



SARASOTA ALLIANCE FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

QUARTERLY PRESERVATION NEWS FOR SARASOTA COUNTY

A GLIMPSE INSIDE



Sarasota Jungle Gardens:
Everything we love about
Old Florida



Hidden Treasure: The
Gulfstream Tower Murals



The Importance of a
Penny: The Penny Sales
Tax

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Erin DiFazio, *President*

**"...cities must be regarded as more than engines of wealth;
they must be viewed as systems that should be shaped to
improve human well being."**

*Charles Montgomery, Happy City, Transforming Our Lives Through
Urban Design, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York (2013) p.295*

Dear friends,

I hope that you are enjoying a healthy summer indulging in things like friendly gatherings and travel that have been uniquely challenging during the past few years. The sense of renewed social connection has been healing for my family, and has helped preserve the 'openness' that Summer has always represented. Having survived another Season, another school year, there is the tendency to allocate all of the big thinking to the summer months. SAHP has certainly been doing its share of big thinking this summer, and we are excited to share our ideas with you.

We are hopeful that our new Sarasota Preservation Program (SP²) will bring tangible preservation tools to empower the whole community to preserve the places that matter to us. In doing this work, we have had to ask ourselves, why is it that our historic built environment is so important? What

drives the passion to preserve? The answers of our board members are included and convey some interesting messages about how the relationship with the architecture of our lives is formed.

There is also an opportunity for you to participate in this generation of ideas about value. In order to convince stakeholders that our historic buildings are worth saving, we must be able to communicate the breadth of community that cares and the spectrum of reasons why. The survey is quick (only 5 minutes) but will help tremendously moving forward.

“It is tempting to believe that the job of fixing cities is the untouchable terrain of distant authorities whom the state has deemed responsible. It is a terrible mistake to give in to this temptation...We are all, through the very geography of our lives, natural stewards and owners of the city. Those who acknowledge it claim immense power.”

Charles Montgomery, Happy City, Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York (2013) p.295

Thank you all for reading, for your support of our mission, and for helping to shape the future of Sarasota with the treasures of our past.

Fondly,

Erin

RECOMMENDED READING

For more information, click to visit websites



The Architects Newspaper asks 'Why can't Paul Rudolph's buildings catch a break?'



'Meet the Women Behind Six Iconic Local Buildings' Sarasota Magazine

'Please, Don't Paint Your Mid-Century Brick' MidMod Midwest



SAVE THE DATE

History Day in the Park

March 25, 2023, 10 a.m.-5 p.m, at Phillippi Estate Park, Sarasota.

This festival will highlight the amazing histories of the Sarasota region, while raising money to help finish the restoration of the 1916 farmhouse on the property, which is to be used as an Historical Interpretive Center. Learn more at: HistoryDayinthePark.com

SARASOTA JUNGLE GARDENS

Lorrie Muldowney, *Vice President*

Photos courtesy of Sarasota County Department of Historical Resources

With a little imagination, visitors to Sarasota Jungle Gardens can be transformed to a Florida of bygone days. Located in Sarasota's Indian Beach neighborhood, on the Sarasota bayfront, the area has been used by people since prehistoric times. According to research conducted by the Sarasota County Historical Commission for the Indian Beach Historical Marker, the area has been used by people for at least 5,000 years.



Archaeological resources at Indian Beach are part of a large complex of Amerindian sites which spanned hundreds of acres of land along Sarasota Bay from today's Tenth Street to north of Jungle Gardens. After the Spanish exploration period and the demise of the native Amerindian populations, Seminole Indians worked at the ranchos, or fish camps, established by Spanish and Cuban fishermen between Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor during the late 1700s and early 1800s.



One such rancho is known to have been located just north of today's Whitaker Bayou. William Whitaker settled along Sarasota Bay in 1842 to fish and later to raise cattle and farm. But it was not until after the Civil War that many other American settlers started to make their homes along the shores of Sarasota Bay.

