

Venice MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

2020 UnAnnual Report: Reflections On An Unusual Year



Harry Klinkhamer
*Historical Resources
Manager*

What a year a pandemic makes. As we started the New Year we saw an increase in attendance, in interest in the walking tours, and in gift shop sales; you name it. Then news broke about COVID-19, followed by its affect in places like China and Italy, and eventually the United States. As the City of Venice declared a state of emergency, the museum closed its doors in the height of high season; as did most of the community. New lexicon entered our daily vocabulary: coronavirus, facemask, pivot, cancellation.

However, to identify this year solely with that event diminishes the fine work and accomplishments that the Division of Historical Resources achieved in 2020. Yes we did have to “pivot” with priorities and “cancel” many things, but as you will see throughout these pages, this nimble crew rode the events of the day and continued to serve our citizens and Clio.

We were able to have a full year of operation at the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center; consider the tires kicked on that one. Its opening has seen an increased interest in using the collection. Research requests are up as well as photo requests. We—along with our colleagues throughout the county—prepared to celebrate Sarasota County’s Centennial taking place in 2021. The fruit of our labor hangs in the museum. The digitization of the *Venice Gondolier* continues as well as digitizing school yearbooks from Venice High School and the Kentucky Military Institute.

The year 2020 was also when the Division of Historical Resources started planning for the future. Projects and discussions that started this year will start seeing results in 2021. This includes renovation of the Lord-Higel House, development of a broader and stronger identity for the Division, upgrades to the main exhibit gallery, capital improvement work at the Triangle Inn and Archives & Research Center, a new historic preservation ordinance, a new public art ordinance, and a new home for Old Betsy.

We missed seeing many of you in 2020 and hope that 2021 will have us engaged more with each other more than just virtually. Take a moment to read or scroll through this UnAnnual Report and see what has been going on with your Historical Resources Division.

Venice Heritage Happenings

by Ronnie Fernandez, President

2020 has been a challenging year to say the least. However, Venice Heritage, Inc. continues to work hard to support our mission: To promote and protect the heritage of the greater Venice, FL area. We started the year with Historic movies in the public library in January and February. We also had booths at the Venice MainStreet Craft Fair in January and Art Classic in March. We were even able to have trolley tours in February.

Unfortunately, our event planning was halted, and we had to cancel many events due to COVID-19 including the Yearly Book Fair, Heritage Dinner, and Museums Day. Yet we were able to continue fundraising by selling Old Betsy Lego sets and the Lost Buildings tropical shirt.

I look forward to ramping back up on our activities in 2021. I am proud to be the President of Venice Heritage, Inc. Board of Directors who continually impress me with their selflessness. Venice Heritage leads the way in preserving, promoting, and educating the community on history.

Lord-Higel House Happenings

It may not have looked like it, but Venice Heritage and Historical Resources made great strides with the Lord-Higel House. Unfortunately it did not start out that way. We received news that we were not awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to plan the interpretation. It is a grueling process and only 16% of applicants are funded, so we knew the chances were not great. Nevertheless, the exercise helped us to find more resources and hone our vision of the stories we want to tell there.

Bigger news is that the architectural firm hired by Venice Heritage—Hall Darling—completed construction drawings for renovating the interior, building an accessible ramp to the porch, and an outbuilding for storage and restrooms. During initial site visits, it was also determined that the second floor exterior needed work to keep the elements out. That work will come first and is planned for 2021.



2020's Exhibits

In 2020, 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.*

Besides, various minor seasonal adjustments to the permanent exhibits, staff spent much of 2020 working with the exhibit firm, ADM2, to rethink the permanent exhibit space with custom cabinets, signage, and exhibit text. The improvements will be installed in early 2021.

Additionally, we showcased two temporary exhibits in 2020:

**Title: *Selling Venice:
Advertising in the 1920s***



January 25th, 2020 - January 13th, 2021
Location: Triangle Inn - Hallway

**Title: *Playing in Paradise:
The History of Venice Sports***



October 7th, 2019 – July 28th, 2021
(Extended due to Covid Closure)
Location: Triangle Inn - Seasonal Exhibit Room

As Always... **FUN, FUN, FUN**

by Rhonda Rogers



Two Lies and One Truth Game

For each person, select the one sentence you believe is the truth. Enter your answers on the last page and submit via email by April 27 to rrogers@venicegov.com.

