



Visitor Experience

Exhibition Design Concept

Fricker Studio

Entrance

Proceeding through the main doors, visitors enter the Museum's lobby. This bright and airy space is bathed in natural light from the building's glass façade and an expansive triangular skylight overhead. On the east side of the lobby, a group entrance offers a place for school classes and tour groups to assemble before beginning their visits. For staff, volunteers, researchers, and program attendees, a stairway and elevator on the east side of the lobby lead to the Archives on the second level. Lobby features include:

Ticketing & Gift Shop

The VAM ticket counter is located just inside the main entrance. Here, visitors can purchase tickets and obtain information about the Museum's exhibits and programs. The ticket counter doubles as the cashier station for the VAM store, where visitors can shop for books and videos about local history, as well as fossilized shark teeth and other Venice souvenirs.

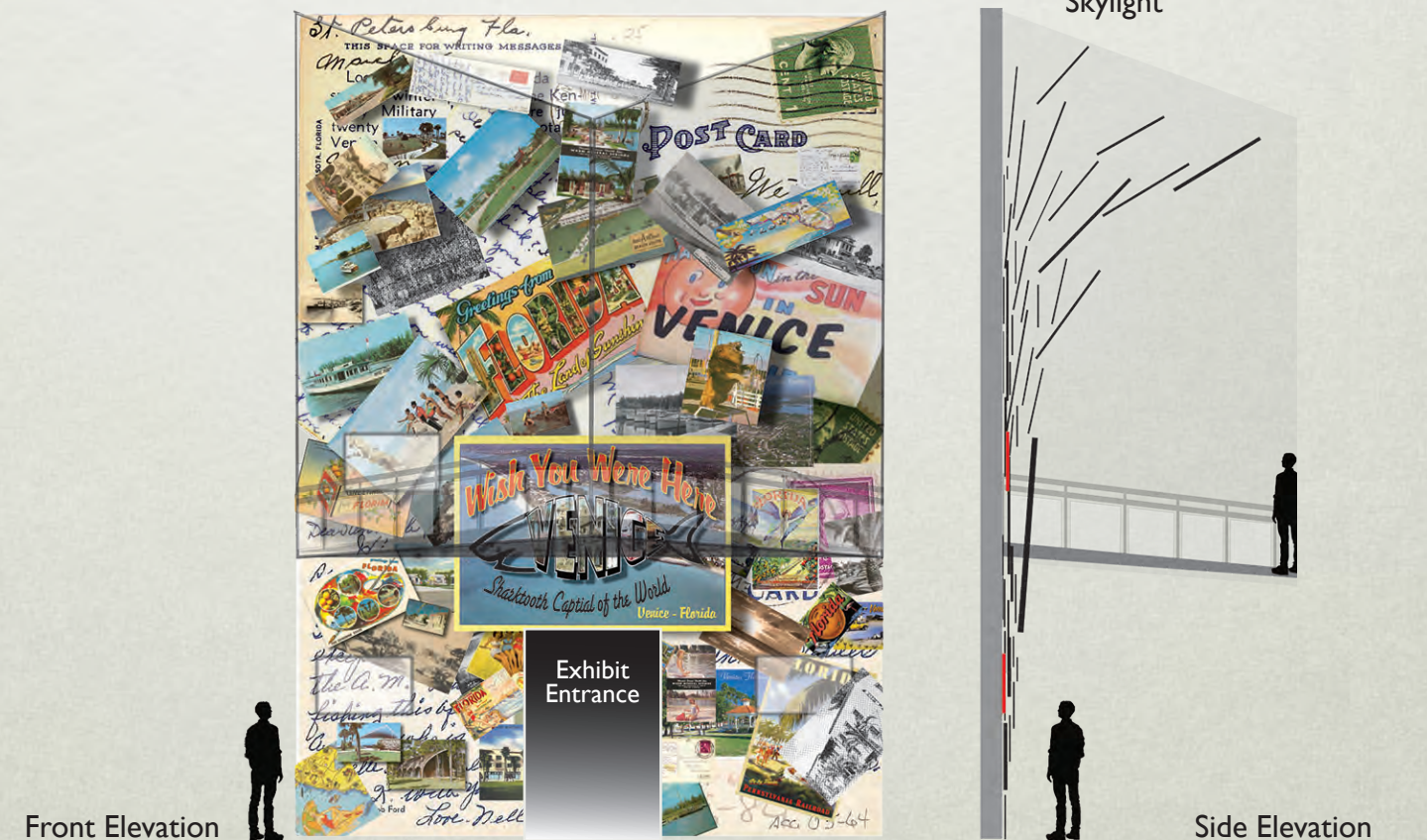


Lobby cont.

Wish You Were Here

Ascending two stories through the center of the lobby to the skylight above is a spectacular montage of reproduced Venice postcards and advertisements from different eras. You see images of beautiful sunsets at the beach, palm tree-lined streets, the Venice Fishing Pier, and the shops of Venice Mainstreet, all beckoning people to a life of leisure in the city.

Some of the postcards are actually video screens, presenting images of contemporary Venice, as seen through the eyes of people who live here today. Community members are invited to contribute their best shots of the city, and the images are changed out on an ongoing basis.



Lobby cont.

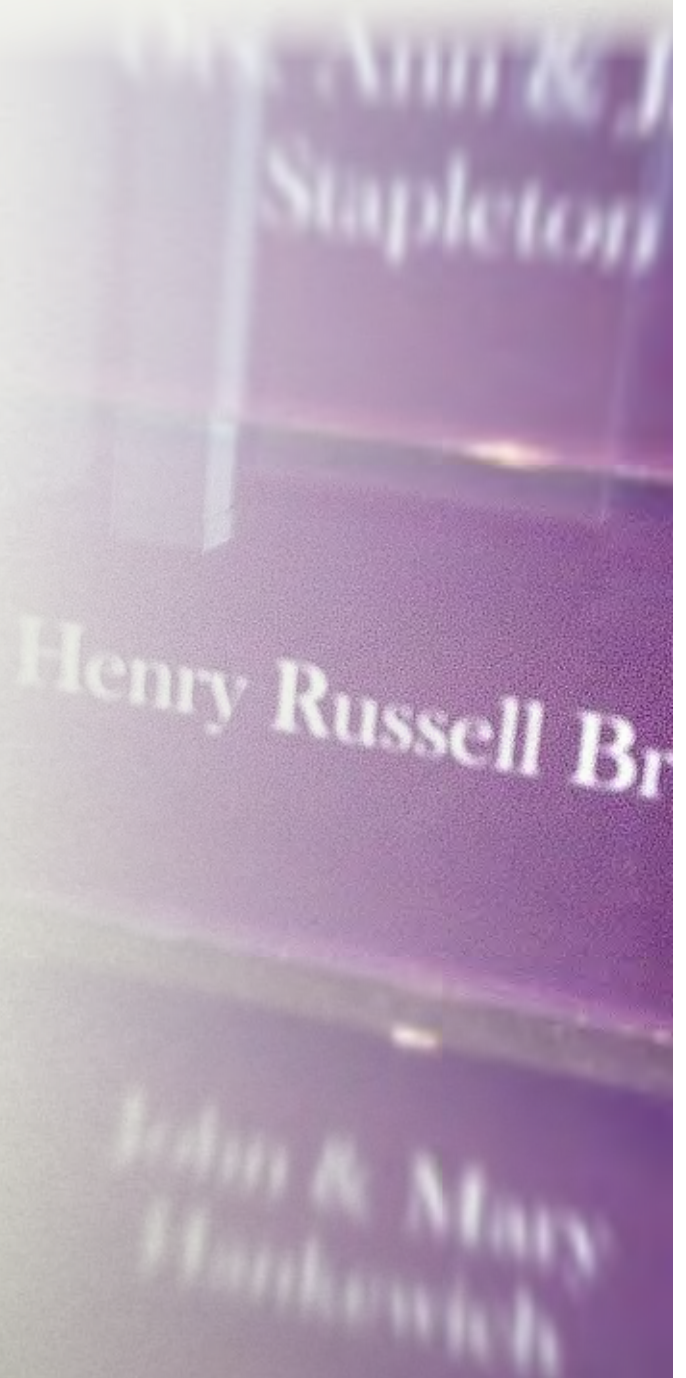
Curiosity Case

Each month, an exhibit case in the lobby highlights a new curiosity—for example, an especially interesting artifact acquisition or a mystery object that the Museum would like the public's help in identifying. Throughout VAM's exhibition spaces, similar updateable displays keep the Museum's content fresh and encourage visitors to return often.



Donor Wall

An attractive display in the lobby honors the major donors who made the construction of VAM possible, as well as those whose generosity supports the ongoing operations of the Museum.



