



# CENTENNIAL

*Journal*

Issue 5 • March - April 2021



Dr. Frank A. Cassell

*From  
The  
Chair*

In March 1921 the recently reorganized Sarasota Chamber of Commerce convened under its new leader, former Mayor Hamden S. Smith. The Chamber was in full charge of the movement to establish Sarasota County. Much of the past year had been spent organizing support throughout what was known as the Sarasota District. Since the next session of the Florida legislature was due to start April 1, the Chamber was in the final phases of preparing a bill planning its introduction. On March 4 the Chamber hired its first executive director, E. S. Delbert. His main task was to oversee every detail of the political operation to gain passage of the legislation. The stage was now set for the final scene in the Sarasota District's fight for independence from Manatee County.

March 1921 was an important month in Sarasota's history. And March 2021 is a fast-moving time for those of us involved in organizing an appropriate celebration of the county's Centennial. As I reported last month, Centennial celebration events are already taking place. Museum displays, orchestral concerts, lecture programs, and auto tours are all going on now. You can find details on our Centennial calendar. The County Government Committee is also bringing Centennial activities on line. The Sarasota Library System's One Book/One Community program is dedicated to Centennial themes this year. The libraries are also organizing a program to interview 100 or so Sarasota County residents about their lives. The interviews will be taped and posted on the internet. Another county project will honor and draw attention to our beautiful 1927 courthouse.

We now have 90 Centennial Partners. Next month I shall report more on their plans for the Centennial.

*Dr. Frank A. Cassell, Chair*  
Sarasota County Centennial 2021  
Steering Committee

## UPCOMING PARTNER EVENTS

HotWorks.org  
Sarasota Open Air Fine Art Show Original,  
handmade art  
for sale by artist  
April 3 & 4, 2021 from 10am-5pm Daily At  
Phillipi Estate Park, Sarasota  
\$5 Admission (15 and under free)

**Sarasota County  
Centennial 2021  
Steering Committee**

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*Betty Intagliata*

**Contributors**

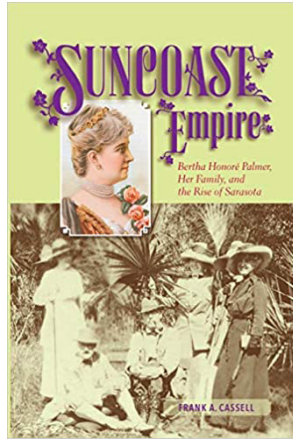
*Don Bayley, Frank Cassell*

**Graphic Designer**

*Evelyn Nelson*

**NEWS**

Englewood's Museum volunteer is Betty Nugent. Betty gives a "Historic Village Tour" of Englewood's Historic Spots. Up to 4 people at 10:30 AM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Four is all she can fit in her "Golf Cart" tour. Group meets at the Old Hardware Store on Dearborn Street in Englewood. Wear a mask! Call to reserve your date: (941)460-1561.



*Frank Cassell's book on Mrs. Palmer has been chosen for this Centennial Year 2021 by Sarasota County Libraries series "ONE BOOK, ONE COMMUNITY."*

**Sarasota County Announces 2021 One Book Selection**

**A history of pioneering Sarasota entrepreneur Bertha Palmer takes the spot.**

By [Kay Kipling](#) 2/17/2021 at 12:11pm

Drumroll, please: After much discussion, the Sarasota County Libraries and Historical Resources system has announced its choice for its annual One Book, One Community program. And the winner is local writer-historian Frank A. Cassell's *Suncoast Empire: Bertha Honore Palmer, Her Family, and the Rise of Sarasota*.

It's a logical choice for the county's centennial year, which features all kinds of ongoing activities in celebration. In telling the true story of Palmer's impact on Sarasota, from the time she arrived here in 1910 to the decades her children and grandchildren also played significant roles in our history, Cassell's book provides an eye-opening saga. Palmer was not only one of the wealthiest women in America, a society queen and a social reform advocate, but in her time in Sarasota she became a frontier entrepreneur who invested in cattle, farming and development.

Library system director [Renee DiPilato](#), calling the book "a perfect fit for the centennial," adds that "The One Book, One Community program encourages discussion across the community, and the Bertha Palmer story is one that still fascinates and inspires us today."

Over the years, One Book, One Community has recognized both local authors and world-renowned ones. This year's celebration includes follow-up programs at county libraries, featuring both writer Cassell and actress Kathryn Chesley portraying Palmer herself.

