

HISTORY CENTER TIMES

A NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023

PUBLISHED BY
FRIENDS OF THE
SARASOTA
COUNTY HISTORY
CENTER

FOSCHC
P. O. Box 91
Venice, FL 34284

941-275-2810



FRIENDS OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

Note from the President

I welcome you to the first issue of the Friends' newsletter. In the following pages you will find fascinating information on the historical records and artifacts held in the History Center. This publication will appear quarterly.

In initiating the newsletter, the friends group, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, aims to inform our members and the general public about the letters, photographs, maps, newspapers, books, artifacts, and much else that taken together document the story of the Sarasota region.

Moreover, new items are constantly being added. Another objective is to keep the community informed about the many educational programs that are organized both by the History Center and its Friends group.

If you are not yet a member of the Friends, I hope this newsletter will inspire you to join. These are exciting times in part because the History Center is preparing to relocate to temporary quarters at the old Osprey schoolhouse at Historic Spanish Point. In a few years it will occupy a new building designed especially to fit its needs and located adjacent to the Fruitville Library. There will be much for the Friends to do in helping prepare for these changes. For information on becoming a Friend of the History Center visit our [website membership page](#).

You can ask any questions you may have by contacting us at friendssarasotahistorycenter.org/contact

Dr. Frank A Cassell, President
Friends of the Sarasota County History Center

FRIENDS OF THE
SARASOTA
COUNTY HISTORY
CENTER

Frank Cassell,
President

Betty Intagliata,
Vice President

Don Bayley,
Treasurer

Betty Nugent,
Secretary

Board Members:

Jim Clubb

Margaret Gates

David Harper

Kim Patton
Manning

Vic Romano

History Center Hosts 39 from the Classroom on Wheels Program



Friends President Dr. Frank Cassell (left) and History Center Manager Dr. Josh Goodman (right) prepare to welcome guests from the Classroom on Wheels program. Photo courtesy of FOSCHC Board Member Peggy Gates.

On December 7 and 8, 2022, the History Center played host to 39 students from the Classroom on Wheels program. Classroom on Wheels is a lifelong learning program offered through the Adult and Community Enrichment Division of Suncoast Technical College. The students take half-day field trips all over Manatee and Sarasota counties to study topics in business and industry,

arts and culture, history, religion, education, social services, agriculture, and more.

On this particular field trip, the students were treated to a backstage tour of the History Center's extensive collections led by History Center Manager Dr. Josh Goodman, as well as a local history primer offered by History Center Friends President Dr. Frank Cassell.

Part One of the History Center's "Big Move" is On Schedule

Thanks to the recent renewal of Sarasota County's one-cent surtax, funding is now available for a new 30,000-square-foot History Center building adjacent to the Fruitville Public Library at 100 Apex Road, just east of Interstate 75.

The new center won't open until 2026 or so, but the moving process is already underway. The History Center's current location at 6062 Porter Way has been identified as the site for a new fire department administration building, so the History Center will soon move into temporary quarters at the old Osprey Schoolhouse on Tamiami Trail.

This beautiful 1927 building was previously the visitor center for Historic Spanish Point, and it is currently the home of the Osprey Public Library. The most frequently used materials from the History Center’s collection will reside with the staff at the new temporary Osprey location, while the rest of the collection will be stored in secure, climate-controlled county buildings elsewhere.



The 1927 Osprey School on Tamiami Trail—the temporary home of the Sarasota County History Center during the construction of its new 30,000-square-foot facility adjacent to the Fruitville Library. Photo courtesy of Sarasota County Communications Department

Public access to the full collection will continue even during this phase. Staff will make regular trips to the temporary storage facilities to retrieve materials requested by the public for research purposes. The History Center aims to open its doors at its new temporary location in Osprey on May 1, 2023.

One big advantage of being at Osprey is that the History Center will now have access to a large public meeting room for hosting lectures, workshops, pop-up exhibits, and other programs. Sarasota County’s Historical Commission and Historic Preservation Board will also begin meeting at the Osprey location. Stay tuned for more details on this exciting new development.

New Exhibit: *The Man with the Little Black Bag*

What was it like to visit the doctor 100 years ago? Well, for starters, it was quite common for the doctor to come to *you* rather than the other way around. The History Center's newest exhibit highlights the careers of two Sarasota doctors, Furman Chairs Whitaker and his son Harper Elliott Whitaker. Together, their careers spanned more than half a century, a period that saw monumental changes in the practice of medicine.