Introductory Video

An upbeat multiscreen video montage sets up the Museum's exhibit experience with a look at the Venice of today. The video features snippets of people of different ages sharing what they like best about the city—e.g., playing in the fountain at Centennial Park, browsing the unique shops on Venice Avenue, taking exercise classes on Venice Beach, attending plays at Venice Theatre, hunting for prehistoric shark teeth, participating in the city's

many civic organizations, and more. Together, these testimonials show Venice to be a true Florida gem—a city with an authentic sense of character and a real sense of community. The montage then culminates with these questions: How did it get this way? What made Venice, Venice? Visitors are invited to search for answers as they journey through the story of Venice . . . a story that began millions of years ago.



3.0

The Nature of the Place

Entering into the Museum's first gallery, visitors come face to face with the gigantic jawbone of an Ice Age mammoth and the fossilized bones of other amazing prehistoric animals, all unearthed right here in Venice.

These awe-inspiring specimens anchor an interactive gallery that takes visitors back millions of years to explore the unique geography and climate that attracted prehistoric creatures to the area. Highlights of this gallery include:

“It’s a mammoth!”

—Dr. J.W. Gidley, Smithsonian paleontologist, identified mammoth remains discovered in Venice in 1926



Shifting Shores

An interactive map of Florida shows how the peninsula evolved over millions of years and how its western shore moved great distances as sea levels rose and fell repeatedly during the Miocene, Pliocene, and Pleistocene epochs. Visitors can turn time forward and back and watch as the shifting shores affect the migration of paleo animals and, later, paleo peoples, to and from this place. The map also reveals how Venice became one of the only cities on Florida's southwest coast without a barrier island.

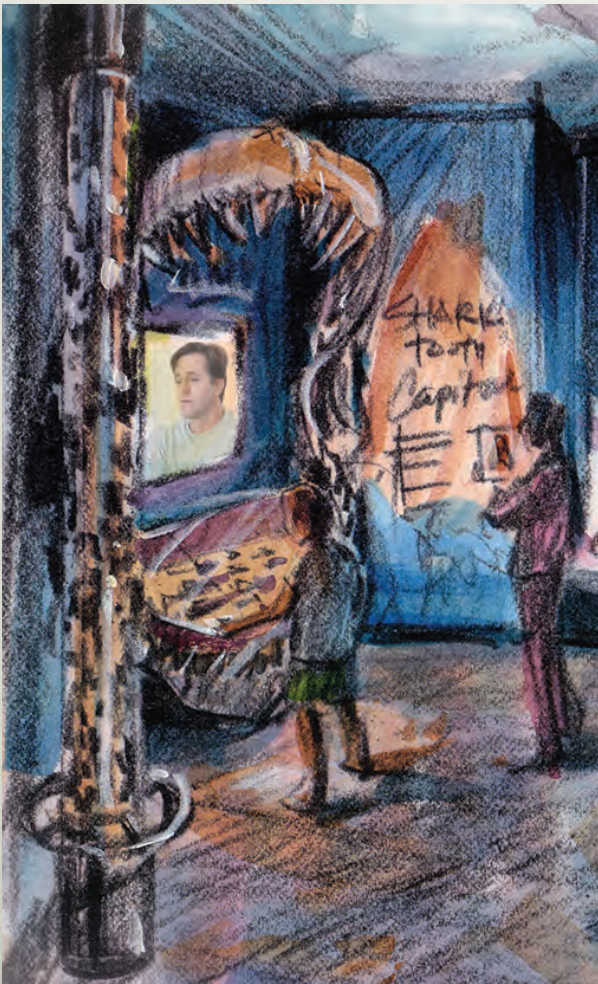


Ice Age “Snowbirds”

Long before humans started wintering in Venice, Ice Age mammals migrated here to escape the ice and cold. A beautifully illuminated display of prehistoric fossils introduces visitors to the saber-toothed cats, ancient camels, rhinos, and other surprising creatures that once walked these lands. A touchscreen brings the animals to life in animated form. The display also includes a Backyard Discoveries exhibit case, allowing for community members to share their latest and greatest finds on a rotating basis.

A Mammoth Discovery

Reprints of telegrams and letters invite visitors to relive the exciting discovery of VAM's prehistoric mammoth skull, found in 1926 when the city of Venice was constructed. It was the first time the remains of that particular species of mammoth had been found in North America, and the Smithsonian jumped on the opportunity to acquire the skull. In 2012, the Smithsonian agreed to let the specimen return home.



Shark Tooth Capital

Every day, beachgoers and scuba divers comb the Venice shore for prehistoric shark teeth. The ultimate prize? The giant tooth of the extinct monster shark megalodon, which lurked in the Gulf millions of years ago. A display of fossilized shark teeth and a short video hosted by a local fossil club member orient visitors to the types of shark teeth they might find on the city's beaches. The display is framed by a partially recreated megalodon jaw that gives a sense of how massive this fearsome king of the ocean was. An adjacent acrylic tube is filled with replica lemon shark teeth to show just how many teeth a shark can lose in a lifetime (up to 50,000!). It is no wonder that billions of prehistoric shark teeth lie on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. Because Venice has no barrier island, these teeth wash ashore all the time—making the city the “Shark Tooth Capital of the World.”

Florida's Wild West

Our story fast-forwards to the mid-1800s via artifacts and interactive displays that recreate the Venice area's rough and tumble pioneer days. Visitors witness the mixing of people that occurred as Florida crackers,

homesteaders, and entrepreneurs from the North arrived to start new lives and businesses in what was then a land of pine trees, snakes, and wild boars. Exhibit elements in this gallery include:

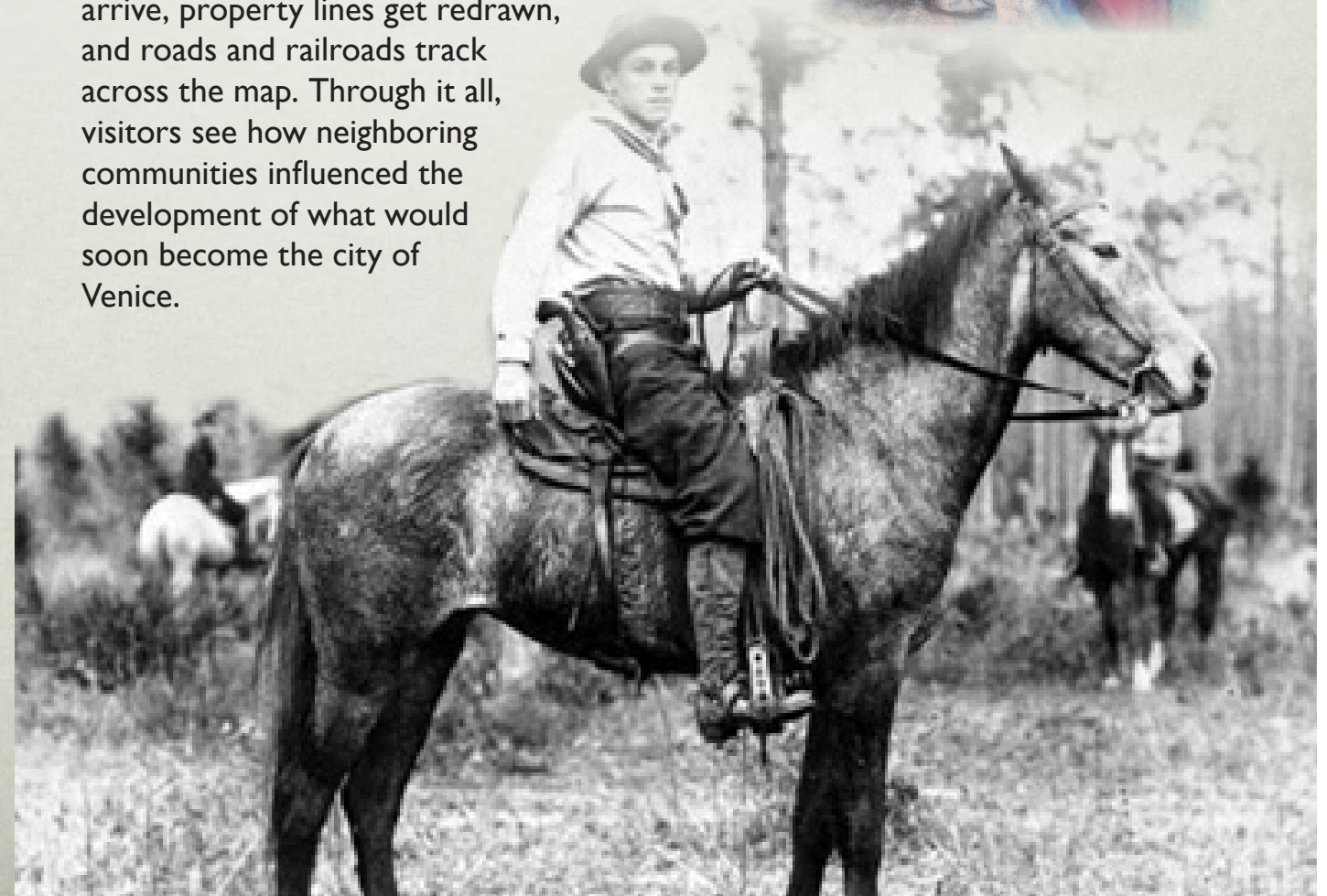
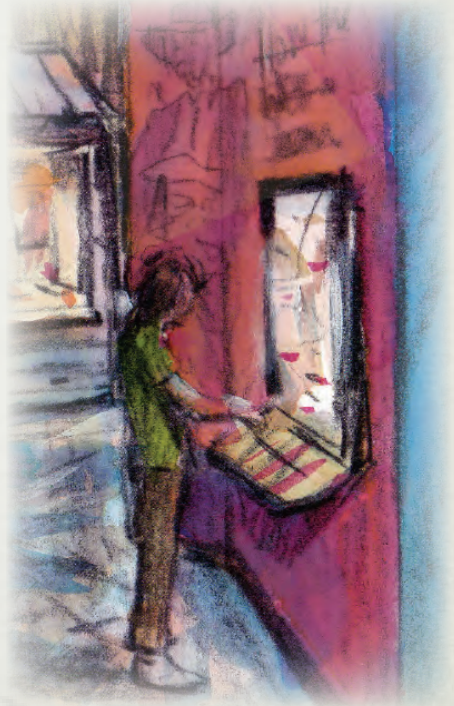
"This was wild country at that time."

