DOCENT HANDBOOK

Sanibel Historical Village
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MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to preserve, share, and celebrate Sanibel’s history.
SANIBEL HISTORICAL MUSEUM AND VILLAGE

The city of Sanibel was incorporated in 1974. Two years later, several citizens led by activist and historian Elinore Dormer formed a Historical Preservation Committee (Resolution 75-10). Several goals were set out but at the top of the list was the desire to obtain a typical early Sanibel home and turn it into a historical museum. The Rutland House became that museum when it was donated to the city by the Meunch family. The Rutland House was moved to city-owned land next to BIG ARTS in 1982, restored, and formally opened on November 10, 1984, Sanibel’s 10th birthday.

The chairman of the Historical Preservation Committee, Evelyn Pearson, worked tirelessly, giving her time and knowledge to furnish and organize the “Island Historical Museum,” as it was first called. The museum was dedicated to “pioneers and Native Americans of Sanibel and Captiva.” It was open just one day a week, eight months a year, with volunteers welcoming several thousands of visitors. Within five years, the museum was open four days a week for 10 months a year.

When Sam Bailey was elected chairman of the Historical Preservation Committee, the Museum entered a new phase. The Bailey family generously gave money and buildings to expand the museum into a “village.” In late 1991 and early 1992, the Bailey General Store (1927), Miss Charlotta’s Tea Room (1926), and the Post Office (1926) were moved to the site and carefully rebuilt and restored by “John’s Angels,” a dozen volunteers under the supervision of Historical Preservation Committee Vice Chairman John Veenschoten. These three buildings joined the Rutland House in 1993 and 1994. Then the Burnap Cottage and Morning Glories followed, donated and restored by volunteers who also built the shell of the Packing House and the garage to house the Bailey’s 1926 Model T truck. The Schoolhouse for White Children was next, transformed from the Old Schoolhouse Theater back to its 1920s appearance as Sanibel’s one-room schoolhouse for white children. Most recent additions are Shore Haven, which has not been restored to its original appearance except for parts of the exterior, and the Caretakers’ Cottage. With the Packing House, a replica, it gives us 10 buildings in all.

The Sanibel Historical Museum and Village exists because of the support of the city of Sanibel and its Historical Preservation Committee, the generosity of Sanibel citizens who have given money and volunteered their time and talent, and all those who have donated family treasures and heirlooms for the museum’s exhibits and displays.

It does take many people to make a village.
We are privileged to have you as a volunteer and docent at the Historical Museum and Village; we hope you feel the same way. As volunteers you help us fulfill our mission to preserve, share and celebrate Sanibel’s heritage. Approximately 10,000 people visit the museum each year. That makes you an ambassador for Sanibel!

There are several “jobs” a docent can fulfill: Backing up Assistant Manager Abbey Allison in Shore Haven, where visitors enter and are greeted. Other positions include Rutland House, the museum store, and tour guide, to name a few. There are also opportunities working with displays, fundraising, decorations, special events, office help, and archiving.

In Shore Haven, Abbey greets visitors, asks them to sign the Guest Book, and pay admission. Admission is $10 for adults (over 18), and children and members are free. Some people will present a library pass; they also are free. Each person is given a gold sticker to wear and a rack card. We have credit card machines for the convenience of our guests. They are easy to use, and we will make sure you are trained and comfortable using the machine.

Please be mindful that not all people want a lot of information. Some would rather tour the village on their own, stopping to look at things that are particularly interesting to them. If you sense this, then leave those people alone. However, it is a good idea to walk through the rooms and be available to answer any questions visitors might have and to supervise. While it hasn’t happened often, theft and vandalism are possible.

Visitors are allowed to handle a few of the objects on display – play the piano, investigate the kitchen tools, play the games in the Schoolhouse, ring the bells, pull weeds or pick fruit in the garden. Use your own judgment on this. Taking photographs without a flash is permitted, unless donors of items for our quilt or special exhibits have asked that no photos be taken. Flash photography is always prohibited.

Talk to the guests; have fun. Keep this in mind, though, when talking with guests: the human attention span is about 5 minutes, probably less. And you need to capture listeners’ attention within 8 seconds. You may learn some interesting things from our visitors. Most of them are on vacation and are in a great mood. This “vacation” ambience makes being a village volunteer a most pleasant experience, and sharing Sanibel history is a most rewarding activity.
The Sanibel Historical Museum and Village is set up to demonstrate Sanibel’s pioneer heritage from the 1880s through the 1940s. After the 1950s, a new era evolved on Sanibel: Mosquito Control (in the late 1950s), the building of the causeway (1963), the establishment of a city water system (1964), and the fight for incorporation that resulted in the creation of the city of Sanibel in 1974.

We certainly expect our volunteers will want to be members of the museum. Members get a 20 percent discount at the museum store as well as free admission at various levels of membership.
AN ABBREVIATED HISTORICAL VILLAGE TOUR

Introduction. Welcome!

We’re going to take you back to the late 1800s on Sanibel and show you what life was like for the pioneers who braved the harsh conditions of the time.

Our village is not really a village. These buildings were brought here from their original places on the island so they could be preserved and shared with you.

Sanibel started as a farming community, much different from what it is now. Life was hard.

