

2019 UnAnnual Report Redux

So you would think as a historian that I would be good at such things as dates. Yet here we are revisiting 2019 because last year's report should have read 2018 UnAnnual Report. Now that we have that straightened out, we can properly reflect on the great ride that was 2019 for the Division of Historical Resources. The following pages will inform you of how busy the "Little Division That Could" was in serving the citizens of Venice.

The year's biggest news for us was of course the opening of the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center. Thanks to the generosity of Julia Cousins Laning, we have a facility that leads the historical community in the area for quality and professionalism. You can read more about our new facility within these pages. But before we even got to that, the museum shut down while we had the remaining doors and windows replaced on the building. So I hope this dispels those rumors started when we had yellow police tape around the building. Honest, I did not assault a visitor for spelling Nolen with an "a".

This past year also saw the beginning of what we hope will be an enduring and endearing project: the digitization of the *Venice Gondolier* newspapers. Even though we may have "jumped the shark" with Venice Museums Day, it is still the highlight of our programmatic year and a great opportunity to partner with the other historical organizations in the city. Learn more about other shark encounters we had later in this Unannual Report.

Projects like those mentioned above are setting us on a path to the long-term preservation and care of this city's historical resources and the growth of the division physically. And with growth comes new challenges, such as who are we now and how do we function. Those are achievements for us to report about in next year's publication. But rest assured that Jon, Rhonda, our unpaid staff, and I are up to those challenges.

As you thumb or scroll through these pages, remember that all this happened through the work of dedicated people looking to serve not only this community, but its past as well.



We remain your humble stewards of history,



Harry Klinkhamer,
Historical Resources Manager

So What's New in the Museum's Collection?



2019.54.11 – Team photo of the 1979 Venice High School Football team currently hanging in the Playing in Paradise: The History of Venice Sports exhibit.



2019.65.34 – A 23"x36" Circus poster featuring The Flying Vazquez, performers of quadruple somersault.



2019.13.01 – Ticket from the inaugural game at Cool Today Park in West Villages, FL



2017.01.01 - Replica lemon shark jaw with Venice-found fossilized teeth in their correct locations.



2019.22.01 - Three large museum-grade megalodon shark teeth found by divers in the Gulf of Mexico approximately 2-3 miles off Venice's shoreline.

Division Opens New Archives & Research Center



Julia Cousins Laning

The dream of Julia Cousins Laning came true on October 17, 2019. On that day we cut the ribbon and opened the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center. Through her friend, Rhonda Rogers, Julia shared memories of coming to Venice and how important this place and its history is to her. As we've said before and still rings true: thanks a million Julia!



The New Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center

by Jon Watson



The Department of Historical Resources and the City of Venice gained a tremendous resource in 2019 with the completion of a new dedicated collections storage and research center. The Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center has become the new home to the over 20,000 archival materials and artifacts in the city's possession.

Staff got the chance to help design the building during the renovation process along with purchasing professional stationary and mobile shelving units to help better store and protect the collection. Many long hot summer days were spent moving boxes upon boxes of the city's collection from our previous four storage areas spread throughout the area to the Archives & Research Center, their new permanent home.

Besides storage, the Archives & Research Center will provide staff and volunteers a better opportunity to organize the collection now that it is centrally located. This in turn, will improve public access to research the historic documents while also preserving them for generations to come.

The Archives & Research Center is open for research to the public by appointment—this ensures that staff will be there to greet and assist you. Please stop by the museum to fill out a research request form or contact curator and collections manager, Jon Watson at jwatson@venicegov.com or (941) 716-7255.

To browse the online collection, please visit: <https://venicefl.pastperfectonline.com/>

Our Volunteers Are Rock Stars

by Rhonda Rogers



In 2019, VMA volunteers donated over 2,080 hours! With only three full-time staff members, the Division of Historical Resources is able to operate at a higher level with the support, time, and talents provided by these knowledgeable citizens. They are a diverse group — ranging in age from college student to 90 years of age. With backgrounds in education, government, law enforcement, business, military, law, banking, healthcare, and hospitality, they have so much to offer and we thank them.

Our Unpaid Staff

What would an UnAnnual Report be without mention of our unpaid staff? Thanks to all the following talented folks in 2019 who ensured that we were open to the public, processed new collections, aided researchers, and put on fun events.

