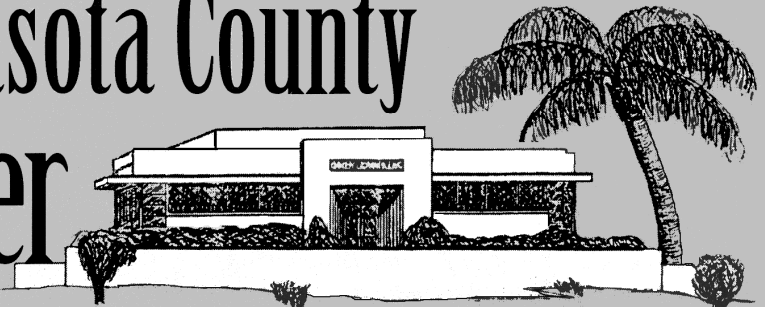


# Friends of Sarasota County History Center



Vol. 2 No. 3

www.foschs.org

Fall 2008

## From The President

Greetings:

First off, I want to clear up a mystery: Yes, I do know how to count but my counter went on vacation when it numbered the previous Newsletter.

Second off, our Treasurer, Hope Black continues to attract volunteers for the History Center. And she has performed many volunteer hours while filing, indexing, cataloging and archiving a "Gillespie" Collection from a grand nephew (Charles V. Swain, Jr.) of John H. Gillespie's wife Blanche.

Due to well-known budget cuts at the History Center no county funds were available to buy specialty archival storage equipment for this unique, prized collection. H. C. (Acting) Director, Dan Hughes, requested aid from the "Friends". The Board of Directors felt that the items in the collection were worthy of special attention and okayed \$1,000 for its preservation. Besides "That's what 'Friends' are for."

Board member, Linda Greaves is chairing our "Road Map" committee with assistance from June Benowitz, Hope Black, Dick Jackson, Larry Kelleher and Curran Smith. The committee's main thrust is to make specific strategic planning recommendations within the "Friends" mission as stated in our by-laws. On September 19, 2008 there are two events of historic significance; Preserve America Award, 2 p.m., Federal Building, 111 So. Orange Ave., Sarasota and at 6 p.m., Nokomis Beach Plaza, 100 Casey Key Road (west end of Albee Rd.). The public is invited to both events

"Friends" board meetings are held in the sunshine, so if you want to come and observe, we meet monthly, the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, 4:30 p.m. at the Chidsey Bldg. 701 No. Tamiami Trail, USE WEST DOOR ONLY (on Van Wezel Way).

Kindest Personal Regards,  
"Pete"

P.S. I hope Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike were kind to you and yours

## HC GM Departing

Acting History Center General Manger Dan Hughes announced his departure from Sarasota County in an email to "Friends" and others.

The text of the email read:

All

The time has come when I must say farewell. The last six years have been one of learning and growth for me but now I must move on. I have accepted a position with the US Army Corps. of Engineers in their Jacksonville District. My last day with Sarasota County will be Sept 19<sup>th</sup> and until then I will be working closely with John McCarthy who will be overseeing the History Center.

Please distribute this message to any one that you feel should be notified.

Sincerely,

Dan

Daniel Hughes  
Acting GM,  
History Center

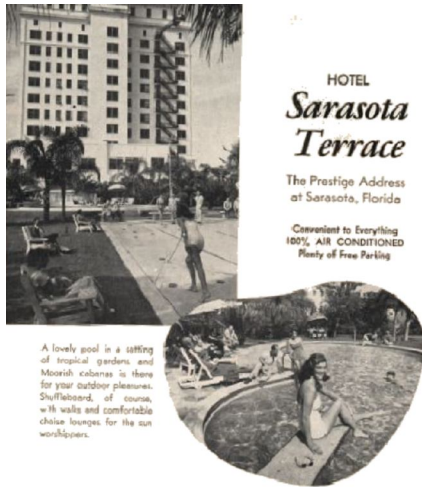
Of course we're all saddened that Dan is leaving. He has been a true friend of "Friends" and a passionate friend to the citizens of Sarasota County during his tenure with the Sarasota County History Center.

Sadly, he's not the first nor the last of talented people that we'll see move on as government struggles to deal with tax reform.

Best wishes, Dan, on your new job and thanks.

# Paradise Re-visited

Recently I had an opportunity to go up to the top floor of the Terrace building. This was the first time I've been up there in over forty years. I think it was a wedding reception back then. I had forgotten what a magnificent paradise we really have here.



For those who are uncertain the what and where of the Terrace building, Wikipedia® tells us it is located on Ringling Blvd. "It crosses Washington Boulevard where Charles Ringling built the Sarasota Terrace Hotel, a high-rise in the Chicago style of architecture, opposite the site which Ringling would donate for the county seat." Today we know it as the Sarasota County Administration Building.

Driving around town in a closed up air/conditioned auto and paying attention to the mundane task of getting to a destination I lost track of what a lovely place this really is. This tenth floor view, looking out over our city and bay and keys and bridges brought home the fact that this place really is paradise. How many folks wait 50 weeks to come here for a week or two and we enjoy this 365 days a year.

At ground level you don't get a sense of the abundance of trees and foliage we have here but at that height you can get the really impressive green view. No wonder folks flock to this place and many have decided that they just don't want to leave. I can't blame them.

