

HISTORY CENTER TIMES

A NEWSLETTER



FRIENDS OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

SUMMER 2023

Note from the President

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FRIENDS OF THE
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COUNTY
HISTORY CENTER

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With the arrival of summer the pace of activities for the Friends slackens though the officers and Board members have continuing responsibilities. Still, this is a brief period when we can assess the organization's progress as well as that of the History Center.

On May 16 the Friends Board held its first meeting at the Old Osprey School House at Historic Spanish Point. History Center Manager Josh Goodman led us on a tour of the temporary quarters for the Center. The County has done a great job of refurbishing the school house, which also houses the Osprey Public Library. The old wood floors, long hidden under tiles, have been refinished and everything has been freshly painted. The move is still ongoing with boxes, records, bookshelves, furniture, and filing cabinets standing about. But Josh and his staff have everything well in hand. (See the article "How Do You Move a History Center?" below.) Indeed, the Center is already open for business and welcomes anyone wishing to make use of the huge collections of correspondence, artifact, photos, articles, newspapers, and videos located there.

At our Board meeting I took the opportunity to thank the officers and Directors for all that we have accomplished this past year. The list of achievements is lengthy, but I would call attention to our high-quality website, the complete reorganization of membership recruitment and services, our efforts to involve the Friends group in the larger world of the Sarasota County Library System, and continuing to make the Centennial Auto tours available to the public by placing them on our website.

Our membership continues to grow. We have also set up a system to fund purchases of exhibits that directly help Josh strengthen the Center's collections.

Plans for next fall and winter are being developed. Among other things, members of the Friends can expect an invitation to tour the History Center once everything is in its proper place. I welcome any comments or suggestions any of our members may have.

I hope you all enjoy this summer. Keep watching this space!

FRIENDS OF THE
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“You Might be Drunk, but There is a Guy Sitting on the Flagpole.”

Some Stories of Sarasota Bars and their Tenders

1940s to 1950s

By John Manning

Since before recorded human history (circa 3,400 BCE) humans have been getting together and drinking alcoholic beverages. The first “cocktail” was a concoction of fermented rice, honey, grape, and Hawthorn berry dating back to 7,000 BCE in China. Mixology started early indeed.

In North America during the 1600s European settlers would drink a mix of rum or fermented peach juice and apple cider with every meal – even their children. When the British refused to supply rum during the Revolutionary War enterprising American farmers took corn and distilled it into whiskey. Up until the 1850s half of Americans over 15 years of age drank seven gallons of alcohol a year. People viewed imbibing alcohol as safer than drinking water. Not surprisingly work production was a bit slower when your mid-morning break beverage wasn’t coffee.

The “teetotalers” (e.g., Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and Anti-Saloon League) believed alcohol was the root of all social problems and it needed to be stopped. They led the Temperance Movement resulting in the 18th Amendment (“Prohibition” – January 17, 1920) being ratified. It didn’t work out so well.

The Roaring Twenties brought a sense of boundless economic opportunities and easy money. It also brought rebellion to social restrictions. Young women wearing short skirts, bob haircuts, listening to jazz and dancing the Charleston (“flappers”) went to speakeasies (‘gin joints’) where they could drink illegal alcohol supplied by criminal organizations (“bootleggers”). And the boys followed. Those were exciting times.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression (1929 – 1941) followed with a crashing stock market, collapsing banking system, joblessness, poverty and hopelessness. Surely having a drink wasn’t our biggest problem. So, the 18th Amendment was repealed by the 21st Amendment (December 9, 1933). Liquor was legal again.

As we were slowly climbing out of the Depression World War II (1930 – 1945) comes along. It created a national sense of anxiety as well as purpose and sacrifice. Adults went to cocktail lounges for camaraderie, to dance to big band swing music, shoot pool, play games of chance (in the backroom), and have some fun.



Sarasota in the 1940s and 1950s had fine dining establishments such as the **Lido Casino's Hurricane Room** (Lido Beach, Sarasota), **Martines Restaurant** (1425 S Tamiami Trail, Sarasota), the **Plaza Spanish Restaurant** (1426 First St., Sarasota), and **The Colony Restaurant** (Harding Circle (block at Fillmore Dr. & John Ringling Blvd.), St. Armands). [Photo Credit: Sarasota County History Center]

For those seeking a more “lively, unrestrained atmosphere” these following establishments were the places to go.