Venice Museum, located at 351 Nassau Street South in Venice (it is to the back of the Venice Community Center & new Venice Public Library), has a wonderful exhibit on "Origins of Sarasota County." Runs through Jan 12, 2022, Mon., Tues., Wed., 10am-2pm. For information call the Museum at (941) 486-2487.

# SARASOTA COUNTY AUTO TOURS

With the generous support of our sponsors, the Sarasota County Centennial Committee is pleased to announce the release of Sarasota County Auto Tours, a FREE smart phone app that brings safe, accessible history to the public. As part of the ongoing Sarasota County Centennial Celebration, the Committee has developed a novel approach to experience landmarks and places of interest at the visitor's leisure.

Available through the Apple App and Google Play stores, the app has four unique tours all with audio narration and travel directions automatically triggered with GPS location services enabled. These tours bring the stories and sights of Sarasota's rich history to life immersing participants in a one-of-a-kind experience.

There are 4 newly produced Auto Tours:



*Sponsored by the Englewood Museum and the Lemon Bay Historical Society*

Lemon Bay  
Historic Lampp House  
Buchan's Landing  
Indian Mound Park  
Historic Green Street Church  
Lemon Bay Cemetery



*Sponsored by Collins Interiors LLC*

Sarasota County Fairgrounds  
Amish & Mennonite Community of Pinecraft  
Fruitville School  
Friendship Baptist Church  
Sarasota Historical Resources & Archives  
Celery Fields  
Audubon Nature Center  
Old Miakka

## BEE RIDGE



## AUTO TOUR

*Sponsored by Mabry Carlton Ranch, Inc.*

Urfer Park & Wilson Home  
Albritton Citrus  
Gillespie School  
Bee Ridge Baptist & Presbyterian Churches  
Historic Bee Ridge Woman's Club  
Maine's Colony's Phillippi Crest Club



*Sponsored by Friends of the Sarasota County Parks*

Phillippi Creek Oyster Bar  
Richard Capes Art  
St John's Chapel Cemetery  
Sarasota High School/Ringling College Museum  
Nora Patterson Bay Island Park  
Phillippi Estate Park

*More Tours coming soon. Additional Sponsorships still available to keep the cost free for the public. For more information visit: [www.sarasotacountycentennial.com/autotours](http://www.sarasotacountycentennial.com/autotours) or search "Sarasota County Auto Tours" in the Apple App and Google Play stores.*

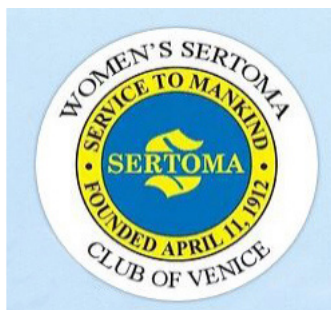


# Become A Partner

We invite you to view "A Special Invitation" to join the celebration  
on our website: [www.sarasotacountycentennial.com](http://www.sarasotacountycentennial.com) or  
on YouTube [youtu.be/uo9U5fbm0PM](https://youtu.be/uo9U5fbm0PM)