—Nadine Roberts,
Granddaughter-in-law of Venice pioneer Emma Blackburn



How the West Was Won

A large, interactive animated map plots out the settlement of the Venice area from 1867 to 1920. Visitors can advance time and then watch as graphical icons pop up on the map to show pioneer families—the Webbs, Knights, Currys, Robertses, Blackburns, Higels, and Wredes—establish homes, a church and school, cattle farms, and citrus groves. Soon, post offices and towns with the names Osprey, Eyry, Venice, and Laurel sprout up. After wealthy land speculators Bertha Palmer and Dr. Fred Albee arrive, property lines get redrawn, and roads and railroads track across the map. Through it all, visitors see how neighboring communities influenced the development of what would soon become the city of Venice.



Wild Country!

What was day-to-day life for the Venice area's pioneer families? Step onto a recreated pioneer front porch to enjoy colorful stories from the olden days. A dense pine forest is depicted on a scrim in front visitors, while sound effects surround them with the buzzing of mosquitoes and the whirs of cicadas. An audio track plays first-person memories passed down from pioneer families.

The Front Porch

As visitors listen to these rich, personal stories, historical images appear and then fade out in the forest. The images are presented via video projection that seeps through the scrim, adding to the memories visitors are hearing and immersing them deeper in life during the pioneer era. An adjacent artifact case presents objects related to the pioneer story. Examples: original product labels from Frank Higel's citrus business, Higel family needlepoint, and a cooper

cooking pot and wooden mallet used by the Wrede family. A portion of the display is updateable to highlight different individuals and families throughout the year.



“We had mosquitoes! You could swing a quart pail around and catch a gallon of them!”

—Elihu Baker, son of Venice pioneer Julian Roberts

The Great Post Office Scandal

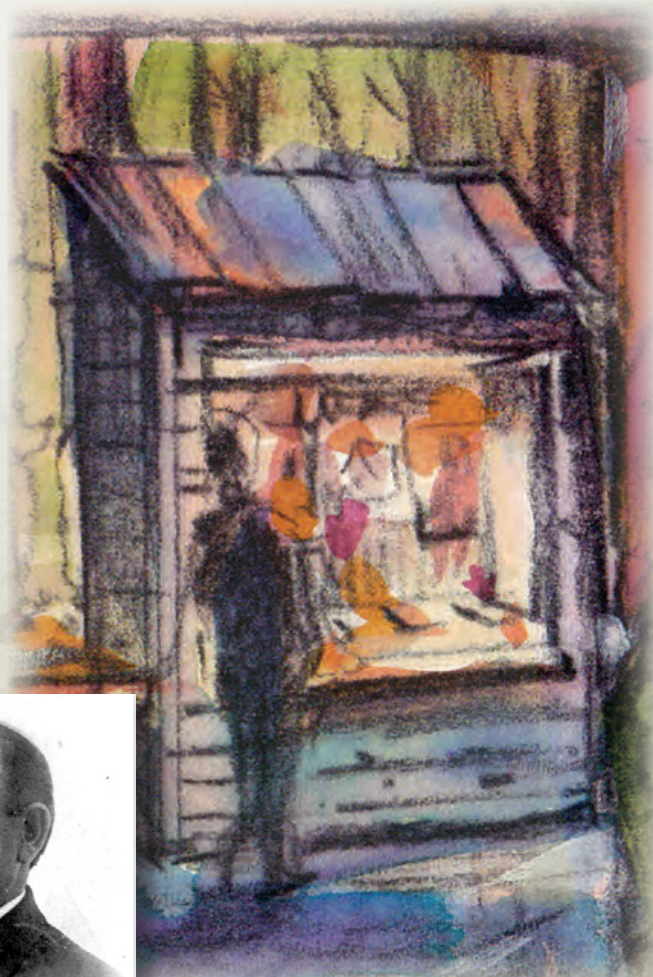
A display of post office applications and letters chronicles the great Venice post office scandal of 1911. Across frontier America, new towns were named when local residents applied for post offices. Venice's first name was Eyry, established in 1885 when Frank Higley applied for a post office here. Three years later, Darwin Curry applied for a post office a few miles north, which he named Venice. Unfortunately for residents of that town, land developer Bertha Palmer fell in love with the name and, in 1911, petitioned for it to be transferred here to the new railroad station and post office being constructed on her property. The U.S. Postmaster General agreed, but a six-year fight ensued, which ended with Curry's town having to adopt a new name . . . Nokomis.



Bertha Honoré Palmer,
Chicago socialite and Venice area real estate developer



Darwin O. Curry, first postmaster
of Venice Post Office
(in present day Nokomis)



Built from Pine

Before the Knights, Higels, and other settlers arrived, the Venice area was labeled Piney Bluffs on U.S. Government maps. A display of artifacts and images reveals how local pine forests played an important role in the area's development during its pioneer days. Visitors learn that pine trees were not only cut down for lumber, but also tapped for resin, which was distilled to make turpentine. The display also brings attention to the African American workers who kept the sawmills and turpentine stills running—people like Oscar “Cato” Wallace, who supervised the still at the Laurel Turpentine Company and whose descendants became leaders in Laurel's African American community.



A turpentine worker scars a tree with a “cat face” to allow the resin to flow, ca. early 1900s



Turpentine industry workers, ca. 1930s



African American laborers collect resin from a stand of pine trees, ca. early 1900s.

Old Time Picture Studio

In 1910, Thomas Wrede (grandson of early pioneer Jesse Knight) purchased one of the first cameras in the Venice area. The camera is on display here, alongside a digital photo op that invites young visitors to try on vintage hats and bonnets and capture a picture of themselves in a pioneer scene.



Curry family fishing party outside fish house belonging to Frank Hayden, 1914



Planning Paradise

“Venice marks the beginning of a new day in city planning, not only for Florida, but also for all the country.”

—John Nolen, Venice city planner, 1926

During the 1920s Florida land boom, Venice transformed from a small town inhabited by a handful of families into a full-fledged city designed by America’s first city planner. Artifacts and a magical object theater presentation tell the story of how this plan came to be and how it was informed by progressive new ideas about the role of cities in the 20th century. This gallery features:





Dr. Fred Albee
and his wife, Louella

Albee and The White City

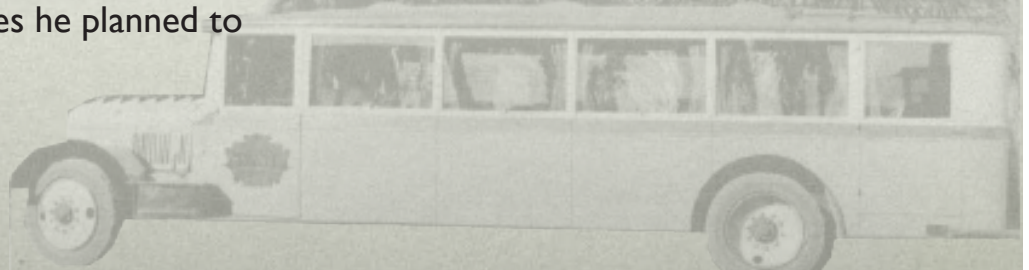
Artifacts and graphics set up the story of *The Plan* with a look at Dr. Fred Albee's land purchases in the area. In 1917, Albee, a renowned orthopedic surgeon from New York, and his wife, Louella, arrived in the area with his cousins, Ellis and Lillian Albee Nash. The two couples liked Nokomis so much they purchased 112 acres from Bertha Palmer's Sarasota-Venice Company. Albee hired city planner John Nolen to develop a plan for the Nokomis subdivision of Bay Point. In 1924, Albee made an even bigger investment by buying up Palmer's land holdings in Venice—1,428 acres in total. Working with Nolen again, he sought to develop the entire Venice-Nokomis area into "The White City on the Gulf," nicknamed for the white stucco hotels and homes he planned to build and sell.