Remember, up for grabs are two prizes—one for the volunteer who correctly guesses the greatest number of truthful statements, and another for the volunteer who fools the most people. Paid staff can play, but are not eligible for prizes. Have fun and good luck!

Edy Browne

1. I was a stand-in for child J. Fred Muggs on a mini-milleraester on the Today Show.
2. The captain let me steer the Delta Queen riverboat on the Mississippi.
3. I was an extra in a documentary about prosthetics filmed at the Naval Hospital on Mare Island in California.



Jim Nemeč

1. My wedding day is April 27, April Fools Day.
2. I crossed the Mississippi River from Minnesota to Missouri.
3. I am a published author with work in the library of Congress.



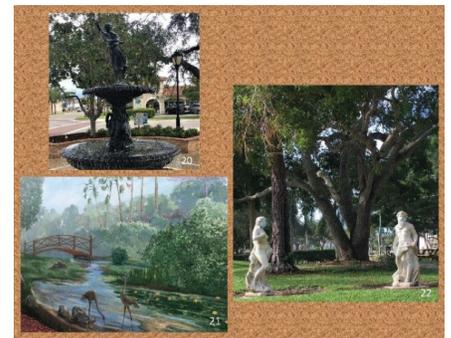
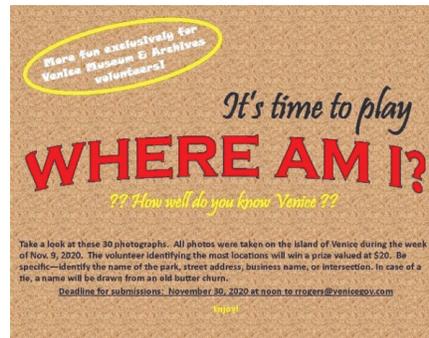
Debb Thompson

1. I've climbed the Alps.
2. I've been married 3 times.
3. I've traveled to all but 3 states in the continental US (today all three begin with the same letter!)



Volunteers play a vital role at both the Venice Museum and the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center. While our facilities were closed or hours reduced due to COVID-19, it was important to maintain engagement with the volunteers. The challenge was coming up with activities that were interesting, fun, safe, and something everyone could do.

For the first activity, each volunteer was asked to submit one truthful statement (something none of us knew about them) and two plausible (but bogus) claims about themselves. Their statements were compiled in a colorful format, complete with headshots, and emailed to the volunteers. Prizes were awarded to the person best able to separate the truth from the fabrications, and the volunteer most adept at duping people.



Feedback from the volunteers: *“This is so much fun. Do it again next season. This showed me what a great sense of humor the volunteers and staff have. I did not realize what a bunch of liars we all are!! Great way to distract from day-to-day. Fun to do this remotely and take time to visualize. Creative, thank you! Great game, do it again. Too much fun. Absolutely hilarious. As always, fun, fun, fun-keep ‘em comin.”*

Another activity we named, “Where Am I?” Volunteers were provided 30 photographs taken on the island of Venice, some wide shots and some telephoto. Our volunteers don’t mess around! They took the challenge seriously and put many miles on their cars and bikes as they traversed the island, determined to find every last vantage point. In the end, one volunteer correctly identified all 30 photos.

Our Volunteers

In 2020, we set a record for volunteer hours. ...a record low, that is. Normally volunteers log more than 2,000 hours per year. In 2020, 28 volunteers managed to donate 1,173 hours before and after our facilities closed due to COVID-19.

We look forward to resuming normal business hours and seeing all of our volunteers when they can safely return.

Michelle Adams
Carol Bailey
Tina Bird
Edy Browne
Sandie Carter
Mary Charles
Linda Dalton

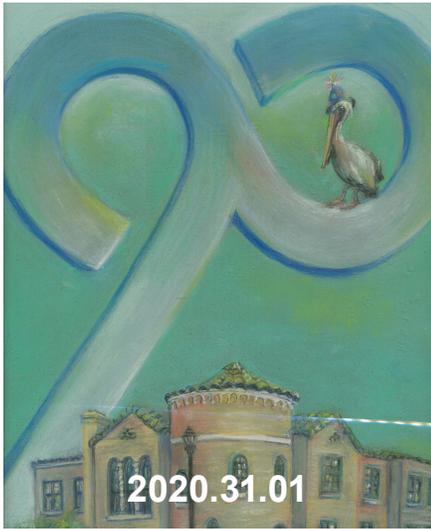
Mary Decremer
Alice Haber
Gerri Hallgren
Sam Humphreys
George Joynson
Abigail Kapustiak
Peg Kapustiak