The **Beach Club** (Sarasota Beach, Siesta Key) was owned by John Z. (“The Greek”) Clark. It was a favorite hangout of writers (MacKinlay Kantor, John D. MacDonald, Burl Ives) and artists (Gil Evgren, Ben Stahl, Bobby Toombs). It is said that the Beach Club was where MacKinlay Kantor famously penned a very salty poem expressing his distaste for tourists. The Greek was beloved by his customers who thought of him as a “shrink, custodian, bookie & banker” rolled in to one person. He would intercede when he thought married men might be straying and remind them of their marital obligations.



Left to right: Bobby Toombs, Gil Evgren, John Z. Clark, John D. McDonald, Al Riegel, and Ben Stahl pose with their collaborative painting at the Beach Club in 1958.

The **Tropical** (at The Alcazar – 1355 Main St., Sarasota) with its arcade entrance was another popular downtown Sarasota lounge. Its main attraction was its large wooden dance floor and live music. During the week Carl Springer would play piano when he wasn't giving flying lessons from Lowe's Field. Bartenders Bobby Cannon and Pop Hardy would make "Cuba Libras" (sic) for underage patrons (parents were less concerned about their kids being in a bar in those days). However, they both worked with Sarasota High School's truant officer, Mrs. Dial, who would happily remove the kids from this "den of iniquity."



The original fascade of The Alcazar Building.



Carl Springer at the piano in the Tropical Lounge, circa 1948.

Herb Field's **Buccaneer Inn** (formerly the Sleepy Lagoon at 595 Dream Island Rd., Longboat Key) was one of Sarasota's secluded "hideaway" bars. Back in the 1950s all of the keys were sparsely populated and not quickly accessible. By the time the police would arrive "the money, the chips, the whiskey, and the girls were gone." It was run by Col. Joe Harris (Canadian Army) and had a one-legged doorman (Ransom Webster) dressed in a pirate outfit.



Buccaneer Inn on Longboat Key
demolished 03Mar2005
now Grand Mariner Condominium

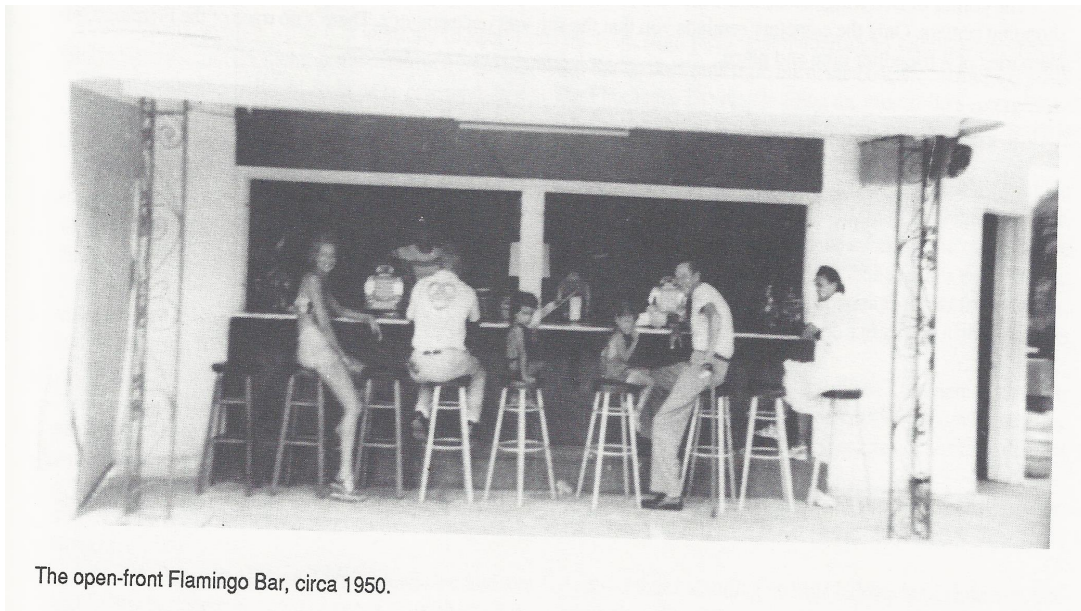


Buccaneer Inn opening, L to R: Ransom Webster doorman -
Herb Field owner - Bill LePage Longboat Key mayor

[Both photos courtesy longboatkeyhistory.com]

As equally important to the success of any bar is its bartenders. And there was no more infamous combination than the Flamingo Bar and Big Gloria.