The BLE and the Florida Land Boom

A second artifact and graphics display tells how the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) came to own most of Venice and how it financed a new plan to develop the town into a resort city. When Albee learned what it would cost to build Nolen's first plan for Venice, he decided to sell the land instead. The 1920s Florida land boom was then in high gear, and speculators were making instant fortunes by flipping property. The BLE swooped in and bought Albee's Venice land, along with thousands of additional acres. Following Albee's recommendation, they retained John Nolen to create an expanded plan for the city.



BLE officers, ca. 1926



The Man with the Plan

At the dawn of the 20th century, America's big cities were a mess. Zoning codes were nonexistent, and little thought had been given to how cities were laid out or how they would grow—resulting in overcrowding, noise, and filth. Cities needed to be different, and John Nolen had a vision to make it happen.

The Man with the Plan is a captivating “object theater” presentation that brings to life the man and the forward thinking ideals behind Venice's city plan. The presentation takes place in a

themed setting suggestive of a 1920s architecture studio. In the center of the space is a drafting table. The back wall and one sidewall are decorated with framed sketches and plans by John Nolen. The other sidewall features a window that looks out onto Cambridge, Massachusetts (circa 1920s), where John Nolen had an office. As the presentation begins, the framed documents and window are revealed to be video screens, which become activated to give an introduction to John Nolen and the unique perspective he brought to the emerging field of city planning.

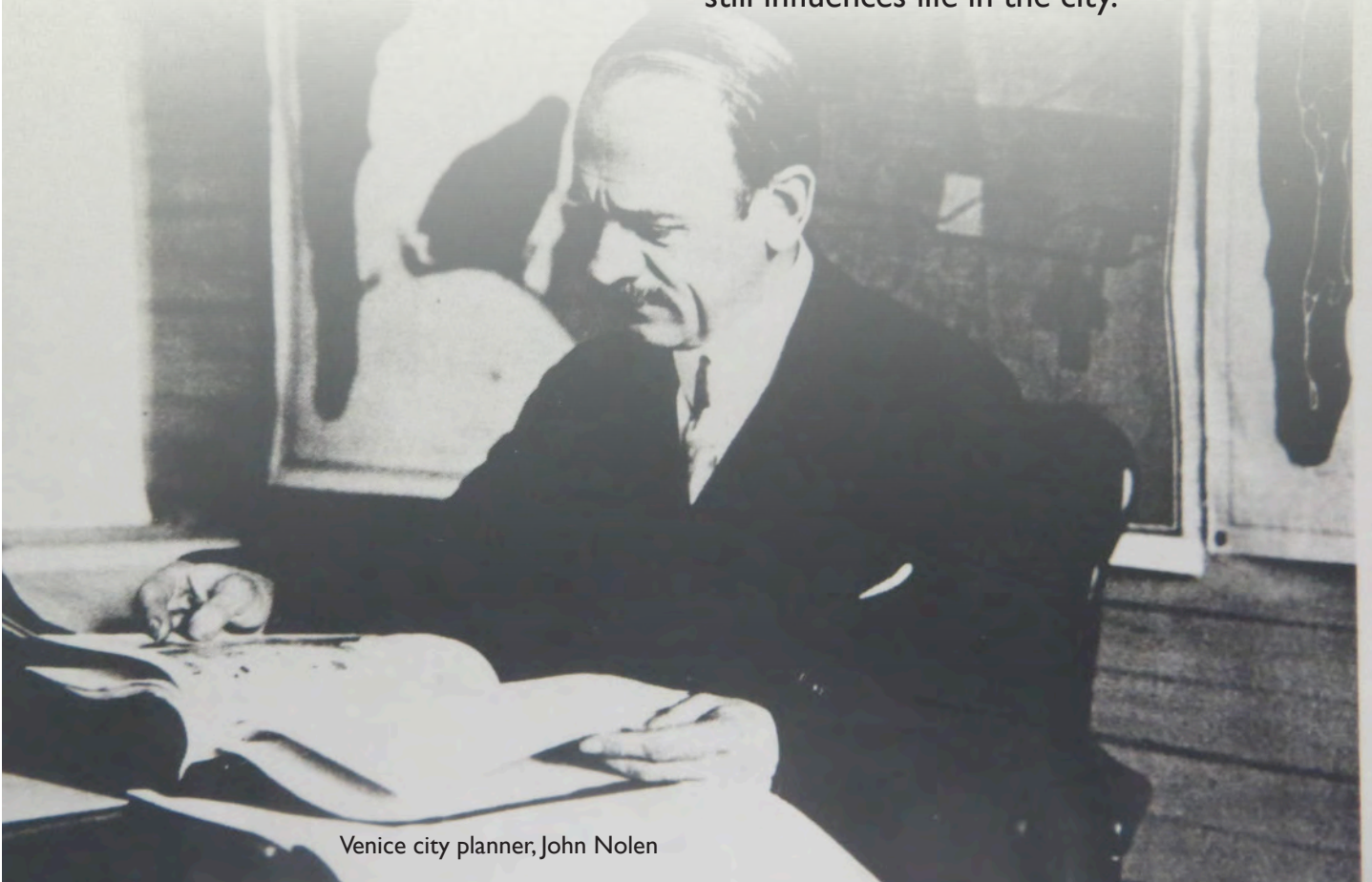


Planning Paradise cont.

For Nolen, the ideal city was more than beautiful. It supported all aspects of life— economic, social, recreational, and more. Visitors discover how these ideals were realized in the Nolen Plan for Venice, as the drafting table before them comes alive via video projection. Visitors hear about the thinking behind Nolen's approach and then watch as the Venice plan gets sketched out in animated form, element by element, to reflect his ideas.

For example, when visitors hear that Nolen believed cities should encourage civic participation, they watch as a Civic Center with a City Hall is drawn in the

heart of the plan. Likewise, when visitors hear that Nolen believed cities should be designed in tune with their natural settings, they watch as a grand central boulevard is drawn connecting the Civic Center to a beachfront public park with a bathing casino and boardwalk. This pattern continues as other elements are added—the general street layout, residential areas of different types, numerous parks, a new train depot, farming acreage, an industrial sector, and more—until the John Nolen Plan for Venice is complete. Not everything in the plan would be realized, but its fundamental structure endures today and still influences life in the city.



Venice city planner, John Nolen

The Dream Team

John Nolen knew that successful city planning required more than a good planner. A whole team of talents was needed. Text and images celebrate the dream team that worked with Nolen to design Venice: landscape architect Prentiss French; supervising architects Walker & Gillette; and the engineering firm Black, McKenney, & Stewart.



Prentiss French, landscape architect for the city of Venice

Building the Dream

Designing Venice was one part of the equation. Building it was another. Artifacts, images, and construction cost comparisons (then vs. now) tell the story of the building of the city. Visitors can examine a model of the barracks and tents that housed Fuller's Army, a team of 8,000 that descended upon Venice to work for the George Fuller Construction Company. Graphics introduce individuals like "Pistol Pete" Edge, who oversaw the encampment, and Elizabeth Savage Black, who established a barbecue business that fed the workers. Additional images and objects look at the contributions of the Venice Tile Company and George Hauser's Venice Lumber Company.



Construction of Venice Avenue, 1926

Main Gallery

Visitors enter a dynamic, high-ceilinged exhibit hall that immerses them in the story of Venice's 1920s boom, the bust that followed, and the subsequent events that brought new people and better times to the city. The space is organized into major story beats that unfold chronologically along the perimeter. In the center of the space, a

train depot-inspired structure houses an interactive version of the Nolen Plan on the front side and a mini-theater for oral histories on the back. Overhead, a photographic cyclorama animated with spots of projected video imagery encircles the space. The Main Gallery includes:



Central Depot Experiences

Venice Then and Now

Which parts of the Nolen Plan were built? And do they still exist? Using a large, multitouch digital display, visitors can leap forward and back in time to explore the roads, buildings, and parks on the Nolen Plan as they looked in the mid-1920s and as they look today. A few parts of the plan were never built, and some of the iconic buildings of the past have been replaced, but many of the Northern Italian-style homes and buildings constructed in 1926 and 1927 are still standing—giving Venice the historic charm and character that people love about the city.



Kentucky Military Institute band performs at Venice Train Depot, ca. 1930s.

Planes, Trains, & Automobiles!

Displays on either side of the central depot spotlight the impact that roads, railroad lines, and, later, airfields had on the Venice area in the 19th and 20th centuries. Visitors will witness that impact as they continue to explore the exhibits around them and learn about the colorful characters who came rolling into town.