Indian Beach was platted in 1891, by Dr. Frederick K. Williams, of Bristol Connecticut. Dr. Williams stated in a letter to the editor of the Sarasota Sun that **"when...it was given to me to name the north shore of Sarasota, recognizing the nature of the shell heaps, I named it Indian Beach."**



Dr. Williams represented a syndicate of twenty New Englanders formed to purchase a desirable waterfront tract in Sarasota. Members of the syndicate were deeded choice waterfront lots and a number of Connecticut people built homes, establishing a winter colony along the Bay.



Jungle Gardens was developed by David B. Lindsay, Pearson Conrad and H.R. Taylor and opened on New Year's Eve 1939. According to Karl Grismer in "The Story of Sarasota," the developers added thousands of plants to those already found growing in their natural state. At first called **"The Sarasota Jungle,"** the attraction opened early due to public demand. The December 31, 1939 Sarasota Herald Tribune reported that "The garden, containing more than 3,000 varieties of plants from all parts of the world is being thrown open today only because of many requests from people who would like for their holiday guests to see Sarasota's newest and most

beautiful attraction." On the following day, the Herald reported in a follow-up story that "hundreds of visitors thronged at the Sarasota Jungle, a luxuriant garden spot on Indian Beach Road at Myrtle Avenue ... to view Sarasota's newest attraction."



Since its much-publicized opening, Jungle Gardens has played host to a number of events garnering State and National attention. In the early 1960s the Gardens hosted several Miss Florida Pageants providing a suitably tropical backdrop for this statewide competition. During this same period, "Jungle Jim," the talking Mynah Bird from Sarasota Jungle Gardens, spent 25 months at New York's Rockefeller Plaza for the Florida Development Commission's Florida Showcase. According to the Sarasota Journal, during his time in New York, Jungle Jim appeared on the Today Show four times and stole scenes from veteran TV personality, Hugh Downs. Jungle Jim captivated the audience by explaining clearly "Birds Don't Talk!" after which he would tell his name and invited people to visit Sarasota.

Today Sarasota Jungle Gardens boasts more than 100 birds and animals, and features bird and reptile shows four times daily as well as a Tiki Garden, Shell Museum, Gift Shop and Café. Promotional literature boasts that it is the only Florida attraction which allows its Flamingo's to roam freely. Sarasota's Indian Beach neighborhood, with its featured attraction, Sarasota Jungle Gardens, has been a pleasant place to visit since prehistoric times, and remains so today.

SAVE THE DATE

VAMO WALKING TOUR

Sunday, November 6, 2022

Click to learn
more about
Vamo

Explore this unique neighborhood of early 1920s Mediterranean Revival homes and the c.1900 Lodge. Watch your email for more details and to register for the event.



DEFINING PRESERVATION

Historic Preservation is about saving things that were built by those that came before. While we each attribute unique values to these places, specific memories and stories, their value transcends the individual.

"Neuroscientists have found that environmental cues trigger immediate responses in the human brain even before we are aware of them. As you move into a space, the hippocampus, the brain's memory librarian, is put to work immediately. It compares what you are seeing at any moment to your earlier memories in order to create a mental map of the area, but it also sends messages to the brain's fear and reward centers. Its neighbor, the hypothalamus, pumps out a hormonal response to those signals even before most of us have decided if a place is safe or dangerous. Places that are too sterile or too confusing can trigger the release of adrenaline and cortisol, the hormones associated with fear and anxiety. Places that seem familiar, navigable, and that trigger good memories, are more likely to activate hits of feel-good serotonin, as well as the hormone that rewards and promotes feelings of interpersonal trust, oxytocin."

Charles Montgomery, Happy City, Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York (2013) p.157

What we keep speaks to the community and to the world at large about what we believe has importance, and it also speaks to our relationship with the natural world, because the resources used to create these structures are finite and our earth's ability to give and receive for our species is almost maxed out. Members of our Board of Trustees were asked to answer the question, 'why do you care about a bunch of old buildings?' Here are their answers.