Carol Bailey
Tina Bird
Edy Browne
Sandie Carter
Mary Charles
Nick Ciavolella
Linda Dalton

Mary Decremer
Tiffany Fernandez
Alice Haber
Gerri Hallgren
Sam Humphreys
George Joynson
Peg Kapustiak

Wendell Kapustiak
Dorothy Korwek
Patricia McManus
Toni Minnick
Jim Nemec
Teri Ostroviak
George Palazzo

Randy Pearson
Clarke Pressly
Trisha Resevic
Sallie Rice
Elizabeth Roop
Laura Scott
Debb Thompson
Thomas Van Dyke

Mary Charles Marks 25 Years of Volunteer Service

by Rhonda Rogers



Mary Charles was presented with a bench and personalized plaque on W. Venice Avenue, commemorating 25 years of volunteer service.

She started working for the City of Venice in 1972, working her way up to Secretary to Mayor and Council, Administrative Assistant to City Clerk, Legal Secretary to Code Enforcement Board, and Deputy City Clerk. Ms. Charles retired in 1994 and began volunteering at the archives. At that time, records were maintained by hand. Today, Mary works with PastPerfect museum software.

When asked why she has volunteered for 25 years, Mary said she enjoys “organizing materials the donors bring in so that anyone researching the subject can easily find them. I love what I do; it keeps my mind active. I enjoy my coworkers and plan to continue as long as my mind and body lets me.” Museum staff noted, with years of institutional knowledge and familiarity with Venice history, she is an asset to the museum. Accuracy is important to Mary and it shows in her work. After the celebration, Mary was asked if she was going to take the rest of the day off. She said, “No, I’m going back to work!”

This Year's Exhibits

by Jon Watson

In 2019, the VMA continued to run its four permanent exhibits:

- *Venice's Inhabitants: The Unique Cultural Heritage of the Land on the Gulf*
- *Dr. Fred H. Albee: A New Beginning for Nokomis and Venice*
- *Fossils: Venice's Land Before Time*
- *The Story of the Historic Triangle Inn.*

Staff made minor updates to the text while giving a rest to some of the highlighted artifacts in exchange for new pieces on display.

Additionally, we showcased three temporary exhibits in 2019:



Snook Haven:

The History of Movies, Mischief,
and Music on the Myakka
October 8th, 2018
through
July 31st, 2019
Triangle Inn - Seasonal Exhibit Rm.



West Venice Ave.:

A Walk Down Venice's Historic
Main Street
January 22nd, 2019
through
January 15th, 2020
Triangle Inn - Hallway



Playing in Paradise:

The History of Venice Sports
October 7th, 2019
through
July 29st, 2020
Triangle Inn - Seasonal Exhibit Rm.

Lord-Higel House Happenings



It may not be noticeable, but a lot happened at the Lord-Higel House in 2019. In the spring, in preparation for hurricane season, Venice Heritage had storm shutters installed on the second floor and storm panels and railing system added to the first floor. They also worked on obtaining the services of a new architect for the interior restoration of the home. Once again they hosted Venice Museums Day on the grounds. Look for some physical activity starting in 2020.

Getting Out and About

This past year was an exciting time of getting out into the community and engaging with some new partners. It's always fun when we make new friends and share some great Venice history. We began the year with the successful Venezia Park walking tours we started in 2018 and added a new tour of the "Grand Homes" of Venice. We saw record numbers of attendees for these tours with architectural historian Sebastian Liseo. Early that year we were also approached by Carol Ann Margolis (Grandma Green Bean) and Anisa Hitt looking for new garden space. The Gardeners and Readers Develop Naturally (GARDEN) Club is a joint effort of the William H. Jervey Jr. Venice Public Library and Venice Area Beautification, Inc. They had a plot to work with when the library was in the Hamilton Building, but needed something closer to the new library. So we are now offering up our garden space that had formerly been managed by Girl Scout Troop 542 for the club's programming. You can see the amazing work these kids come out and do every month.