Venice Train Depot, terminus of the Seaboard Air Line Railway, 1927

Venice Memories

The Nolen Plan provided the infrastructure for Venice to become the unique gem it is today. But it was the people who truly made the city. A mini-theater invites visitors to sit and relax, while enjoying personal memories from the 1920s forward, collected from

local community members. Visitors can contribute their own stories or those of their ancestors by making an appointment to participate in an oral history interview in the Archives on the second level of the Museum.



Boom & Bust

“Backed by unlimited capital this city is growing by leaps and bounds.”

—*This Week in Venice*, June 5, 1926

Boomtown Venice

Visitors board a partial recreation of a Pullman safety coach for a simulated tour of Venice during the boom. The driver appears via a video screen at the front of the bus and delivers an entertaining tour derived from actual promotional scripts produced by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE). Computer-generated imagery of the city appears in the front windshield, while period music adds to the fun.

Next to the bus, furniture and other artifacts from Hotel Venice, Park View Hotel, and San Marco Hotel reveal how the BLE spared no expense to lure prospective buyers. And a text-and-image display shows how a new civic spirit arose as local residents established the first city council and civic groups such as the Venice-Nokomis Woman’s Club.



“The only apparent interest Venice now has for visitors is one of curiosity—they want to see the scene of the Brotherhood’s failure in Florida, they want to see the wreck.”

—Stanton Ennes, *Sarasota Times*, 1929

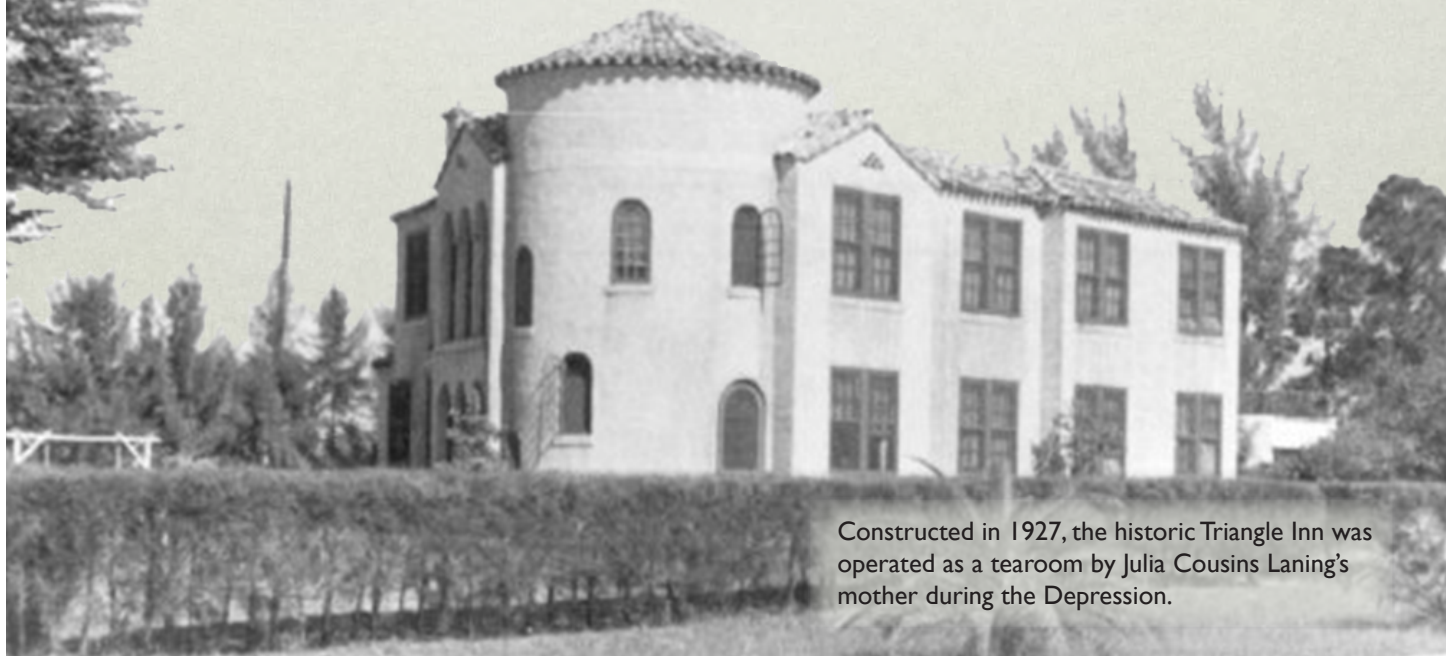
Bust!

A timeline chronicles the city’s downturn when the 1920s real estate boom went bust. Visitors see how a hurricane in 1926 foreshadowed the economic storm, which started in other parts of Florida, but spread here despite the BLE’s efforts to forge ahead. In the end, the BLE lost \$18



Venice damage from hurricane of 1926

million and ultimately abandoned the city. It wasn’t long before the Great Depression set in, and Venice became a virtual ghost town. Images and text tell the story of the locals who hunkered down and stuck it out during the Depression—including Julia Cousins Laning and her family. For the people who stayed, the city wasn’t a bad place to ride out the hard times. The winters were sunny and there were no bread lines, as residents could always walk to the beach to catch fresh fish for dinner.

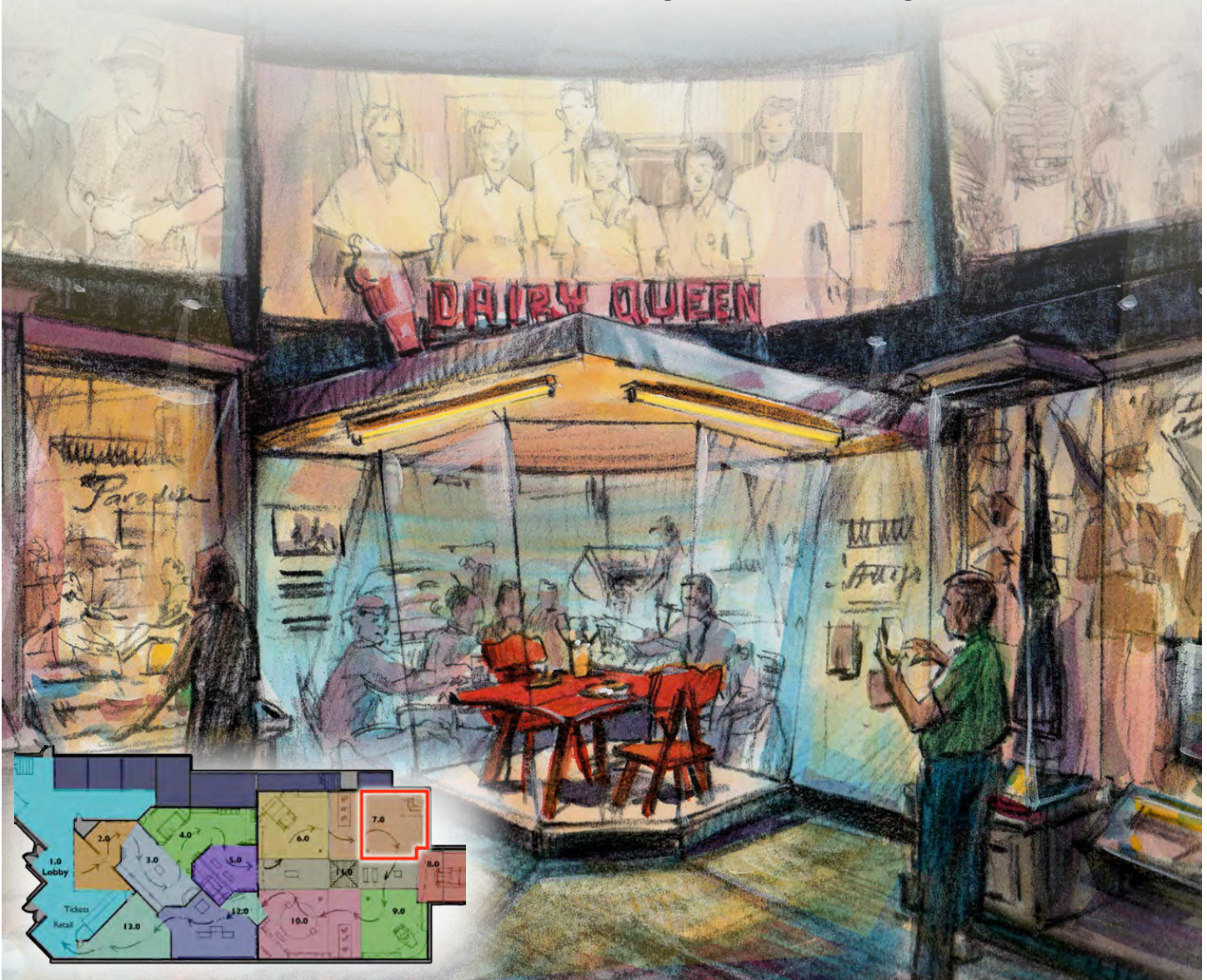


Constructed in 1927, the historic Triangle Inn was operated as a tearoom by Julia Cousins Laning’s mother during the Depression.