"Old buildings - remind us where we've come from, help us figure where we are at the moment and how we got here, and give us insight into what we need in the future."

Frank Wright

"I care about historic preservation and old buildings because they anchor communities and foster a sense of place. Historic architecture tells a story of our past, roots us in our present, builds bridges to the future, and allows for a sense of pride in an area. In Sarasota especially, our old buildings encapsulate charm, diversity, and contribute in significant ways to the economic regeneration of the city. It is no coincidence that some of the most sought after locations to live in and spend time in are those that maintain their historic integrity." **Zach Pieri**

"Historic buildings talk to current generations. Newcomers to our area are eager to learn of Venice's history and view our historic buildings. A perfect example is the Venice Train Depot (1927) saved by Sarasota County which draws visitors from all over the United States and beyond." **Betty Intagliata**

"I can immerse myself in a culture, in a building or place, that once existed. I get excited feeling that I am seeing a place exactly as it once was, holding events so long ago. I love stepping back in time to another era when life may have been more simple, or elegant through architecture, landscaping, and placement in a community." **Nancy DeForge**

"I care about historic preservation because our buildings embody the memories and dreams of those that came before us. By protecting these buildings, we honor those that preceded us on the planet. Historic Preservation is also technically interesting. Why was an individual building constructed in a particular fashion at a particular time and in a particular place? How do the answers to these questions speak to larger trends about how we live, both with our loved ones and in our neighborhoods, community, and state?

They also shelter us and in so doing contribute to many of our most memorable experiences."

Lorrie Muldowney

"Sarasota has a unique character that comes from its historic buildings. Many are being demolished to make way for yet another condominium building of undistinguished design and monstrous scale. I care about preservation because it reminds us of the distinguished record of those who built the city and provides a path forward, because it carries forward the character of the city that makes it such a desirable place to live and work, and because it is better for the environment and the soul."

Barry Preston

"Growing up in the NY-NJ area, I had access to many historic properties and sites that afforded me a chance to experience the fabric of our country's and my family's past - sites of Revolutionary War battles, Ellis Island, Fraunces Tavern, Statue of Liberty, my 1890s high school, the 1920s Bronx apartment building where my grandmother lived. All preserved, these bring history to life for me, and each helps tell a story that allowed me to assemble my perspective on the world. And now they're always there to re-experience when I feel nostalgic. Like buying old furniture, they make us part of the continuum of life. In Sarasota, long time residents and new arrivals have far fewer reminders of the area's history. Though a very young MSA, the Suncoast is a time capsule of the early and mid 20th century, its formative years, and I think it is vital to preserve our history. Sarasota's physical and historic past is no less important to our community than national monuments are to our country."

Tom McArdle

"For me, preservation is about connecting to America's past and our history, but it's not about nostalgia. Preservation of old buildings and districts gives us a sense of community across generations and eras in an increasingly cookie-cutter landscape. The American building pattern post-WWII is so car-centric, so focused on mass suburbanization. I find older, well-planned communities to be much more human-centered and appealing. It's why so many people are drawn to places like Venice, even if they can't articulate why exactly. And as a conservationist, I support adaptation and re-use of old buildings because it's the environmentally friendly thing to do."

Jan Vertefeuille

"To understand the foundation of our present, we need to explore what came before and the reasons buildings were constructed the way they were. Historic structures are a part of me and you. Therefore, we should help save these places so that we can all appreciate the fine workmanship and artistry of prior generations (of Sarasotans or your home town or another location of special interest to you). Without a past to study, we have a meaningless shallow future. Preservation reminds of a time that was and what can continue to be for many years to come."