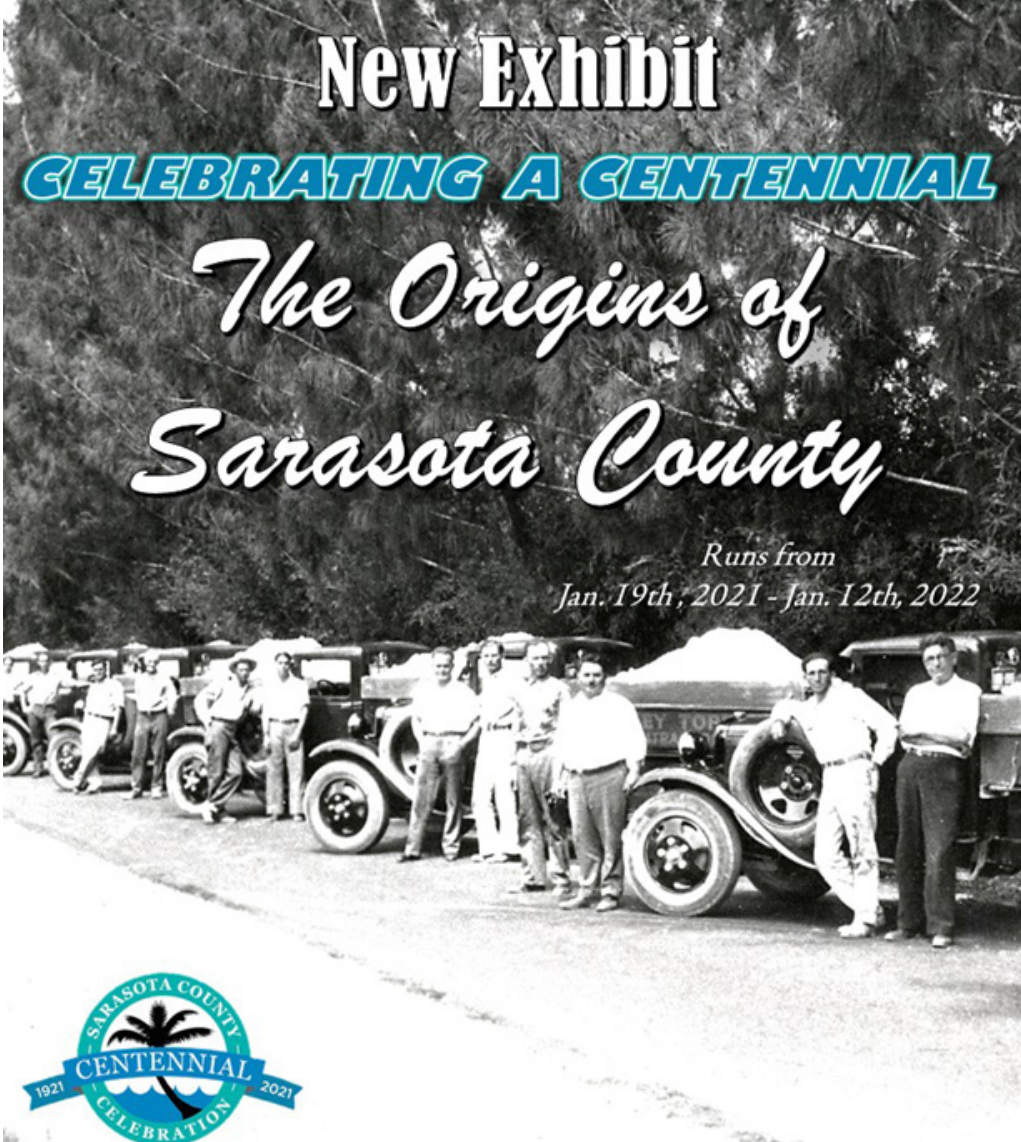
## Join Our Partners

*In every issue we will feature some of our Partners.*




## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT


Celebrating a Centennial: The Origins of Sarasota County commemorates Sarasota County turning 100 years old with historic photos focused on the origin, controversy, and creation of the county we call home today. Learn about the specific role Venice played in its creation and the colorful characters who made the “new” county a reality!




**New Exhibit**  
**CELEBRATING A CENTENNIAL**  
*The Origins of Sarasota County*  
Runs from  
Jan. 19th, 2021 - Jan. 12th, 2022



**Venice MUSEUM & ARCHIVES**  
351 Nassau St. S.  
Venice, FL 34285  
941-486-2487

Open: Mon., Tues.,  
Wed., 10am-1pm  
VeniceMuseum.org  
Follow us on 



## How Sarasota County Came To Be

[SarasotaCountyCentennial.com](http://SarasotaCountyCentennial.com)

Be sure to visit our website to watch the video of Dr. Frank Cassell sharing the story of how Sarasota came to be, its break from Manatee County and the people involved.



# OUR SPONSORS

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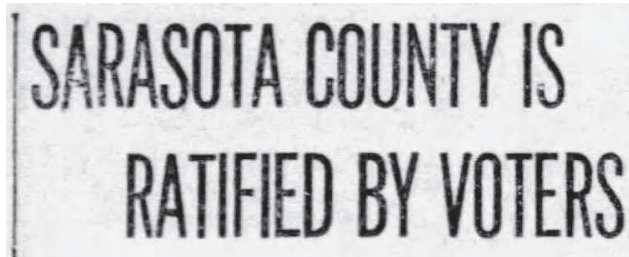
## BRONZE \$500

*Florin/Roebig Attorneys  
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Philip & Dorothy Korwek  
Rick Benitez Photography*

## INDIVIDUAL \$250

*Seaborn & Priscilla Brown  
Lawrence J. Magill  
Floyd "Stone" Rinehart*

*Thank You To All Our*  
**CENTENNIAL SPONSORS**



*Tampa Tribune  
June 16, 1921*

In 1921 the citizens of the Sarasota district won their battle for independence from Manatee County to become Florida's 62nd county. This year in 2021, the entire Sarasota County community including Sarasota, Venice, North Port, Longboat Key, Osprey, Nokomis, Englewood, Newtown, Miakka, and Laurel is celebrating our 100th birthday. Representatives of local historical organizations have formed the Sarasota County Centennial 2021 organization to plan events and raise awareness regarding this important anniversary.