The Boys of KMI

In spring 1932, the city got a boost from one of the oldest military prep schools in the nation, when the Kentucky Military Institute (KMI) made Venice its winter home. The school leased the Hotel Venice and Hotel San Marco for its cadet quarters, and the first KMI students arrived by train after Christmas. The school became an integral part of the community,

wintering here from late December until just before Easter every year until 1970. With the cadets came visiting parents, who rented homes and hotel rooms in the city. As an added bonus, the cadets put on a dress parade for the city every other Sunday. The KMI story comes to life via a display of uniforms and a themed vignette of the old Venice Dairy Queen, where the cadets socialized and mingled with the local girls.



7.0b

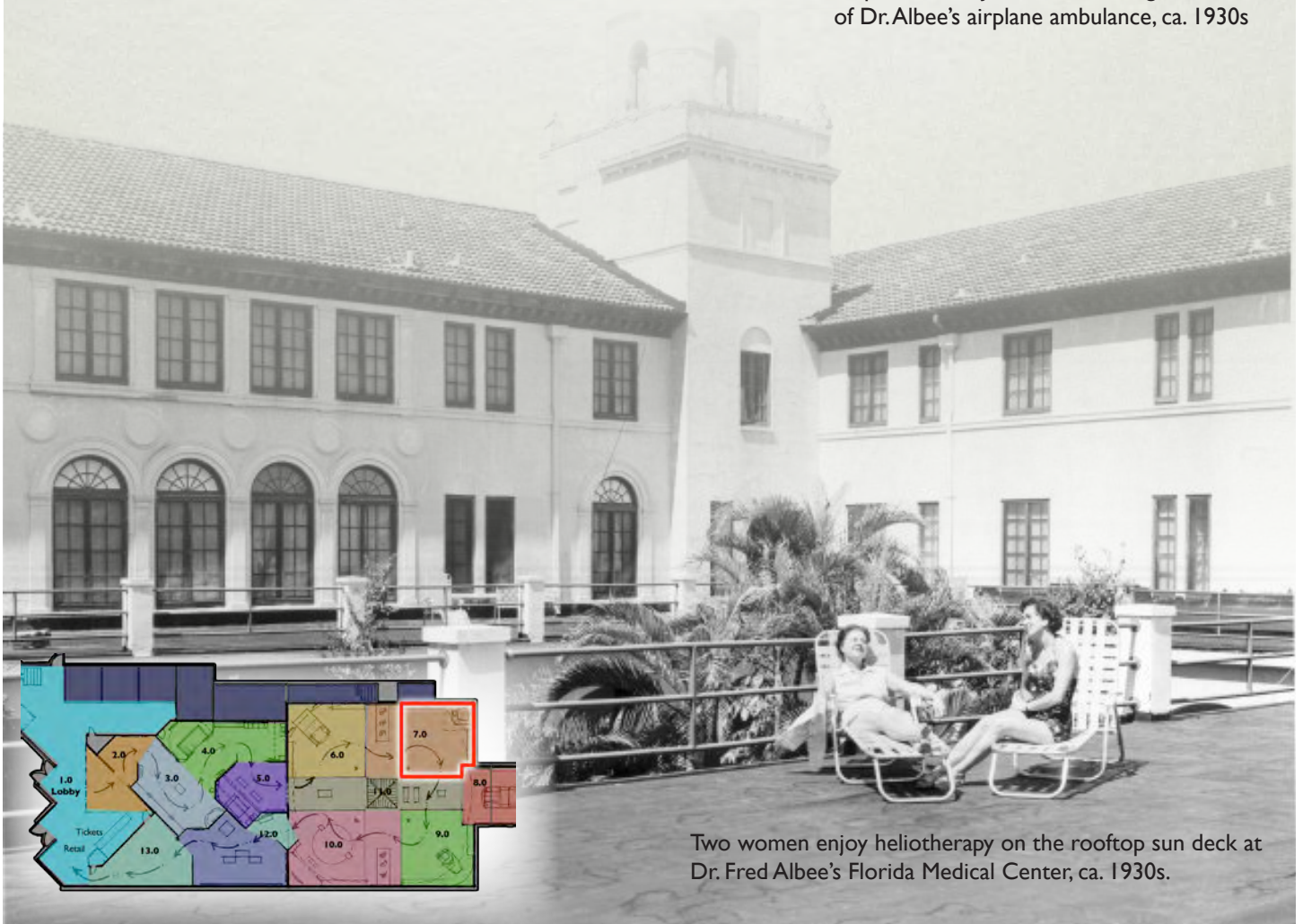
Recuperating in Paradise

The Venice economy got another shot in the arm in 1933, when Dr. Fred Albee purchased the Park View Hotel (the second hotel built by the BLE) and transformed it into a world class private hospital. The Florida Medical Center featured the latest medical treatments and devices—including surgical instruments designed by Albee himself—as well

as sun decks for heliotherapy, a warm sulphur pool, fresh foods grown at Albee Farms in Nokomis, and one of the nation's first air ambulances. Artifacts and images offer a look at the hospital and the visionary man behind it.



Dr. Fred Albee and his nephew, Stephen Albee, Jr., under the wing of Dr. Albee's airplane ambulance, ca. 1930s



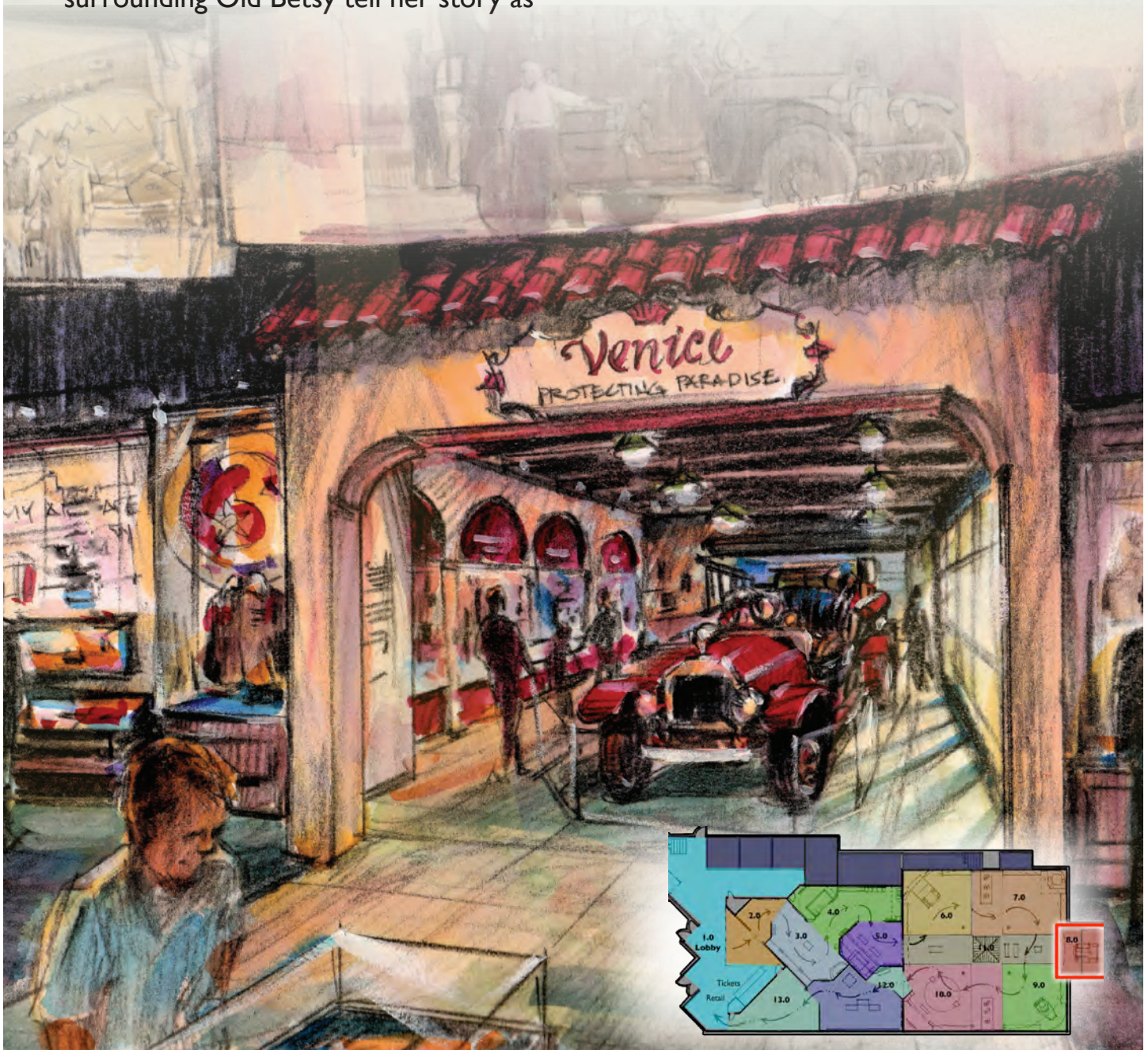
Two women enjoy heliotherapy on the rooftop sun deck at Dr. Fred Albee's Florida Medical Center, ca. 1930s.