Also this spring, we had the good fortune of working with Boy Scout Troop 77 to clean one of the artistic icons of the city: the Circus Mural. Thanks to them, they pressure washed the artwork making it once again bright and pleasant to view from Tamiami Trail. In May we held our second Venice Museums Day with Venice Heritage, Inc., and the Venice Area Historical Society. Tours, crafts, and activities made for a wonderful day for Venice area families.



Summer may not be high season, but we were still plenty busy. Once again we partnered with Venice Heritage, Inc., to be the 9th hole for the 2nd Bar Stool Open hosted by Venice Main Street. Participants putted around and learned about Bertha Palmer, Dr. Fred Albee, and John Nolen. Then we celebrated Venice with the Venice Newcomers and their event, Celebrate Venice. A jam-packed afternoon took people to several of the National Historic Districts in the city. And we capped off the summer by participating in Café Venice's celebrity bartending program with Cultural Campus Night. Heads of the William H. Jervey Jr. Venice Public Library, Venice Arts Center, Venice Community Center, and the Venice Museum raised funds for the Backpack Program at All Faiths Food Bank.

Heading into fall, we partnered with the Venice Area Board of Realtors by offering them a set of workshops that covered Venice history, Venice architecture, and historic preservation. Realtors have really appreciated understanding better about the city and what historic preservation really all means. As part of our goal of reaching new audiences, we spent a wonderful day out at Venice Pride Fest. We got the word out to many folks that we exist and that we are interested in their history. And of course, we wrapped up the year with our annual Holiday Open House. What a joy it is to see everyone enjoying the tree lighting across the street at West Blalock Park and coming over to visit the museum.

Top to bottom: Grand Homes Walking Tours; GARDEN Club; Boy Scouts clean Circus Mural; Bar Stool Open; Venice Museums Day.

The Irresistible Museum Gift Shop



The museum gift shop is stocked with unique items ranging from \$1 to \$300. Venice is the shark tooth capital of the world and the museum's gift shop has the shark tooth jewelry and items to prove it. Or pick out a seashell book to help identify the shells you will find at the local beaches.

New to the gift shop are "Secret Boxes." These small boxes made of wood come in many different designs and sizes and are secret because they open in a secret way. The wide variety of designs makes them the perfect gift for anyone. Who knows what you might put inside? Cash? Jewelry? A love note? Beach sand? You decide. Made in the USA.



Also new to the gift shop is a new Point of Sale system. What this means is a much more user friendly cash register for the volunteer docents to use. Using Square, we can now easily process transactions and take cash, check, and credit cards. Bartering with chickens is still not allowed though.

2019 Year of the Shark for Museum



Despite what the Chinese calendar might tell you, 2019 was really the year of the shark. This past year saw several additions of shark teeth to the museum collection, which you can see elsewhere in this UnAnnual Report. Additionally, the museum gift shop continues to work with a local diver and artist to provide the best shark tooth jewelry in the city. You can see more about that elsewhere in here as well.

But it was also the year of the shark for two very unique and fun reasons. In May we held our annual Venice Museums Day activities. This time around we included a mechanical shark that people could ride, proving that anyone could be a shark whisperer. Later in the year, our historical resources manager competed at a national history conference in their competition based off of the popular show Shark Tank. Beating out museums from across the country, his pitch won the seed money from the sharks to develop what is being called the "Lost Buildings of Venice Tropical Shirt." Pre-orders will begin later in this year. And no, this image is not the actual design; the winnings are paying for an actual designer.



Our unofficial ambassador, Old Betsy, spent the early part of the year getting a little nip and tuck after her previous year's activity; you would too at 93. She continued to excite young and old during different events around the city, including: Public Safety Day, the Halloween Parade, and the Holiday Parade. She would have also been in the Sun Fiesta Parade, but that was cancelled due to weather. Thanks to Earl Midlam for his tireless efforts in being Old Betsy's caretaker. With his help we'll get her to 100 in great shape!



Historic Preservation

This past year, the Historic Preservation Board worked diligently on drafting a new historic preservation ordinance. This will be folded into the new Land Development Regulations being worked on, so this work was put on hold waiting on that.

But we did get to host a workshop this spring from the State of Florida's Division of Historical Resources. With the support of Venice Main Street and the Venice Area Historical Society, the City hosted two days of training from national and statewide leaders about the benefits and responsibilities of becoming a Certified Local Government.