Diane Esthus

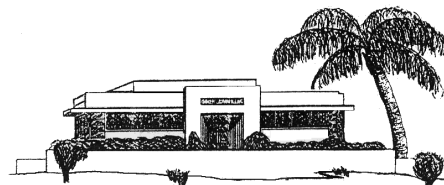
# History Alive Site

For those of you interested in our history as evidenced by your membership in our Friends group, you might want to take a look at [Sarasotahistoryalive.com](http://Sarasotahistoryalive.com).

It's a neat website that Larry Kelleher and Lee Gaines have put together to tell our history in webisodes and articles.

Pete & Diane Esthus have been writing a blog about the Sarasota they remember with a great deal of nostalgia and fondness. There is also an area where folks can comment on the blog as well as a forum to ask questions.

If you sign up for the newsletter you'll get a weekly email informing you of the latest additions to the site



## FRIENDS OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

6062 Porter Way  
Sarasota, FL 34232

Diane Esthus, Editor  
Marshall K DuBois, Publisher

### Board of Directors

President: George I. "Pete" Esthus  
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June Benowitz	Dick Jackson
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# Fire – A Serious Threat to Early Sarasota

In the absence of an organized fire department, one of the most common threats to early area residents was fire.

Lighting your way into a stable with a candle? Found by the Town Marshall to have an unsafe stovepipe or chimney in your house? The first set of ordinances for such behaviors you were liable for a \$50 fine or doing time in the calaboose.

Sometimes the fire was wild and came through the woods. Dan McKinlay, one of the 1885 colonists from Scotland, wrote in his diary as he stood outside his tent in the Fruitville-Bee Ridge area, "Prairie on fire all around us...fires miles in extent burning up everything in their way... almost as soon as it is done the wind shifts and threatens to burn us out..."

Alex Browning later recalled that unexpected snow fell soon after the colonists' arrival, "greatly to the surprise of the natives, who thought at first, the woods were afire, and ashes being carried by the wind, from the fire."

In "Buckets and Brawn," Wayne Welsh notes that construction materials and style made the early buildings "built to burn." Pine lumber and roofing shingles were used in most buildings. The balloon construction left empty spaces in walls and floors, which allowed the swift spread of fire.

Built on piers to lift the structure out of standing water during the rainy season, structures had a crawl space underneath them, which offered easy access to floor joists for flames and radiant heat from nearby burning buildings.

A well-maintained yard contained no lawn or shrubbery hugging the house. Rather, it was well-raked sand, to remove potential fire fuel from the area. Detached kitchens were common, to reduce the threat from the cooking fire. The Town Marshall was required to check chimneys, stove pipes, and open flame lamps to ensure they were not a fire hazard. The owner was given twelve hours to correct any identified problem.

In the winter of 1910, two fires on Sarasota's Main Street resulted in several buildings burned and others saved only by the arduous work of citizen "bucket brigades" wetting down nearby roofs and walls. The next year the town acquired its first fire-fighting equipment, a hook and ladder wagon that the newly organized volunteers pulled through the sandy streets to help fight fires.

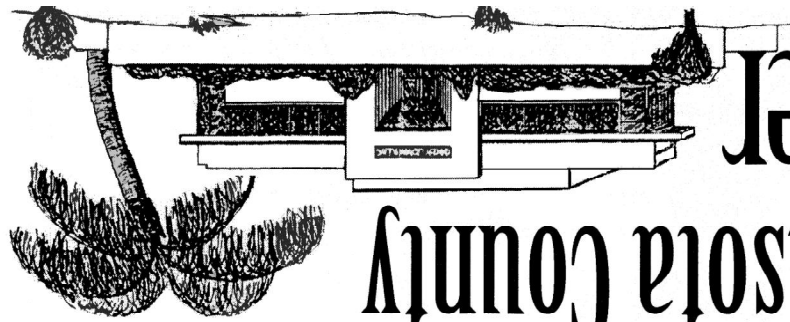
In April 1911, the *Sarasota Times* noted that the new fire department had come through its first test with flying colors. The men had prevented a wind-spread trash fire from turning three nearby businesses into ashes.

Although the Town Council passed an ordinance that required new construction within certain "fire limits" to be of non-flammable materials, it took a while before effective changes were made. The 1912 Tonnelier Building on the corner of Main Street and North Pineapple Avenue sported a brick veneer, thought to make it fire safe, but the hotel, theater, café, doctor's office, bakery, pharmacy, and barbershop that occupied the structure burned to the ground in 1915.

Only gradually, with the combination of a larger and better-equipped fire department and the use of fire resistant building materials, did fire become a less immediate threat to the growing communities of Sarasota County.

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Article Courtesy of Sarasota History Alive! – Author, Ann A. Shank, former County Historian



# Friends of Sarasota County History Center

**Friends of Sarasota County History Center**  
 6062 Porter Way  
 Sarasota, Fl. 34232



### Annual Membership Categories

Individual	Family	Organization	Corporation
\$20	\$30	\$100	\$250
Patron	Benefactor	Individual Lifetime	Student
\$50-99	\$100-500	\$250	\$10

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 The Friends of the Sarasota County History Center  
 6062 Porter Way - Sarasota, FL 34232

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Category: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering \_\_\_\_\_

Join or renew (painlessly) online with your credit card! [www.foschc.org](http://www.foschc.org)