8.0

Protecting the City

Venice's charming antique fire truck Old Betsy serves as the centerpiece of an exhibit honoring the city's fire and police departments, established in 1926. Old Betsy has been beautifully restored and is housed in a themed setting suggestive of a fire station. Graphics surrounding Old Betsy tell her story as

Venice's first fire truck, while child sized gear and equipment and a busy box with an engine crank, siren, and bell bring out the fire fighting spirit in young visitors. Vintage police badges and a timeline chart the history of the police and fire departments.



Taking to the Skies

An interactive P-51 Mustang flight simulator puts visitors into the action in the skies above Venice during World War II, when the Venice Army Air Base (VAAB) served as a training base for combat fighter pilots and ground crewmen. Supporting graphics and artifacts tell the story of the VAAB and its later transformation into a municipal airport. The story began in March 1941, when winter resident Finn Caspersen sent a telegram offering the government 3,000 acres of his land

for an Army campsite. In 1942, after the U.S. entered the war, the Army Air Force built a Service Group Training Center on the land, where it trained men in airplane maintenance. The following year, the center expanded its mission to train fighter pilots, and its name was changed to the Venice Army Air Base. The influx of soldiers and civilians boosted Venice's population and economy, with the married men renting homes off base, and their wives and children integrating into the local community.



The Circus Comes to Town

In 1960, a delightful new cast of winter residents arrived, bringing elephants, lions, zebras, and camels with them! Video footage, artifacts, and interactives recreate Venice's circus days, when the town was the winter home of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and its Clown College. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a mini stage, which serves as the backdrop for a video montage of rehearsals in the Venice Arena. During special programs, a live performer can take to the stage to teach visitors a few simple circus tricks.

The museum's youngest visitors can enjoy playing with a model of a circus train—opening the cars to see the performers and animals inside—and creating their own three-ring circus scene using a vinyl magnetic play set. And kids and adults alike can have fun transforming themselves into a clown character of their own design via an interactive magic mirror. In addition, a parade of circus costumes and other artifacts celebrates the performers who decided to settle permanently in Venice—including trapeze legend Tito Gaona, master of the triple somersault, and Gunther Gebel-Williams, one of the greatest animal trainers of all time.



12.0a

Modern Times

After World War II, air conditioning, mosquito control, a rise in automobile ownership, and the birth of jet travel brought new waves of people to cities throughout Florida. A brief video montage traces Venice's growth and change from the 1940s through the 1990s.

As the local population increased, housing developments sprouted up in and around the city, and new architectural traditions took root, such as the Sarasota School of Architecture, or "Sarasota Modern." In the 1960s and '70s, with beachfront property becoming scarce, developers starting building up instead of out, and condos rose along the Venice shore. Manufactured housing appeared as well, making a life in paradise accessible to the masses.

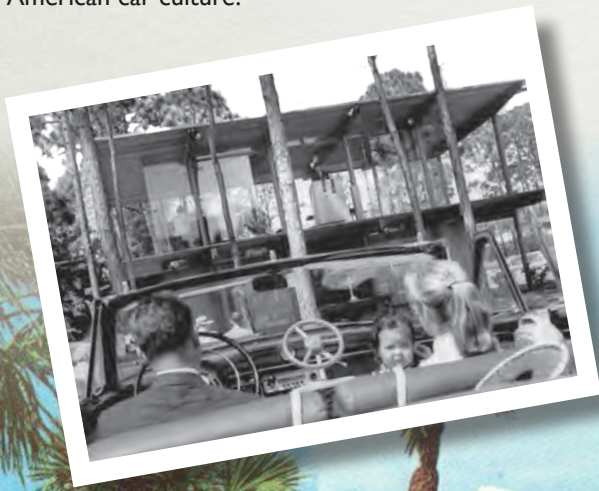


Modern Times cont.

Through much of the post-WWII boom, people viewed anything old as holding back progress. As a result, some of Venice's historic 1920s buildings were demolished to make way for the new. However, not all changes were destructive. The 1960s brought the Civil Rights movement to Florida, and in 1963 Venice High School and Laurel School were integrated. The arts

In the 1950s, Venice-Nokomis Presbyterian opened a drive-in church to cater to the booming American car culture.

and culture also blossomed, with the premiere of the Venice Little Theatre (1950), the creation of the city's first library (established by the Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club in 1951), the birth of the Venice-Nokomis Art Association (1958), and the debut of the Venice Symphony (1974).



Constructed in 1964, the thoroughly modern Venice Beach Pavilion replaced a Northern Italian style beach casino that once stood on the same spot.

12.0b

A City for the Future

In recent years, John Nolen's 1926 plan for the city of Venice has attracted new attention, from local residents seeking to preserve the unique character of the city and from urban planners seeking to develop livable new cities across America. *A City for the Future* shows how both groups are moving forward by rediscovering the past.

A display of photos reveals the influence of John Nolen's ideals on the New Urbanism planning movement today. Visitors see direct correlations between cities planned by Nolen in the early 20th century and cities planned by New Urbanists in more recent decades. One of the best examples is the city of Seaside in the Florida panhandle. Developed in the early 1980s, its planners looked to Venice for inspiration, especially when it came to developing the layout of the city's streets.



A City for the Future cont.

Visitors can then get into the city planning spirit themselves at a series of interactive multi-touch tables where they can design their own small city. Visitors experiment with street layouts, building styles, park placement, and other planning issues—with the goal of designing a city that’s walkable, livable, and has a distinct sense of place. The Museum’s youngest visitors can become city planners too, as they play with a fun, low-tech design-a-city interactive, with movable houses, shops, schools, trees, and other features.

A final display in the gallery looks at the challenges and opportunities the people of Venice face today as their city continues to evolve. Visitors learn about recent efforts to enhance life in the city, including the creation of the Venetian Waterway Park Trail and Legacy Bike Trail from Venice to Sarasota. There’s also a digital “Suggestion Box,” where visitors can comment on current planning challenges in the city or contribute ideas for making Venice even better. Even paradise can be improved upon!

“Today, Nolen’s ideas are experiencing a modern rebirth . . .”

—Bruce Stephenson,
Professor of Environmental Studies, Rollins College



Seaside, Florida,
a master-planned community
inspired by the John Nolen Plan for Venice

13.0

Temporary Exhibits

Visitors will want to return often throughout the year to see what's showing at VAM's temporary exhibit gallery. The space will host changing exhibits addressing a broad range of topics related to the history and people of Venice and Southwest Florida. Examples might include an exhibition on the life and work of Venice author

Walter Farley, creator of *The Black Stallion* children's book series, or the development of the Intracoastal Waterway, which resulted in the creation of Venice Island. The gallery could also celebrate local cultural clubs or interest groups, such as the Quilters Guild, the Coin and Currency Club, or the Camera Club.



Green Roof

The visitor adventure continues on the Museum's green roof, one of the building's key sustainable design features, which also functions as an outdoor exhibit space and an after-hours events venue. The roof is planted with an attractive leafy cover that helps keep the building cool and eliminates the heat-island effect caused by tile and shingle rooftops. Interpretive graphics explain how the green roof works and point out the building's other sustainable features.

From the green roof, visitors can also enjoy a panoramic view of Venice's West Blalock Park and its lush, tree-

filled arboretum. Interpretive graphics celebrate this and the city's many other parks (33 and counting!). Again, John Nolen reenters the story, for it was his idea to include parks of all sizes throughout his plan for the city. Thanks to Nolen—and the dedicated Venetians who have carried on his legacy—most residents live within a couple blocks of a well-cared-for local park.

In the evenings, VAM's green roof transforms into a lovely outdoor events venue. The roof can be rented for parties, weddings, business events, and other special occasions.



Green roofs top the new restroom facilities at Caspersen Beach, 2012.

Sites to See

In the Venice area, history is everywhere, not just at VAM.

A Sites to See computer kiosk in the lobby helps visitors develop an itinerary of historical sites they might want to visit in the community in the future. Throughout the Museum, visitors will encounter Sites to See stations, where they can scan the barcode on their VAM entry tickets in order to collect information about historical sites related to the exhibits on display. For instance, a

station located next to a display about the prehistory of the Venice area might offer information about Spanish Point in Osprey, where visitors can view an authentic shell midden left behind by prehistoric peoples. Likewise, a display about Venice's pioneer days might direct visitors to the Lord-Higel House, the oldest standing house in the city. After making their way through the exhibits, visitors can stop by the Sites to See kiosk in the lobby to either print out the information they collected or email it home.



