

# Horse and Chaise Gazette

VeniceHeritage  
Florida

August 2025

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## President's Message

The quiet of the summer in Venice will soon be over and we are preparing for our VHI 25/26 winter season including the start of the 18-month Venice Centennial events.

So much has happened in Venice since last spring. First and foremost was the opening of the exciting Old Betsy Museum which offers a look back in Venice history plus a relaxing place to stop while biking, walking or visiting the arboretum.

Pop into the Venice Museum which is just a few steps away because there is always something new going on there!

To prepare a fresh trolley experience, VHI will not be offering our usual trolley tours during the 25/26 winter season. Join us for our new Centennial Trolley tours that will be offered in 26/27 winter season.

VHI has great plans for our Venice Library lectures which will start in October 2025. At this time, the updated schedule for the VHI Horse and Chase newsletter will be offered in August, December and April yearly.

There will be a full 25/26 calendar of VHI sponsored events for you to enjoy including volunteering opportunities. Spend a few hours helping VHI introduce your community to the Heritage side of Venice. We guarantee your time will be well spent.



*Congratulations to James Clinch on his new position as Venice City Manager. We are looking forward to continuing a long-term relationship in making Venice City history shine for residents and visitors.*

Teri Ostroviak, President.

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## About Venice

The hibiscus holds a special place in Venice, Florida—it has been the city's official flower since 1966. There are streets named after the flower, like Hibiscus Drive, which features beautiful homes in the Golden Beach neighborhood.

The hibiscus, with its striking petals and vibrant colors, is more than just a pretty flower—it carries cultural significance, medicinal properties, and even culinary potential. From tropical landscapes to backyard gardens, this resilient bloom continues to captivate plant lovers and researchers alike.

One particularly notable variety, the Venetian Sunset hibiscus, was developed in Venice and pays tribute to the city's identity. Residents and businesses can display hibiscus paintings to celebrate local history while supporting preservation efforts. The hibiscus is celebrated worldwide, symbolizing delicate beauty, power, and even hospitality.

In Hawaii, the yellow hibiscus is the state flower, often tucked behind the ear to signify relationship status. In many Caribbean nations, hibiscus tea is a staple, praised for its bold taste and health benefits. If you're looking to add hibiscus to your garden, the good news is that it's relatively low-maintenance.

A sunny spot with well-draining soil is ideal, and regular pruning encourages fuller blooms. Whether grown in pots or planted directly in the ground, hibiscus flowers provide a colorful, tropical touch to any landscape.

Venice Heritage, Inc. even offers custom hibiscus paintings by local artists to celebrate this vibrant symbol of community pride. If you're interested in exploring hibiscus themed art or learning more about its significance, you can find details on our website. [Click here](#)



## Coming Events

November Venice Art Classic – volunteers needed to man VHI Booth

January 2026 Venice Craft Show – volunteers needed to man VHI Booth

March 2026 Venice Art Show – volunteers needed to man VHI Booth

March 27, 2026     Writer's Festival – afternoon lectures and evening reception

March 28, 2026     Venice Book Fair in W. Blalock Park 10 am – 3 pm

## VHI News

Wow! What a year. Through the library lectures, we learned about Bud Wimmers, the Venice Army Air Base, and so much more. At the annual Heritage Luncheon, we learned about the past and future of the Venice Theatre.

The annual Venice Book Fair and Writers Festival went well. Dozens of authors spent the day in West Blalock Park showing off their latest publications. We helped launch Larry Hume's new book, *Venice: A Century on the Gulf*. If you have not picked up your copy yet, you can order from our Web site, [www.veniceheritage.org](http://www.veniceheritage.org). And, there's more.

We worked with the City on a "Local Register Forum". People learned about historic preservation opportunities here. Another example of how we are focusing our energy back into supporting the city's Historical Resources Division.

Throughout the year, we ran a booth at the various arts and crafts festivals to highlight the history of Venice.

And then, there's Old Betsy. We worked with others to raise \$220,000 to house and showcase our Venice's 1926 American LaFrance firetruck opened in June.

That's just the latest chapter of VHI. More is coming.



Old Betsy



Heritage Luncheon



Local Register Forum

The Triangle Inn houses the Venice Museum. The grounds should accentuate the Inn's stature on the National Register of Historic Places and the Local Register of Historic Resources. The Triangle Inn should be a photo op for visitors to Venice.

We're out to raise \$15,000 in funds or in-kind to create a plan that will beautify the building services and grounds and begin plantings.

Some of the support VHI offers Venice doesn't show publicly, but is significant to support the city's accumulated knowledge. We want to help the Julia Cousins Laning and Dale Laning Archives & Research Center be more efficient storing the donations coming in as Venice approaches its centennial. We know, shelving isn't so romantic. Maybe so, but \$50,000 is needed. We would hate to have things lost or damaged because we didn't support this need.

We're also looking for more opportunities to support the city we love so that our history remains available to future generations.