Formerly the 400 Club, **The Flamingo Bar** (1948 – 1965) appeared to be a barn covered in stucco. It was out in the “boondocks” at the southwest corner of US 41 and Bee Ridge Rd. (Sarasota) across the Trail from Bing Crosby’s “Snowcrop Orange Grove.” Owned by Al Abdulla (former Washington Redskin football player) its open front entrance faced the Tamiami Trail (known as “Boondoggle Boulevard” due to its constant construction work) which allowed the dust to cover the glassware, bottles & the clutter inside. Air, whiskey fumes and smoke were circulated by large fans – there was no air-conditioning. The restrooms were primitive. An old jukebox provided the music.



The Flamingo’s large parking lot could accommodate semi-trucks allowing drivers to go inside, have a few drinks and then go back to their trucks to sleep it off. To the side of the building were woods which gave patrons a short-cut back to their neighborhoods if they were sober enough not to get lost; and provided a private setting for “romantic encounters.”

The Flamingo had a reputation for action. It drew a very wide mix of personalities: real estate developers and salespeople, politicians, circus midgets, millionaires, construction workers, hookers, art students, baseball players, movie stars and fishermen (who could trade their day’s catch for drinks if they were low on cash). Deals were made and bribery was known to occur. The dance floor was in the back where you could dance or play shuffleboard which all too often wound up in brawls over scorekeeping disagreements.

The janitor was a tough little guy named Freddie who had worked for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. He would drink all day, mop the floor at night, and then go sleep in his pick-up truck out back. To get attention for the bar Alvin “Shipwreck” Kelly was occasionally hired to sit on top of the tall flagpole out-front with only one leg strap for safety. The bartenders were Wanda Davis and “Big” Gloria Kidd known to all as the “Blond Bouncers.”

“Big” Gloria Kidd came to Sarasota in 1939 with her first husband (there were four). Times were tough and jobs were hard to come by. They were broke, but managed to rent a house on Osprey Ave. with two other women. They were happy to have shelter even though the landlord’s cow liked to stick its head in their bedroom window to look around. Her break came when she was hired to be a bartender at the Flamingo. She was a natural.

Big Gloria was a tall, pretty, full bodied, curly haired blond. She was friendly, kindly (she helped a young mother & her baby escape an abusive husband), a good listener with a quick comeback, had a good memory, honest and tough.



Gloria Kidd at The Flamingo Bar.

If a customer was mean she would literally throw them out the door (which she did to a 300 lb. man) - not always checking to see if the door was open. You did not mess with Big Gloria if you knew what was good for you.

Her reputation and following grew to the point that other bars pursued her. She became the Queen of the Sarasota bartenders. Over her 30 years as a bartender in Sarasota she worked at: the Flamingo; Sleepy Lagoon (became Buccaneer Inn); Freddie’s Bar (Main St.); Metronome (Main St.); Circus Lounge (Main St.); Gator Bar (Main St.); Bullard’s (Main St. – a hole in the wall bar famous for a prominent Sarasotan who would bring his wife’s crystal glassware so winos in the back alley could drink in style); Vi’s Bar (where she and Bobby Cannon would lift their fellow midget bartenders up to reach the cash register); Central Bar (Central Ave.) and Dixie Lee’s (Bee Ridge).

As much as styles may change people will still want to go to a place where they can listen to music, dance, have a drink and some fun. Just don’t be mean.

(Photos, not otherwise credited, courtesy *Sarasota Times Past* by Bernice Brooks Bergen)

Join Us!
What can members do?
See the last page for info.

How do you move a History Center?