Vicky Urban

"Over the past 40 years, I have worked in saving and rehabilitating historic buildings. Coming from New Bedford, Massachusetts, it was not difficult. I headed much of the Historic Preservation as Chairman of the New Bedford Historic Commission and as the Director of WHALE the non-profit Preservation organization. We saved many buildings because people there like the history of the City. We created an after-school program to teach children from the first to the sixth grades on why the old buildings are still important. We authored a coloring book with houses the children could understand. They colored them, had field trips to see them and they learned who lived there and they understood their importance in American History. I would ask the children if they still had a special toy, such as a Teddy Bear or other that was given to them when they were small. They all answered that their parents or grandparents gave them this toy or Teddy bear and they saved it because it was so special to them. We taught them that, unfortunately, we could not save every historic building, but we saved the ones we loved like just like their Teddy bear. They understood!" **Tony Souza**

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Take just a couple moments of your time to share your thoughts about why historic preservation is important. Your feedback will help us communicate these values to those in positions of power.

Take the 5 Min. Survey →

THE GULFSTREAM TOWERS MURALS

Bill Denhard, *Guest Author*

This history of the Gulfstream Towers murals has been researched by many, but much still remains unknown. Gulfstream Towers, completed in 1960, was Sarasota's first downtown condominium. It was designed by architect Edward J. "Tim" Seibert, one of the founders of the modern movement known as the Sarasota School of Architecture. Stored in this mid-century modern building at 33 S Gulfstream Avenue are two (2) historically important murals, deteriorating with time.



The murals were painted in 1949 by Henderson "Sid" Smith, the *Gone With the Wind* poster artist. Over seven decades, Smith painted landscapes, murals, movie posters and portraits of famous people, including numerous Hollywood stars. It is believed, but unconfirmed, that the Gulfstream Towers murals originally hung in the Orange Blossom Hotel at 1330 Main Street in downtown Sarasota.

The Orange Blossom's building was formerly the American National Bank Building, an architectural neo-Classical landmark completed in 1926. It was converted to the hotel in 1934 and featured 125 rooms, a restaurant, a cocktail lounge and coffee bar.

In 1965, the Orange Blossom Hotel closed. That same year, the murals were found in a Main Street property purchased for renovation by Benjamin F. Cochran. Mr. Cochran gifted them to Gulfstream Towers.



Both murals depict maps and are large, measuring 8 Feet by 12 Feet. One details the Sarasota coastal area from the northern end of Longboat Key to the southern tip of Siesta Key. The other maps the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea with fragments of land including the Gulf Coast States, the East Coast States, the Caribbean islands, Central America and South America's northern countries. Surrounding the land masses are bright, colorful, detailed cameos germane to the geography.

Smith used fine brushstrokes to blend paints that shaped each map and the surrounding images. The land is depicted with vivid tints and hues of color. For the Sarasota mural, "Painted around the periphery are a clown's head and circus elephant, a fishing boat and a tarpon jumping against a fishing line, a woman diver in a purple two-piece, a woman in a yellow bathing suit lounging on a circus pageant float, baseball players, a trailer park, and a woman picking oranges."¹ On his Caribbean map, "Colorful sea scenes encircle the geography -- a fisherman; a mermaid; a clipper ship under full sail; and pirates dueling over treasure on an island just east of Panama."¹

These imaginative murals are truly extraordinary, but sadly in need of restoration. As we continue to research and learn more about the history of Sid Smith's murals, the Gulfstream Towers Board seeks a benefactor to help extend the life of these cultural works of art.

¹Kevin Costello, "Smith's legacy: The mystery of Gulfstream murals," *Herald-Tribune*, November 17, 2002

Please contact the manager of Gulfstream Towers, Natalie Munno, at gulfstreamtowersmanager@gmail.com or 1 (941) 955-7534, if interested in being that patron.