Board Members

Jean Trammell, Chair
Frank Codella
William Jervey
Patricia Shreeve
David Tschanz
Curt Whittaker
Franklin Wright
Christopher Miscannon, Student Member



Dorothy Korwek, former Director of Historical Resources, leads a tour of downtown architecture during the Certified Local Government Workshop in April.

Venice Heritage Happenings

by Ronnie Fernandez, President

Venice Heritage, Inc. (VHI) has served the community for 25 years and is committed to preserving the history of the Venice area for now and the future. We do this by arranging events throughout the year to raise money. This money goes to maintain and restore our beloved historic buildings and educate our community. We also advertise and promote our organization by getting involved in community events.

Some of the events we organized in 2019 to raise funds toward our mission were as follows:

- Carnavale themed Tea. Attendees were able to learn about the history of Carnavale, have tea and create a Carnavale themed mask at the event.
- We also held our Annual Heritage Dinner at the Venice Yacht Club.
- VHI organized the annual Venice Book Fair and Writers Festival held at Blalock park and the William H. Jervey, Jr. Venice Public Library
- We held Trolley Tours for guests to learn about the history of Venice and Nokomis.
- In October, VHI started showing historical films about Venice and Sarasota County. These are held at the Venice Library and have shown an increase spark of interest in our local history.

Throughout the year, VHI participated in events to help promote the organization as well as gain membership. Some of these events included Venice MainStreet's Arts Festivals, Craft Fairs, and Barstool Open. We also opened the Lord-Higel House for Museums Day and had snacks along with games for the kids to enjoy.

We had a great year in 2019! Our events grew and will continue to grow with the help of our VHI members. Membership and donations are vital to the cause of historic preservation and education. We appreciate all help and support through both volunteers and donations.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

by Harry Klinkhamer

Last year was a busy and exciting time for Historical Resources. In last year's UnAnnual Report, I dared to make some predictions for 2020. Let's see how I did predicting 2019:

- ❖ The opening of the Dale Laning and Julia Cousins Laning Archives & Research Center. A successful ribbon cutting took place on October 17 that year.
- ❖ Passing an overhauled historic preservation ordinance. Although the Historic Preservation Board worked hard to draft a new ordinance, it got bogged down in the Land Development Regulations update and now waits for that to be completed to see what rendition of the draft is incorporated.
- ❖ Completing the window replacements at the Venice Museum. After Venice Museums Day, we shut down for a month as the remaining windows and doors were replaced.
- ❖ Showing off Venice's history by hosting a state Certified Local Government workshop. With the help of Venice Area Historical Society, Venice Heritage, and Venice Main Street, we showed off Venice to workshop attendees around the state along with historic preservation staff from Tallahassee. It was a great experience.
- ❖ Another successful Venice Museums Day and Holiday Open House. Both these events continue to be fun and allows us to engage with new audiences.
- ❖ Creating a Venice Sports exhibit. Playing in Paradise opened in October, telling the story of sports and recreation in the city.
- ❖ More of our residents and visitors both at the museum and out at talks and events. We saw a six percent increase in our annual attendance last year. We also spoke at numerous club and organization meetings and in an effort to increase awareness we attended Venice Pride Fest.
- ❖ Approval of the Lord-Higel House Site and Development Plan and construction on the parking lot and on the grounds. These items unfortunately took longer than anticipated and will not happen until 2020.
- ❖ More partners in the community that we can work with together. We continued to strengthen our relationship with the Venice Municipal Mobile Home Park. We set up a regular schedule with the City's bicycle coordinator to provide historic bike tours. We are now working with the Venice Area Board of Realtors to offer regular workshops on Venice history and historic preservation.
- ❖ And of course serving the community so that we can all embrace the past and meet the future. The Division of Historical Resources is proud to be the stewards of this fine City's history.

Here is what we will strive for in 2020:

- Continue the reorganization of the entire collection at the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center.
- Continue upgrades and repairs at the Venice Museum.
- Expand our outreach to community events in order to engage with a more diverse audience.
- Add to the Local Register of Historic Places.

We also hope to see more of you at the museum or out in the community.



351 Nassau Street South • Venice, FL 34285

(941) 486-2487 • www.venicemuseum.org • facebook.com/veniceflarchives