Wendell Kapustiak
Patricia McManus
Toni Minnick
Jim Nemeč
Teri Ostroviak
George Palazzo
Randy Pearson

Myra Plescia
Clarke Pressly
Sallie Rice
Elizabeth Roop
Laura Scott
Deborah Thompson
Thomas VanDyke

New To The Collection In 2020

by Jon Watson



2020.31.01



2020.30.01



2020.09.01



2020.35.01



2020.19.01

This year we had 452 new items donated and accepted in the City of Venice's Division Historical Resources' collection. Here are a few wonderful highlights of new and interesting pieces.

2020.31.01– Painting created by Linda Barnett Sparks for 90th Birthday of Venice. The title is “Party at the Triangle Inn”.

2020.09.01 - Color photograph of President Lyndon B. Johnson shaking hands with Venice, FL resident Howard Sharp. Taken at Venice Airport, February 1970.

2020.19.01 – A 1980s bronze plaque from Casa de Venice (Hotel Venice Building) with the imprint “Casa de Venice. Established 1926, Restored 1983”.

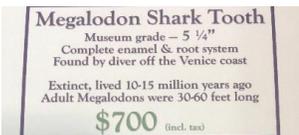
2020.30.01 – Bound copies of Venice Gondolier spanning from March 1946 – December 2002.

2020.35.01 – Kentucky Military Institute West Point Military Uniform Jacket, belonging to William Wilton Wade, an early KMI cadet.

Reminder - If you would like to know what/why/how we collect items for the historical collection, please see our new Collections Policy available at the front desk of the museum during normal business hours or by contacting archives@venicefl.gov.

Museum Gift Shop Offers Something Different

by Rhonda Rogers



The museum's small-but-mighty gift shop is always fully stocked with unique gifts, books, and fossilized shark tooth jewelry. In 2020, the shop offered Megalodon and Mako shark tooth specimens larger than ever before. And they sold. So we replenished our stock with even larger shark teeth for 2021.

The “Lost Buildings of Venice” (and one in Nokomis) Hawaiian-style shirts arrived just in time for the holidays and sold like hotcakes. Due to the fabric repeat pattern, no two shirts are alike. They are made in the USA of high quality 100% cotton. Men's sizes S-3X and Women's S-2X. Exclusively sold in the museum gift shop or online through Venice Heritage, Inc.

Buy Local! ~ Buy a Conversation Starter!

A Division Responds To COVID-19

In January, a pandemic hit the country and the world. The City of Venice declared a State of Emergency on March 16th and the museum closed indefinitely. Not having visitors did not mean that we had no work to do. Historical Resources set about to ensure that this event would be documented for future historians.

The Collecting COVID-19 project set up collections priorities for what we should be seeking to help tell this story. Using StoryCorps, we encouraged the community to share their thoughts and feelings. Finally, we took pictures of a whole lot of nothing. No tourists, no open shops and restaurants, and no open parks. We collected some things and took many photographs. Groups and individuals are still encouraged to donate items related to the pandemic in Venice or share their experiences on StoryCorps.

The museum reopened with limited hours in July with a myriad of safety precautions. Hand sanitizer stations shared space with exhibits. Direction arrows and distance reminders kept those brave enough to visit at a safe distance. All of these are still in place.



Entrepreneurial Aspects of 2020



Not everything in 2020 was about cancelling things. Historical Resources along with Venice Heritage, Inc., dove into the entrepreneurial waters for some interesting new ways to promote and preserve different aspects of Venice history.

The first project under development was the “Lost Buildings of Venice” tropical shirts. We started this venture to promote awareness of some of Venice’s (and Nokomis’s) lost historic buildings. Along with some cultural icons, such as fossilized shark’s teeth, the City flower, and the Nolen Plan, the eight buildings shown serve as a conversation starter. Knowing what was lost can help encourage the prevention of more significant losses. Working with High Seas Trading Company out of California, we worked with a veteran shirt designer to come up with just the right look. They arrived just in time for Christmas and have been a hit since. If you want to wear a piece of Venice history and have an icebreaker at social events (when we have them again), you can purchase these at the Venice Museum or Venice Heritage’s website.