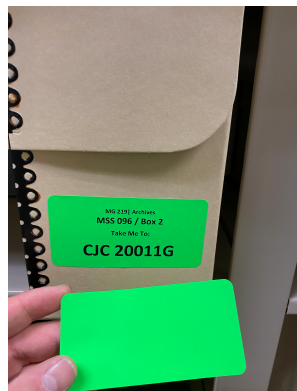


Very carefully!

The Sarasota County History Center teamed up with Displays Fine Art Services out of Dallas, Texas to pack and move the collection from the old Porter Way location to two secure, environmentally appropriate storage facilities.

Every box has been carefully labeled to ensure it finds its proper home in storage. Even the 800-pound marble stele of Bertha Palmer got its own special crate!

Once the move is complete, researchers will be able to request collection materials and have them delivered to the new research room in Osprey. Visit the History Center website scgov.net/history for more details.



Cyanotypes

Per a request from Josh Goodman, Manager of our History Center, the Friends have purchased three cyanotype photographs of Hall's Turpentine Camp. These were up for bid on eBay and we won the auction! Final cost was \$47.60 for all 3.



What are Cyanotypes?

Cyanotypes are photographs made with a 170 year old photographic process that produces prints in a distinctive dark greenish-blue. The word cyan comes from the Greek, meaning “dark blue substance.” The process uses a mixture of iron compounds, which when exposed to UV light and washed in water oxidize to create Prussian Blue images.

The technique was invented in 1841 by Sir John Herschel, a brilliant astronomer and scientist. (His father was the astronomer Sir William Herschel, who discovered the planet Uranus. Interestingly, Uranus, due to mostly methane gas in its atmosphere, appears cyan blue.) The cyanotype process was popularized by photographer and botanist Anna Atkins.



"The brilliant cyanotypes of the Hall Turpentine Camp the Friends purchased for the History Center have been cataloged, digitized, and put into archival-quality acid-free sleeves for long-term preservation. This is an excellent and unique addition to the History Center's collection. Thank you, Friends, for an awesome contribution to our mission!" --Josh Goodman, Manager History Center



From Movie Stars to Mosquitoes!

By Don Bayley

During the Roaring 20's a development called "Hygeia" was planned for north Englewood along what was to be the route of the new Tamiami Trail. Hygeia was marketed to movie stars, producers and directors.

Doug and Mary Among Hygeia Realty Owners

From intelligence issuing from the office of the Bell and Mooser company a goodly portion of Broadway's most shining stars are heading south for real estate investments and even the "Olympiads" of Hollywood, Cal., have begun to trickle in.

Tripping close on the heels of the announcement that a half score of producers, managers, actors, newspaper men and authors had purchased lots in Hygeia, the latest development in Englewood, is the news that Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks (Doug and Mary) have also made purchases here.

The news of the coming of these two most lustrous stars of *Movie Land* was given out by George Mooser, erstwhile manager, producer and actor of national fame, who is interested, with H. H. Bell in establishing a theatrical colony in Hygeia.

Those making up the nucleus of the new colony of property owners are: Mrs. A. H. Woods, wife of "Al" Woods, one of the country's greatest producers, and owner of a group of New York and Chicago's leading play houses; Martin Herman, general manager for Mr. Woods; Wallace Ford, Ignaccio Martinette, one of the best known actors in the country; Jack Lait, head of the Hearst feature syndicate; Samuel Shipman, author of "Friendly Enemies"; Millie Revell, noted woman writer;

Sarasota Herald Tribune, November 13, 1925*

In the November 16, 1925 issue of the *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, this appeared:

"The announcement of the first offering of one hundred lots in beautiful Hygeia signals the opportunity that has been given Sarasota investors to participate in what is destined to become Florida's greatest theatrical colony.

"George Mooser, for many years prominent in the production of plays and pictures in New York and Hollywood, California, has spent the past summer in those sections doing missionary work among the celebrities of stage and screen for the manifold beauties and attractions of Sarasota county in general and the Englewood district in particular.

"A life member of the famous Lambs club and belonging to the Lotus and other great clubs of the Metropolis, his work bore fruit in steady additions to the roster of stellar names that he succeeded convincing of the charm of residence, summer and winter, in Sarasota county.