Thanks to people like you, the Sarasota County Centennial will be a historic event to remember. We invite you to be a sponsor of this very important community initiative! Your contribution will help support the entire Centennial effort, including the community events, history programs and a website to share all of the various opportunities for the community to participate. You or your business will be promoted through our marketing efforts online and in print.

Please view our levels of sponsorship. Go to our website [sarasotacountycentennial.com](http://sarasotacountycentennial.com) or print and fill out the Application on the last page to secure your sponsorship. Friends of the Sarasota County History Center dba Sarasota County Centennial 2021 is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.\*

Your support is critical to celebrating this once in a lifetime milestone!

# HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT

*In each of our Centennial 2021 Newsletters, we will focus on some of our "Partners." Currently we have 90 ..but we eventually hope to have 100 marking the 100th Anniversary of Sarasota County!*

## Venice Celebrates Sarasota County's Circus History

*by Mary Huba, Venice Area Historical Society*

The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus played a significant role in Sarasota County's 100-year history when it set up its Winter Headquarters in the county, first in Sarasota (1927-1959) and then in Venice (1960-1992). During the Venice years, the circus train arrived at the Venice Depot each December so that performers could prepare new shows for the coming season in the Ringling Bros. Circus Arena. Within a few weeks, the performers were back on the rails bringing excitement to crowds around the country. In many years, the new shows were not only developed in Venice, they were also performed in the Arena as the official opening show of the season.

In tandem with the county's Centennial Celebration, the Venice Area Historical Society (VAHS) has culminated an eight-year project, restoring a former Ringling train car and placing it on the campus of the Historic Venice Train Depot. By the end of 2021, historical exhibits describing Venice's circus history and circus legacy will be installed, and the car will be open to the public, pandemic permitting.

To date, VAHS has raised nearly \$350,000 to purchase, refurbish, and transport the car, as well as to prepare the Depot site, which includes bringing electrical service to the car and constructing a walkway from the deck of the on-site caboose to the new car.

The exhibits in the car's interior will include three rooms illustrating how performers lived on the circus train, as well as displays that address:

- The arrival of the Ringling Bros. Circus in Venice
- The construction of the Venice Circus Arena
- Innovations in the Circus during the Venice years
- A profile of Clown College, an initiative unique to Venice
- Special stories about the relationship between Venice and the Circus
- Venice's circus legacy



VAHS is deeply indebted to the numerous Society members and local citizens who participated on the project's Community Advisory Committee, its Interior Design Committee, its Project Oversight Committee, as well its standing Development Committee. VAHS thanks former Ringling performers Sigrid Gebel, Chuck Sidlow, and Peggy Williams for their cooperation in recreating their living quarters on the train.

VAHS could not have completed this project without the generous support of the Kathleen K. Catlin Fund at the Community Foundation of Sarasota and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. In addition, donations from almost 200 individuals ranged from \$5 to \$42,000. This project was truly supported and embraced by the citizens of Sarasota County in honor of its unique circus history.

**VISIT THE HISTORIC VENICE TRAIN DEPOT**  
303 E. Venice Avenue • Venice, FL 34285



[veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](http://veniceareahistoricalsociety.org)

941.412.0151

PO Box 995 • Venice, FL 34284



**A Community Celebration of 100 Years of Sarasota County**  
**January 9, 2021 – July 4, 2021**  
***Sponsorship Information***

\_\_\_\_\_ Presenting (\$10,000)    \_\_\_\_\_ Platinum (\$5,000)    \_\_\_\_\_ Gold (\$2,500)  
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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other Donation Amount

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name for listing in event materials and website: \_\_\_\_\_

Link to your website: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a logo for use in event materials and website: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

*If yes, please also send a PDF or JPG file to sarasota2021@gmail.com*

Please make your check out to "Sarasota County Centennial 2021" and mail to: SC Centennial 2021, P.O. Box 91, Venice, FL 34284. To pay via credit card, go to SPONSORS page on **www.sarasotacountycentennial.com** for information.

To ensure your name appears in event materials please respond by October 1, 2020

If you have any questions, please call Marilyn Gerkin at 941-922-8730