Everyone loves the City’s unofficial ambassador of good will: Old Betsy. She may not need awareness, but she does need maintenance, and a new home. Working with a professional LEGO® designer, we created a LEGO® version of our 1926 American LaFrance fire truck. We saw this as an opportunity to engage young audiences that typically love seeing Old Betsy at events, as well as new audiences who liked the idea of a unique LEGO® set. Like the shirts, these are available at the Venice Museum or online at Venice Heritage’s website.

Discussions are under way for future entrepreneurial projects. Stay tuned.

CLARC Updates

Additional Items on Past Perfect Site

In 2020, we added 1,567 additional items to our Venice Museum & Archives online collections website. This brings the total number of searchable items to 6,781 pieces. The website can be found at <https://venicefl.pastperfectonline.com/>.

Reading Room Research

October of 2020 marked a very successful first year of operation at the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center (CLARC). Numerous people have made appointments to come and research the over 20,000 pieces within the archives. We have made many discoveries and plan on making many more in 2021 by providing this service free to the public!

Digital Venice Gondolier Newspapers and Research Website

In 2020, staff completed the digitization of the first batch of the Gondolier papers spanning from the inaugural edition in March 1946 to December 1967. The editions are now digital and available to keyword search or browse by individual date. More editions will be added on annually until we reach the publish year of 2003.

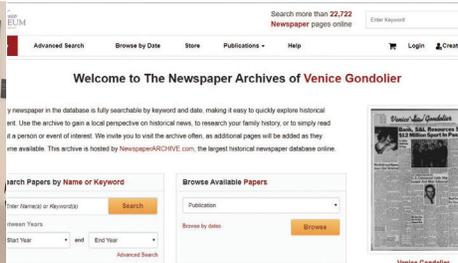
The two-year project was in partnership with the digitizing firm World Archives. It consisted of the relocation, organizing, microfilming, scanning, and uploading of over 22,000 pages of newspapers. The site will be free of charge to researcher who make an appointment to come into the CLARC. In addition, the site will be accessible to the public at home for an annual fee of \$29.99. If interested in the "at home" accessible website, please go to <https://veniceflmuseum.newspaperarchive.com/> to sign up.

Digital Yearbooks

Also, this year we are proud to announce the completion of the digitization of our Venice High School Yearbook Collection. The year-long project was in collaboration with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections who scans historical repositories' yearbooks free of charge to help serve as job training to prison inmates.



Researchers diving into our archives and using our Reading Room at the CLARC.

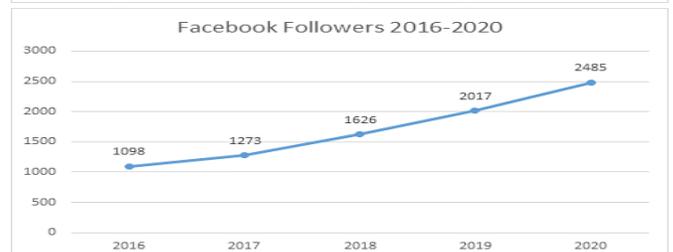
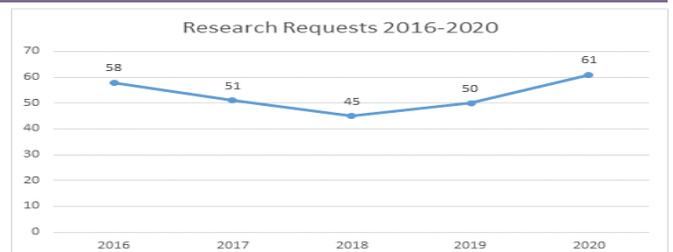
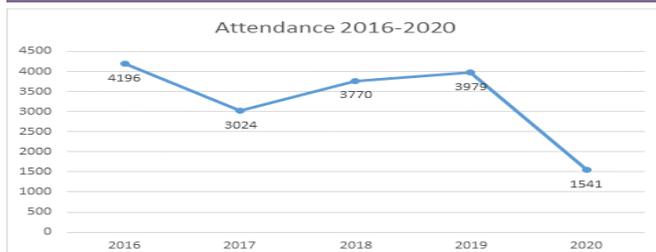


The home page at <https://veniceflmuseum.newspaperarchive.com/>. Simply type in a keyword to search for or browse the papers by clicking on "browse by date."



Venice High School yearbooks. The CLARC houses most Venice High School and Kentucky Military Institute yearbooks spanning from the 1920s-present.