"Wallace Ford, the handsome young leading man of the "Pigs" company, then playing at the Little Theatre, having purchased two lots, jumped into his Cadillac and drove down to Sarasota to look at his property. Upon his return to New York he spent hours at the Lambs club telling his brother thespians of the beauties of the Englewood district and added two more lots to his holdings in "Hygeia."

PAGE SIXTEEN SARASOTA HERALD MONDAY NOVEMBER 14, 1921

HYGEIA

THEATRICAL COLONY

Today
First Come—First Served

The Only Bona Fide Theatrical Colony in Florida

Including

MARY PICKFORD Belasco's Greatest Star	DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS Belasco's Greatest Star
LENORE ULRIC Well Known Leading Man	FRANCIS KENNAN Belasco's Greatest Star
GEORGE CONNOR Well Known Leading Man	MARY PICKFORD Belasco's Greatest Star
THOMAS KANE Owner Century Players Co.	ED WATSON Owner Century Players Co.
MARTIN HERMAN General Manager A. H. Woods	MARCO MARTINETTE New York Star
NELLIE REVELL Famous Writer	JACK LAIT Famous Journalist and Author
FLORA SHEFFIELD Belasco Star, Leading Woman, Silents Co.	"BIM" SILVERMAN Publisher of "Variety" (The Actors' Bible)
SAMUEL SHEPMAN Author of "Friendship Enemies"	REGINALD SHEFFIELD With Richard Barthelmess

MRS. A. H. WOODS
Wife of New York's Greatest Producer of Plays
And Many Other Celebrities of Stage and Screen

Pre-Opening Prices \$635 to \$1,000
First Offering Limited to 100 Lots at These Prices

Opening Sale December 5th
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"Mary Pickford, her mother and Douglas Fairbanks are owners of lots nearest the beautiful Lemon Bay, and other prominent members of the theatrical world who have invested include Lenore Ulric, famous throughout America first for her wonderful work as "Luana" in "The Bird of Paradise" and later as a Belasco star, playing the leading role in "The Heart of Wetona," ...and more recently "The Harem."