LEAVE A LEGACY

The Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation is now offering Lifetime Legacy Memberships. You can also help preserve the past for the future by leaving a gift to the SAHP in your will. [Learn More](#)



SUPPORT THE PENNY TAX RENEWAL

Dr. Frank A. Cassell, Guest Author

November 8, 2022, can be a big day for the county's many historical and preservation groups if the Penny Tax renewal is approved by the voters. **Over 20 million dollars for history and preservation projects appear on the county's list of approved projects.** That should be a powerful incentive for all those who care about saving important aspects of our past to campaign for passage of this measure.

Let's begin with a little background. The Penny Tax fund has existed for over 30 years and been renewed three times by the voters. Interestingly, 20% of the Penny Tax revenue comes from visitors and tourists to Sarasota County. The Penny Tax allows counties to collect an additional one percent on top of the state's six percent sales tax. The funds collected are apportioned by formula to county and city governments and the school district. The funds are intended for infrastructure expansion and repair and may not be used for salaries and other general expenses. Road building and maintenance, equipment for police and fire departments, and the erection and repair of public facilities such as schools and libraries are some of the acceptable uses of Penny Tax income.



The biggest history and preservation project for 2022, at \$15 million, is the building of a new History Center next door to the Fruitville Library. The History Center is the leading institution for collecting, preserving, interpreting, and displaying a huge range of written or printed documents, maps, photographs, art, and many forms of material culture that are critical to understanding Sarasota County's past. The current facility housing the History Center is far too small, susceptible to hurricane damage, and lacks even a fire suppression system. To have this collection destroyed or simply stored away and less available for use would be to lose touch with much of our heritage.

Architectural preservationists are one of several groups that have much at stake with regard to erecting a new History Center. The collection includes archival material concerning members of the Sarasota School of Architecture along with hundreds of architectural drawings of public and private buildings in the county designed by architects such as Ralph Twitchell, Paul Rudolph, Victor Lundy, and Thomas Reed Martin. There are records documenting local historical preservation efforts, such as proposals for historic designations and opposition to inappropriate changes to historic structures. In addition, the Center has records and ephemera from organizations fighting to preserve historic architecture such as our own Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation. Moreover, there are photographs of historic buildings including some lost to demolition and an extensive A-Z reference file containing information on thousands of historically significant events and people. It also includes material on architecturally significant structures and the people who designed and built them. History Center staff tell me that the new structure will allow them better to organize and store their architecturally significant holdings, thereby making them more convenient for researchers. They will also be able to digitize parts of the collection.

While the History Center is vitally important, it is not the only history-related beneficiary of Penny Tax funds. The county project list also designates the Venice Train Station and adjacent Manhattan Produce Exchange building, the Edson Keith mansion at Philippi Estate Park, and the Terrace Building and County Courthouse in Sarasota for facility renewal funds. We should all support the Penny Tax renewal on November 8. As it has for three decades, the Penny Tax has helped make Sarasota County a better place to live, work, and raise families. The fact that history and preservation are recognized as important components of building a better community should give us a special reason to campaign for renewal of the Penny Tax.

Dr. Frank A. Cassell is the President of the Friends of the Sarasota County History Center and Chair of the History and Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County

HALL PRESERVATION CAMPAIGN AND SP² UPDATE

Tom McArdle, *Treasurer & Secretary*

In our Spring 2022 newsletter, we announced that the SAHP had undertaken a major funded historic preservation initiative in Sarasota County. Known as the Sarasota Preservation Program (SP²), it will offer financial tools to the community designed to help protect our historic resources through preservation easements and covenants, low interest loans and technical support to owners of these properties.

Our initial capital campaign was officially launched at the 2022 Heritage Awards Ceremony in April. The Hall Preservation Campaign was named for the Greg and Eleana Najmy Hall, two Sarasotans who had lasting impact on our architectural and historic heritage. We set an initial goal of raising \$100,000 in capital, and through the very generous contributions of our supporters, we exceeded our expectations and were able to reach that goal by July.