Lord-Higel House, Venice's oldest surviving pioneer structure

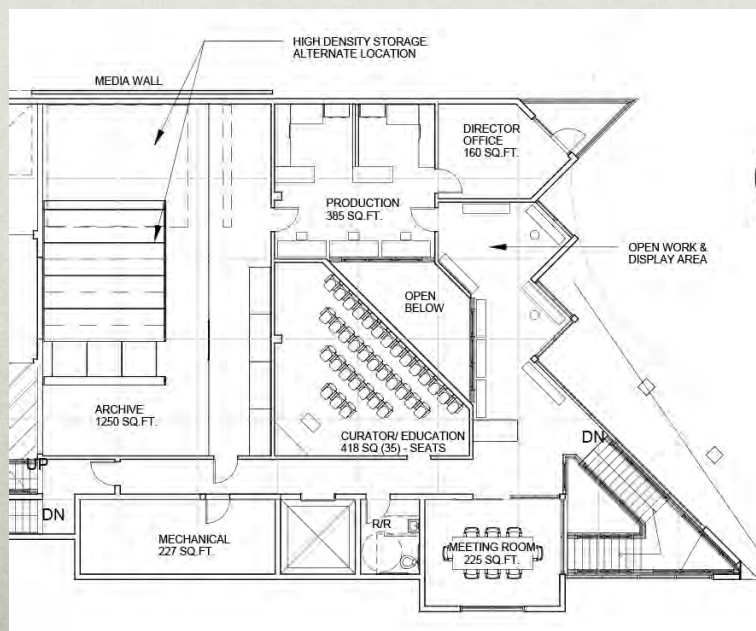


Mary's Chapel, Historic Spanish Point, Osprey

Archives & Collections Storage

The second level of VAM will be home to the Venice Area Archives, a state-of-the-art collections facility and community education center. Public programs in the Archives will break down the traditional wall between visitor and vault. Features of the new Archives include:

- A large, climate controlled storage room equipped with an advanced high-density storage system with mobile shelving.
- Multiple computer workstations providing curatorial staff, volunteers, and researchers with access to VAM's online collections database.
- A large conference room for community workshops, lectures, school group learning labs, and other events.
- A cozy library/meeting room where community members and outside scholars can deep dive into the details of Venice area history.
- Exhibit cases with artifacts and photos telling the story of the Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club, the first civic club in Venice and an early promoter of education and history in the city.
- Modern office spaces for VAM director, director's assistant, and curator.



Programs & Events

Educational programs and events are the lifeblood of museums and are essential to attracting new visitors and retaining existing members. Throughout the year, an active calendar of programs and events will offer enrichment and entertainment for the people of Venice. These diverse offerings will encourage community members of all ages to return frequently, ensuring that VAM remains a vital aspect of our city. Possible programs include:

- Curator-led tours of the Museum and Archives
- Hands-on workshops, for instance, in fossil hunting and identification, scrapbooking, pioneer cooking, oral histories for civic groups and families, and genealogy research
- Educational labs for school groups, for example, in paleontology and city planning
- Seasonal and holiday events, including the annual holiday tree lighting at Blalock Park, VAM holiday exhibit opening, and a new Pioneer Christmas celebration with vintage games, crafts, and songs
- A Community Curators program that teaches community members and civic groups how to design their own exhibits for display in the Museum's temporary exhibit gallery



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- Guest lectures and readings by local authors
 - Storytelling events with costumed performers (perhaps actors from the internationally renowned Venice Theatre)
 - Symposia for local and outside scholars involved in fields such as New Urbanism or Florida paleontology
 - Guided tours of historical homes and sites in the area
 - Collectors' Day, when community members can display their own historical collections and treasures
 - The Cultural Campus's annual Progressive Dinner
 - And more!



Exhibition Design Team

In May 2012 the exhibition planning and design firm of Fricker Studio was engaged to develop an interpretive plan and exhibition design concept for the new Venice Area Museum.



The Design Team:

Tom Fricker

Creative Director

Fricker Studio, Lakeport, CA

Tom Fricker has more than 28 years of experience in exhibition design, illustration, and graphic design. He excels at interpretive design and concept development, and his technical skills as an illustrator allow him to share his ideas with his clients, and in turn, sponsors and donors. Tom is able to incorporate a painterly eye and vision with an understanding and appreciation of content to produce illuminating designs and memorable experiences. He has designed permanent exhibits for museums such as the Kennedy Space Center's U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center, and the Evergreen Air & Space Museum. In addition, his designs for blockbuster traveling exhibits include: Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs, Real Pirates, and Cleopatra: The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt for National Geographic. Over the last 10 years, working with the Vatican, Tom has designed a series of exhibitions including Saint Peter and the Vatican: The Legacy of the Popes and most recently Vatican Splendors: A Journey through Faith and Art. These exhibitions have traveled to 14 cities nationally and internationally, with Vatican Splendors currently in São Paulo, Brazil.

Nancy Seruto

Producer

Project Consultant

Temple City, CA

Nancy Seruto brings three decades of creative, production, and management experience to our team, and contributes a holistic approach to project development, which balances artistic vision with practicality. Her recent projects include: Tutankhamun, the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, Women & Spirit, The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, Top of the Rock at Rockefeller Center for Tishman Speyer, and America I Am for Tavis Smiley and AEG. Prior to starting her own firm, Seruto & Company, Nancy served for 12 years as vice president of Lexington Scenery, the largest independent exhibit fabrication shop in the country at that time. While at Lexington, she spearheaded the reorganization of the company for rapid growth, while overseeing production, estimating, project management, and design. Nancy is currently serving as a show producer/director with Walt Disney Imagineering, developing a significant area of the company's new theme park in Shanghai. She continues to support cultural projects such as the Venice Area Museum project, and is a fine artist who renders California landscapes in oils.

Exhibition Design Team cont.

Phillip Sowder

Co-Founder & Creative Director

Design Force, Inc., Somerville, AL

Phillip Sowder is a co-founder and creative director at Design Force, Inc., an innovative exhibition design and fabrication firm, servicing institutional, governmental, and commercial clients since 1987. Phillip has overseen the design and production of permanent and traveling exhibits for major museums, science centers, and interpretive venues around the world, covering a wide range of subjects from the sciences to history. His specialties include exhibition space planning, 3-D modeling, and concept visualization, as well as the design and fabrication of engaging interactive exhibit elements. Under Phillip's leadership, Design Force has become one of the top exhibit fabricators for educational and aerospace-themed venues. The company's clients include the Smithsonian, Space Center Houston, Carnegie Science Center, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center, the Singapore Science Centre, the Aviation Hall of Fame, Challenger Learning Centers, BlueCross Blue Shield, Discovery Place, and Mexico's Museo Semilla.

Susan Spence

Content Developer & Writer

Altadena, CA

Susan Spence is a content developer and writer for museums, visitor centers, and themed attractions. At the start of each project, she conducts background research and works with clients and content advisors to develop themes, audience objectives, and learning goals. As the project progresses, Susan contributes to concept development, conducts in-depth artifact and image research, and generates copy and scripts for exhibits and presentations. Susan has provided content development and writing services for more than 20 major projects in the last 18 years, for clients such as the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center, Chicago's Museum of Science & Industry, the Texas State History Museum, the Museum of Liverpool, Volkswagen's Gläserne Manufaktur (Transparent Factory), and Ford Motor Company's Ford Rouge Factory Tour.

Research Contacts

Dr. Bruce Stephenson

(New Urbanism expert)
Professor of Environmental Studies
Rollins College

Sandra Terry

(Laurel community leader)
Exec. Director Laurel Civic Association, Inc.

Deborah W. Walk

Tibbals Curator of the Circus Museum
Ringling Museum of Art

Marion M. Almy

(Local archaeology expert)
President, Archaeological Consultants, Inc.

Randy Boshela

Local fossil expert World Fossils
Minerals & Gifts

Dean Calamaras

Local fossil expert

Tito Gaona

(Trapeze performer)
Owner and Founder
Tito Gaona's Flying Fantasy Circus

Lorrie Muldowney

Historic Preservation Specialist
Sarasota County History Center

Erin Mahaney

Archivist (Former VAM volunteer)
Mote Marine Laboratory

Peggy Williams

(Clown College graduate)
Education Outreach Manager
Feld Entertainment

Bob Horne

Owner and Cook
Bob's Train (Diner)

Laura Dean

Marketing Director & Archaeologist
Historic Spanish Point

Rebecca Rabinowitz

(Volunteer for VAM)
Great-granddaughter of Jesse and Rebecca Knight

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Larry Humes

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Judy Murchison

President, Venice-Nokomis Woman's Club

Dorothy Korwek

Former Director,
Venice Archives and Area
Historical Collection

Fricker Studio Projects cont.



Fricker Studio Projects cont.

