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HISTORICAL VILLAGE TO CELEBRATE SANIBEL LIGHTHOUSE

March 28, 2014 - On Wednesday, April 16, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Sanibel Historical Village will celebrate the Sanibel Lighthouse, which has been the island's beacon for 130 years.



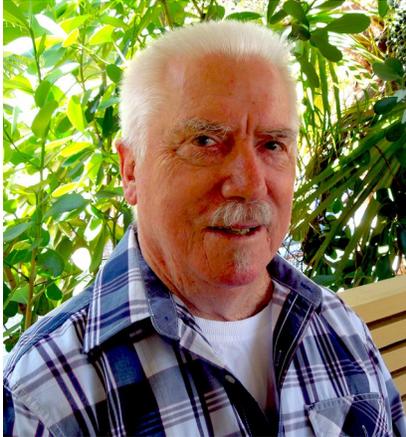
Sanibel residents first petitioned for a lighthouse in 1833, but no action was taken. In 1856 the Lighthouse Board recommended a lighthouse on Sanibel, but Congress took no action. In 1877 government workers surveyed the eastern end of the island and reserved it for a lighthouse. Congress finally appropriated funds in 1883. The foundation for the new lighthouse was completed in early 1884, but the ship bringing ironwork for the tower sank two miles from Sanibel. A crew of hard-hat divers from Key West recovered all but two of the pieces for the tower.

August 7 is National Lighthouse Day, when communities all over the country take part in ceremonies and festivities in honor of their lighthouses. On August 7, 1789, through an Act of Congress, the Federal Government took over responsibility for building and operating the nation's lighthouses. The government recognized the importance for ships at sea to find safe harbor during fog and storms. Over the years, lighthouses have saved many ships, and an untold number of lives.

Events at the Sanibel Historical Village on April 16 begin with a talk by Jeff Lysiak, a lighthouse aficionado and reporter for The Island Sun newspaper. At 2:45, museum volunteer Hal Theiss will play Henry Shanahan, Sanibel lighthouse keeper.

Accompanied by his wife and two sons, Shanahan moved to Sanibel in 1888 and two years later became the assistant lighthouse keeper. When the head keeper resigned in 1892, Shanahan applied for the position but authorities at first denied him because he was illiterate. He threatened to resign and was granted the position. There's much more to this story, which "Henry Shanahan" himself will explain on Lighthouse Day.

Sculptor Ken Idle will be at the village to show his model of the lighthouse, which sits in front of the Burnap Cottage.



To cap off the day, Charles LeBuff, author of "Sanybel Light: An Historical Autobiography," will speak at a Twilight Talk in the Old Schoolhouse from 7 to 8 p.m. Reservations are required due to space limitations; call Emilie Alfino at 472-4648.

LeBuff lived on Sanibel for 47 years, arriving on the island as an employee of the Wildlife Refuge. LeBuff, whose family had relocated to Florida in 1952, would go on to live for 21 years in the assistant keeper's cottage. He has chronicled his life on Sanibel Island in his book, "Sanybel Light: An Historical Autobiography."

LeBuff moved out of the lighthouse station in 1979 and retired in 1990. He still is an active lecturer and writer. In "Sanybel Light," he wrote, "There's one very special element missing in my everyday life: the close, constant and faithful flash that is generated each night after dark from inside the lantern room of the Sanibel Lighthouse."

Learn more at the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Full guided tours take place at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. each day at no additional charge. Beginning in May, the village will operate on off-season hours: Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with guided tours at 10:30. The Sanibel Historical Village is located at 950 Dunlop Road (next to BIG ARTS) and there is handicap access to all buildings. Admission is \$10 for adults (18 and over). Members and children are free. For more information, call 472-4648 during museum hours or visit www.sanibelmuseum.org.