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## *History @ Venice Library – 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the Month, 3pm*

### 2025-2026 Season

Date	Topic	Speaker
Oct. 10, 2025	Tamiami Trail and Development of Florida's Gulf Coast	Josh Goodman
Nov. 14, 2025	Fore! History of Mulligans at Venice Golf and Country Club	Harry Klinkhamer
Jan. 8, 2026	Nature Let the Way to a Casino	Harry Klinkhamer
Feb. 13, 2026	Stories of the Venice Theater	Jean Trammell
Mar. 13, 2026	History of Venice	DVD Presentation
April 10, 2026	Sarasota County During WWII	Josh Goodman
May 6, 2026	Searching for Angola	DVD Presentation

## *Volunteer Needs*

Photographers	Document VHI Activities & Events
Event Helpers	Promote VHI and its merchandise at booths
Lecture Helpers	Prepare and breakdown room
Book Fair Helpers	Populate the VHI booth
Committee Members	Marketing/Membership
	Fund Raising
	Governance
	Finance
	Volunteer Coordinator
Graphic Designer	Create and distribute flyers to media outlets for VHI events

## *Membership*

### **Become a Champion of Vintage Venice**

Support Venice Museums. Promote our rich history. Promote saving and restoring the historic buildings in Venice. We are a volunteer organization that believes in what we do.

### **Join VHI Today**

Go to <https://veniceheritage.org/membership/> to learn more and join.

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## *From the HRM*

This past June, the City of Venice held a ribbon cutting for the new Old Betsy Museum. Our 1926 American LaFrance Pumper finally has a home next to the Venice Museum.

We are also now going through the data from the visitor survey we conducted at the beginning of the year. These results will help us better understand what our visitors are looking for when coming to the museum.

Next, we are working on our upcoming seasonal gallery exhibition to coincide with the city's centennial. "Venice Turns 100" will open right after Labor Day. Speaking of the centennial, the theme for the 2025 Holiday Parade will be "All Aboard for the Centennial," which will kick off 18 months of reflecting on the history of Venice.

We have also begun plans for designing the interpretation at the Lord-Higel House. Long a fundraising project of Venice Heritage, the city is finishing up the rehabilitation while Black Gold Coffee Roasters prepares to move in and make their modifications. Soon you will be able to see what history looks like on caffeine.

I hope you can join us on December 13 for our Holiday Open House. We'll have the Venice and Old Betsy Museums decorated for the holidays and open that evening while you are enjoying the beautiful lights in Monty Andrews Arboretum. You won't want to miss it.

You can even get some of your holiday shopping done while visiting! Exciting things are happening, and we are so glad to be working with Venice Heritage as they support the work that we do to preserve our city's great history.



Harry Klinkhamer, City of Venice Historical Resources Manager



## More About Venice

Have you ever wondered why our newsletter is named the “Horse and Chaise Gazette”? The short answer is that "Horse and Chaise" was the original name of the area we now call Venice. But how and why did our early settlers come up with this name, and when did it officially become Venice? Let's take a brief journey back in time, about one hundred and fifty years ago, to find out.

In the early and mid-1800s, the area we now know as Venice was not yet a cohesive community. It consisted of scattered citrus groves, cattle ranches, and farms, with no real sense of unity. It was a time before the railroad had been extended southward from Sarasota, and the only road connecting the area to Sarasota was in poor condition and often impassable.

Travel by water was the easier option. Travelers would sail south from Sarasota along the coast. As they sailed, they would observe the tree line much like we observe shapes in clouds today. When the tree line resembled a horse pulling a chaise carriage—a popular type of carriage at the time—travelers knew they had reached their destination. Consequently, the area became known as Horse and Chaise, and it retained this name until 1881.

By 1881, the community had begun to grow, and some early settler families—such as the Knights, Higels, and Currys—wanted to formalize it. One way to establish a community formally was to apply for a post office.

Darwin Curry and Frank Higel traveled to Sarasota to complete the post office application. Initially, they intended to name the community "Horse and Chaise." However, the law at the time required post office names to be a single word, so "Horse and Chaise" was not acceptable. Their next choice was "Guava," although it's unclear why.

Though Darwin Curry's signature is the only one on the application, both the Higel and Curry families claimed to have come up with the name Venice. Both families claim that their ancestor visited Venice, Italy and thought the area's waterways were just as beautiful as those in Venice, Italy. Inspired, “Guava” was crossed out and replaced with the name "Venice". While we cannot confirm the accuracy of either claim, it's the tale passed down through the generations, and a charming explanation of our transition from Horse and Chaise to Venice.

Thus, our newsletter, the “Horse and Chaise Gazette,” pays homage to this fascinating history and the journey our community has undergone.

***Another perk when you become a Member of VHI is our annual Members Only Event. Sunday, January 18, 2026***

***Join now and enjoy our fall events, too. This year, we have a personal tour of a Venice vintage home with refreshments. The backyard has a view of one of Venice's pocket parks.***

***This is an original home built and owned by BLE Realty Corp. This home shows how a modern addition can be added to a lovely historic structure with elegance.***

***This special tour is free with your annual membership! [Go to Membership](#)***

## *Our Sponsors*

Thank you to businesses who support VHI



### **Sponsors**



### **Business Partners**

VHI hopes you will consider joining us in support of our high priority projects. You may make a donation and specify which project you support by going to <https://veniceheritage.org/donate/>.