Learn more about the economic benefits of preservation

Learn more about preservation easements

The SAHP has committed over \$60,000 to the Hall Campaign from our Preservation Fund and generous contributions from our Board members. The Board is incredibly grateful for the generous additional support that we have received from the Namjy family, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Joseph Arena and Tom Deletto, M.D., and the Caplin Foundation.

We were also humbled by the commitments we received from our members and supporters during the 2022 Giving Challenge last April. The Community Foundation of Sarasota County sponsors this bi-annual event, together with its partner, the Patterson Foundation and with additional support from the William G. and Marie Selby Foundation, Manatee Community Foundation and the Charlotte Community Foundation. This year, seventy-four of our members and supporters came through for us and contributed an incredible \$11,600, which generated a matching gift from the Patterson Foundation of \$6,185.

This initial \$100,000 is the first critical step in obtaining additional grants and donations and securing access to revolving credit facilities that will grow the SP² program capitalization to \$300,000 to \$400,000 by the end of 2023.



The SAHP Board believes that this will give us enough critical mass to generate a significant and lasting impact on preserving more of Sarasota's rapidly diminishing supply of historic properties.

We're now in our formation stage, creating the SP² Management Committee, establishing guidelines and procedures and enlisting the professional expertise needed to implement and manage our programs. Our consultant who conducted the program feasibility study in 2021-2022, Kirk Huffaker of Kirk Huffaker Preservation Strategies, has agreed to stay on through the end of the year to help implement the Program.

The Board is also soliciting input from you on formulating key components of the SP². We know that many of our older homes are occupied by residents of limited means. Both residential and commercial properties have owners who do not have ready access to knowledge of the economic benefits and various financial incentives that can be obtained by preserving their historic properties. The SP² will bring together both the knowledge and help facilitate obtaining these benefits.

We have distributed an [on-line survey](#) that is designed to gauge interest in the easement & covenant programs and the revolving loans. Our feasibility study and our work in the community have identified the macro-level support for these initiatives, and your participating in this survey will help us fine tune the SP² to meet the specific needs of the community. Thank you in advance for participating!

Learn more about our Sarasota Preservation Program on our website preservesrq.org.

ADVOCACY UPDATES



The developer's appeal for the demolition of the **Mira Mar** was officially withdrawn on August 1, 2022 and the corresponding contract to purchase cancelled. SAHP board members are engaging with building owners in the hopes of exploring opportunities for its preservation.

Also on August 1, 2022, Sarasota's City Commission ruled 3:2 to overturn their Historic Preservation Board's denial of a demolition for the locally designated **Palm Apartments**, at 1225 2nd Street, despite the fact that no plan for future use of the site was provided. This sets a horrendous precedent, and will destroy some of the only remaining affordable housing and small business space downtown.



In **Venice**, residents have filed paperwork to initiate a citizens' referendum to repeal Venice's new Land Development Regulations (LDRs), which City Council approved in July despite provisions that were opposed by the majority of residents who provided public comments. Five voters submitted notarized affidavits to initiate a petition to put a referendum before Venice voters to "reconsider and repeal" the LDRs. The new LDRs allow up to 6-story buildings across many parts of Venice, eliminate protections for Venice's historic neighborhoods and allow large-scale commercial development in residential Planned Unit Developments (PUDs).

The City Clerk has 10 days to certify the affidavits and then the five residents will have 6 months to gather signatures representing 10 percent of Venice's 22,123 registered voters to get the referendum on an upcoming ballot. Once the petition is filed with the required number of voters' signatures, the LDRs will be suspended from taking effect until a referendum is held.

"If the five Council members had represented the will of the voters, we would have a strong new set of regulations in place to guide Venice's future development. Venice residents were unified that they wanted downtown protected and the John Nolen Plan honored," said Betty Intagliata, another of the affidavit signers. "Instead, we have a flawed, rushed document that the public opposes and that even City Council acknowledges will need to be fixed soon."

Learn more at [VENICE UNITES](#)

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