarily black labor and leased convicts who lived in company towns. The stockade for the leased convicts was located a block west of the Seaboard Air Line Railway tracks at 41 and Pocono Trail.

Wages were a \$1.00 to \$1.75 a day, and convicts could be leased for a \$150 a year. Governor Napoleon Broward stopped the leasing of convicts in 1923 after a young white boy was killed. However, a new law allowing employers to retain workers for debts continued the hard labor until the industry died out after World War II. Wages remained the same into the 1940s.

In order to tap the sap-producing layers of a tree, the pine bark was removed. Once debarked, pine trees secreted oleoresin to seal the opening, reduce exposure to organisms and insects, and prevent sap loss, thereby protecting the tree. Turpentiners cut V-shaped streaks along the length

of the trunks in order to channel the oleoresin into containers. It was then collected and processed into spirits of turpentine. Applying herbicides could increase the yield by almost 40%.

The V-shaped cuts that resemble a cat's whiskers indicated that the tree was used to collect resin for turpentine production. A crop of lumber was about 10,000 trees. It is estimated that there were 10-15 crops for each camp.

The resin was collected by Hoover Wagons, automobiles that had been cut down, fastened to a shay, and pulled by mules because companies could not afford to keep the cars in gas and repairs.

By 1925, the J. Ray Arnold Lumber Company had moved in to mill the 80 acres of land around the McCloud turpentine quarters. This area, with its community of 50 to 100 houses, including a commissary for workers, was sawed out by 1930.

## **In Memoriam: Patricia Hobbs (1929-2016)**



Pat Hobbs (left), sister of former VAHS president Sue Chapman (right), followed her parents to Venice in 1987 from New York. Her parents had been seasonal residents from the 1960s, and her father, Harry Case, served as mayor of Venice from 1976 to 1980 and from 1987 to 1992.

Pat retired from ATT where she had been honing her political activities as a union rep. She had an extensive career of community service both in New York and Venice.

As her sister Sue Chapman says, "My big sister was a natural leader, and her generosity took place behind the scenes and was not widely known." Her significant volunteer activities in Venice included the Venice Theatre, the Venice Archives, the Elephant's Trunk, Our Mothers' House, and Venice Hospital. Pat was responsible for inventorying the hospital's art collection. She will be remembered as the Pearl Mesta of Venice for her artful table settings and memorable entertainments.

With a little help from her sister, Pat became a member of VAHS about eight years ago. Her contributions to the restoration of Old Betsy and the Circus Train Car Project have helped with their success. Pat was a strong volunteer for many organizations, and she promoted civic and social pride in the development of Venice.

Pat and Sue recently accepted the City of Venice's 2016 prestigious Legacy Award on behalf of their father who was honored for his many contributions to Venice, including establishing the Planning Commission. This City award is given through the Historic Preservation Board which honors those who have made significant contributions to Venice.

## 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@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:president@veniceareahistoricalsociety.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.)

## VAHS Welcomes New Members

Kathryn Chesley, Jerome Chesley, Mary Hoffman, Dorothy Gross, Dick Gross, Tracy Ivey, Larry Ivey, Ruth Levering, Spencer Levering, Gordon Stoff, Jan Wilcox

## Keeping Track--2016 Depot Statistics

In 2016, 2,876 individuals signed the visitor log at the Historic Venice Train Depot, and almost half of them (48%) visited in February and March. Since VAHS began giving tours of the Depot in November 2003, 31,154 visitors have been hosted. Thank you, Depot Docents, for your untiring dedication to sharing Venice history and Depot history with the public.

# 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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