The Man with the Little Black Bag exhibit on display at 1660 Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota. Staff photo.

The Man with the Little Black Bag features books, medical equipment, and photographs from the Whitaker Family Collection at the Sarasota County History Center. It is located in the ground floor showcase at the Sarasota County Administration Center at 1660 Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota, right across the hall from the County Commission Chambers. The building and the exhibit are open to the public. The exhibit will remain on display until late March.

Collection Highlight: Englewood Volunteer Fire Department Scrapbook



An unknown firefighter poses with an Englewood Volunteer Fire Department truck, circa 1970. Image from the Englewood Volunteer Fire Department Scrapbook (MSS 285), Sarasota County History Center.

Early Englewood had no professional fire department to rely on in case of an emergency—only the help of quick-thinking citizens. That all changed in 1949 when a group of locals established a volunteer fire department, which managed fire and rescue services for the Englewood area until 1983 when the Englewood Area Fire Control District was established.

This scrapbook, donated by a former fire chief, Ronald F. Andrick, contains newspaper clippings and photographs documenting the Englewood Volunteer Fire Department and its work in the community. It is open for public research as Collection MSS 285.

Artifact Highlight: A Washboard Made of... Glass?

You've heard of a washboard, but what about a washboard made of *glass*? That's right... glass. This washboard, manufactured by the Carolina Washboard Company in Raleigh, North Carolina, features a glass surface on which to scrub clothing, and would have been a handy household implement back in the days before washing machines.

A glass washboard would have been more costly than the usual metal kind, but the advantage was that the surface would not corrode as easily and cause either damage or discoloration to clothing during use. This particular washboard is part of a larger collection of antique household items donated to the History Center by Pine Shores Presbyterian Church in 2017.



Glass-surfaced washboard manufactured by the Carolina Washboard Company in Raleigh, North Carolina. From the Pine Shores Presbyterian Church Collection (2017.038), Sarasota County History Center.

Volunteer Highlights

Reference Collection Indexing: Volunteer Virginia B. has been working hard on indexing the History Center’s extensive Reference Collection (sometimes called the “Vertical File”). The Reference Collection consists of about 15,000 folders of information on all kinds of topics in local and regional history, all arranged alphabetically. To date Virginia has indexed more than 6,400 folders in the collection. Once the index is complete it will be available online, making it much easier to request folders ahead of your next research visit.

Map Indexing: Volunteer Mike G. has been updating the History Center’s catalog of historical maps, which contains thousands of topographical maps, survey and sales plats for subdivisions, topographical maps, Sanborn fire insurance maps, aerial photographs, and much more.

Snake Island Ceramic Artifacts: Volunteer Michelle C. has been working closely with County Archaeologist Steve Koski to create a detailed catalog of ceramic artifacts recovered from Snake Island near the entrance to Robert Bay. Through careful analysis, Michelle and Steve have even identified sherds from the same clay vessels that fit together!

Interested in volunteering to help preserve and share local history? Contact History Center Manager Dr. Josh Goodman at jgoodman@scgov.net or give him a call at 941-861-6883 to learn more about opportunities to volunteer.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, January 26	Open House at City Hall for New Art/Photo Exhibit – History Center photographs are featured in this exhibit, and Manager Dr. Josh Goodman will speak briefly about the History Center’s role in preserving local history to make exhibits like this one possible. Visit the City of Sarasota’s recent press release on the event for details.
Wednesday, February 8	“Sarasota’s Gilded Age Connection” – History Center Manager Dr. Josh Goodman will discuss how America’s Gilded Age affected the early development of Sarasota County. The talk will be held at Elsie Quirk Library in Englewood from 10:30am-11:30am, and it is open to the public. Visit the Libraries event calendar for details. This is one of many events scheduled as part of the “Lemon Bay Fest—Englewood History with Zest!”
Saturday, March 25	History Day in the Park: The Friends of the History Center will be at Phillippi Estate Park, 5500 South Tamiami Trail, Sarasota from 10 to 5. We will be joining many other nonprofit groups around the region who focus on historic places, people, and events. There will be entertainment, kids' activities, fun, crafts and food. Be sure to stop by our booth. historydayinthepark.com