By The Numbers





Finding A New Home For Old Betsy

As our beloved historic fire truck approaches 100, plans are under way to find a new home to show off Old Betsy. Currently the 1926 American LaFrance vehicle is stored in a county-owned warehouse on East Venice Avenue. She is only accessible to the public when she attends events and parades, and there have not been any of those in 2020.

In August, Earl Midlam and Director of Public Works and Asset Management for the City of Venice, James Clinch, presented a conceptual proposal for a new building that would serve as open storage for Old Betsy. This building, to be located on the Cultural Campus, would provide 24/7 viewing access to Old Betsy. With blessings from the Parks Advisory Board and City Council, Midlam is working with Venice Heritage to raise the needed funds for the new building. Challenge grants and pledges have started to come in. Those wishing to donate can reach out to Venice Heritage.

Not So Out and About

The year started out as usual. We continued our Venice 101 workshops for the Venice Area Board of Realtors, started our walking and biking tours, and started planning for Venice Museums Day and for participating in a new event for us – Tour-de Parks on the Legacy trail. Guest speaker requests came in as well. For the Manasota Beach Club’s anniversary, we did a talk on Woodmere. We also provided a history lesson for the many volunteers at the Chamber of Commerce.

After we closed in mid-March, many of our events also were cancelled. We held out hope that maybe we could do Venice Museums Day, but as the City of Venice kept extending event cancellations, that became impossible. Some presentations switched to a virtual format, but for the most part we stayed put and focused on pandemic-related projects.

Historic Preservation

Things did not come to a stop in 2020 for historic preservation. In fact, it was a busy year. It saw gains, losses, and some progress.

The Historic Preservation Board continued to work on a revision of the City’s historic preservation ordinance. First reactions on the draft from elected officials was concern about overreach, so the board took those concerns and rewrote the draft to better reflect what was preferred. After completing the revisions it is now with Development Services and the Planning Commission as they continue to work on the Land Development Regulations.

In late summer the demolition of a 1920s home sparked some community outcry and organized advocacy. It also brought into question how City ordinances are codified for these matters. It has sent several City boards back to look at how demolitions are covered in their respective legislation. Following this, the City added its seventh property to the Local Register of Historic Places. It had been at least five years since the last addition. We now welcome 613 W. Venice Avenue to this prestigious list.

BOARD MEMBERS

Jean Trammell, Chair	Carol Orenstein
Franklin E. Wright, Vice Chair	Benjamin M. Abramson
Catherine A. Parise, Student Member	Heather R. Munro
Thomas A. Cookingham	Cynthia Greene

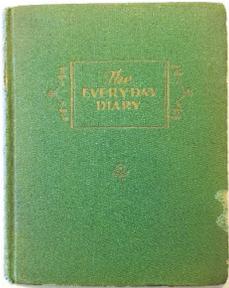




Facebook Greatest Hits

by Rhonda Rogers

The “Marker Monday” posts proved to be our most popular Facebook series in 2020. Each Monday a local historical marker was spotlighted. Posts included close-up images of the marker, interesting tidbits of information, corresponding photos from the past, and the marker’s location. It was no surprise the #1 Marker Monday post was about the #1 go-to spot in Venice: “Casey’s Pass” (also known as the Venice jetties.)



The greatest exposure for a single Facebook post came when Tampa television station WTVT Channel 13 shared with its more than 2 million followers, our “Mystery of the Little Green Diary.” Years ago, an unknown donor dropped off a diary at the museum. It was rich with stories of daily life in Venice in 1932, but who was the author? By posting some of the diary’s clues, two citizens were able to put the puzzle pieces together and help us solve the mystery of the unnamed author.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

by Harry Klinkhamer

2020 was an unusual year for Historical Resources. Definitely one for the history books. So how did this all affect our predictions?

- *Continue the reorganization of the entire collection at the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center.*

Well, this one was a no brainer. The massive job of re-recording the locations of everything now that they are in one building is time-consuming. Seeing that history never ends, this process will continue.

- *Continue upgrades and repairs at the Triangle Inn.*
A new generator connection, second floor HVAC unit, and water intrusion repairs continues that trend.
- *Expand our outreach to community events in order to engage with a more diverse audience.*
Well.....
- *Add to the Local Register of Historic Places.*
We did add one property.

Not too bad all things considered. For 2021, you will see:

- At least two major facility improvements at Historical Resources.
- A return to regularly scheduled hours.
- Outreach to at least two new groups in Venice.

We'll check in on these next year!



351 Nassau Street South • Venice, FL 34285

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