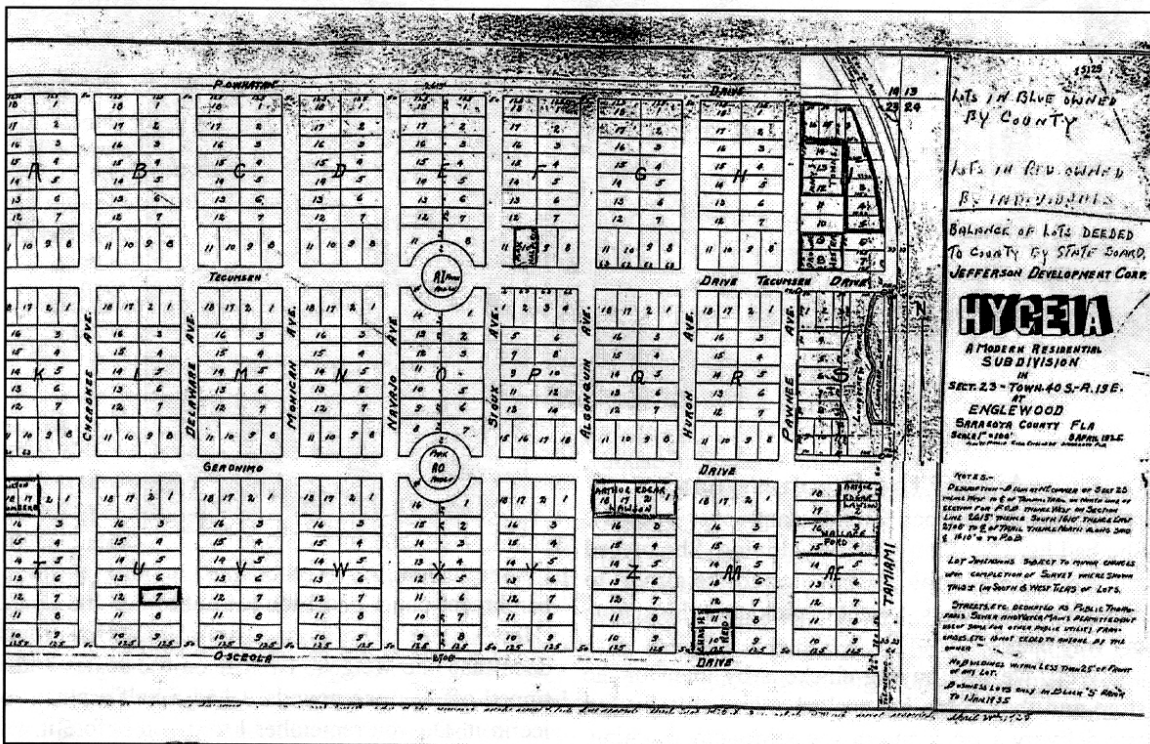


Mary Pickford & Douglas Fairbanks
Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

“The offering of one hundred lots will leave only two hundred more to be released when the formal sale opens. It is freely predicted that within a year lots in Hygeia will command large premiums.

“Work has been in progress for some time on the clearing of the three parks and fifty foot drives. With the arrival of Mr. Bradford Lambert representing a group of New Jersey builders who plan the erection of twenty-five houses. “Hygeia will hum with augmented activity. Mr. Lambert states that his principals are bringing with them their own trucks and building materials, thus eliminating chances of work being delayed by the embargo.

“Negotiations are also under way with W. A. McCarty of the Albee Construction company for the erection of twenty-five additional bungalows--attractive in appearance, varl-colored as befits the character of the occupants, and constructed of Armostone which is fire and moisture proof. Applications for the first hundred lots will be received at the office of Bell-Mooser, First Bank & Trust company building.”



The subdivision plat that was filed on April 21, 1925 shows the streets were to be given Native American names: Osceola, Navajo, Pawnee, Tecumseh, Geronimo, et al.

Movie stars and Hollywood moguls were coming to Englewood to live! Indeed, in 1925 the future of Englewood looked bright and exciting.

What Happened?

Roaring and rampant speculation and the Stock Market crash brought an end to it all. Politicians moved the Tamiami Trail away from Englewood. And to make matters worse, the Englewood's new bank folded when a cashier absconded with all the funds.

Hygeia went bankrupt and the area was abandoned until 1949 when County Commissioner Pete Buchan arranged for the County to acquire 93 acres of the Hygeia land for just \$100. Why? An aerial mosquito eradication program had been developed and the county wanted to build an airport there to facilitate the small planes used for the spraying.



This is the marker which was blown down by hurricane Ian.

Today the grass field airport is still in use, primarily by private planes. The County Commissioners named it Buchan Airport to honor Pete's "long and efficient service to the county."

One Hygeia street was actually built: Osceola Drive which remains today. Here residents have built homes with hangars for their planes so they can use at the airfield right across the street.

Newspaper articles and photos not otherwise credited were obtained from our **Sarasota County History Center. For information on the collections and how you can enjoy viewing items from our fascinating history visit: scgov.net/history*

Join Us!

What can members do?

1. Join to support the History Center's mission to save our precious historical artifacts. No physical volunteering needed.
2. Make an annual gift to the Friends to support educational programs and additions to the collections.
3. Consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors.
4. Become a member of a Friends' committee:
 - **Membership:** Help with recruitment, membership communications, activities, promotions, etc. Email Kim Patton Manning: foschcmembership@gmail.com.
 - **Programs:** Organize presentations by historians, authors, History Center staff, et al for community outreach and fundraising
 - **Communications:** Assist with newsletter and social media outreach. Design, computer and writing skills highly desirable. Email Don Bayley at friendsschistorycenter@gmail.com.
 - **Development:** Assist director in seeking gifts and grants.
5. Assist the History Center with tours, information, talks and pop-up exhibits.
6. Become a speaker on behalf of the Friends and the History Center before civic clubs and homeowner associations. Awareness of the History Center is needed and the staff will provide outlines and talking points.

**To become a member Email Kim Patton Manning at
FOSCHCmembership@gmail.com
and/or visit our Membership page:
<https://friendssarasotahistorycenter.org/membership/>**