Farmers used mules and worked for generations without modern equipment. Horses and cows couldn’t live on the island because of the mosquitoes. Before Mosquito Control was founded in 1953, the mosquitoes were measured with a New Jersey Light Trap set overnight at the ferry landing. Generally, 25 mosquitoes in a trap constitute an annoyance. One hundred are a problem. If you get up to 2,000 in a night, they get in your throat, your ears, and boil around your legs. Mosquitoes are very much of a problem at 2,000. On September 15, 1950, right at the ferry landing, in one trap in one night, they collected 365,000 salt marsh mosquitoes.

These were brave, tough people.

Shore Haven (1924). Shore Haven, where you entered and bought your ticket, is the museum’s newest acquisition, moved here in 2012 and opened to the public in 2014. Here you can watch the fifteen-minute film on the Island history. The home is a Sears and Roebuck kit house, purchased in 1924 by Ross and Daisy Mayer. Ross Mayer and his brother, Martin, were contractors in Erie, Pennsylvania who had often vacationed on Sanibel. In the 1920s, they decided to buy land on San Carlos bay, near the Sanibel Packing Company. Both families bought Sears houses and built them next to each other, sharing an artesian well and a generator, as well as a bath house and the caretakers’ cottage that we have here at the Village. Daisy Mayer, who lived in Shore Haven, loved to fish and could often be seen on the fishing pier.
behind their house. The exterior of Shore Haven has been restored to its 1924 look, except for the sun porch - a modern addition.

The Sears Roebuck kit homes were available through the Modern Homes catalogue of Honor Bilt Homes from 1909 until the 1940s. The homes were very popular with “factory” towns because a large company could order as many as needed for their employees and have them constructed in the same location. They were extremely well-built houses, available in three grades. Sanibel’s two examples are of the middle grade. Shore Haven is the “Verona” model and Morning Glories is the smaller “Springwood” model. The electric lights and the bathroom were unusual on the island at that time. Shore Haven and Morning Glories shared a generator, which allowed enough power for lights and plumbing pump but not enough for a refrigerator.

**Morning Glories (1926).** This historic cottage was milled in New Jersey in 1925 and came to Sanibel in kit form in 1926, purchased by Martin and Ada Mayer. It arrived in 30,000 pieces by rail and barge and cost $2,211. Morning Glories was a sister home to Shore Haven, built by Ross and Daisy Mayer (see above). Martin and Ada had adopted two children, Isabel and Robert. Five years after moving into “Morning Glories,” Ada died. Martin hired a housekeeper and governess, Ava, who became part of the family for almost the rest of her life.

Please note a few things about this building:

- The porch across the back of the house faced away from the bay (an interesting choice!)
- Electricity was fairly new to the island when these houses were built, and the light fixtures were installed upside-down.
- The built-in features (bookcases, buffet, kitchen cupboards, etc.) were purchased from the catalogue at additional cost.

This building and its sister house, Shore Haven, illustrate the gradual transformation of Sanibel Island from an agricultural settlement populated primarily by hardy pioneers into a community serving tourism and “snowbirds,” come to escape northern winters.
**Caretakers’ Cottage (c. 1930).** This cottage was built not long after Shore Haven and Morning Glories as a multi-purpose building serving both homes. At one point it was the caretakers’ cottage and later served as a guest cottage. A similar structure (or possibly this one) housed a generator, making the Mayer brothers’ homes among the first houses in Sanibel to have electricity – the Bailey Homestead was the first. Frank Bailey got a generator as a present for his wife Annie Mead Matthew Bailey so it would be there when she returned from having their first baby. (It wasn’t until the 1940s that commercial electricity arrived on the island.)

The Gavins, one of the earliest black families on the island, were caretakers of the Mayer homes for a time and the cottage now tells the story of black settlement on the island.

**Bailey’s General Store (1927).** Frank Bailey, one of the island’s early homesteaders, came to farm in 1895. He soon purchased the buildings on Mathews Wharf and set up a packing house for shipping out produce. This, in time, became the island’s only general store.

In the 1926 hurricane the entire wharf was swept away and, within a year, Frank Bailey rebuilt, this time on the shore. The only thing that remains of the first store was the steel safe (now in the corner), which was dragged out of the water.

The store was, in many ways, the social center of the island. It had telegraph and telephone service, a freight dock, and after 1926, a ferry landing. People voted here, socialized, and shopped for everything essential. The store’s slogan was “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”

When the causeway was built, in 1963, the store was no longer at the geographical heart of the islands and the Baileys moved it to its present location, where it is still run by the Bailey family.
The Post Office (1926). The first post office on Sanibel was in Laetitia Nutt’s home, Gray Gables. Laetitia Nutt was the wife of a Civil War officer. After he died (after the Civil War), Laetitia moved with her daughters and her brother to Sanibel to be a homesteader. Her Homesteading Certificate, in her name alone, is dated 1895 and was signed by Grover Cleveland. Laetitia was postmistress on Sanibel from 1889 to 1895. George Cooper also collected mail during this time on Pine Island.

The next postmaster was Will Reed (what a perfect name for a postmaster!). Will Reed served as postmaster for forty years. He operated out of his own home until it was destroyed in the 1926 hurricane; the same one that destroyed Bailey’s store on the wharf. Mr. Reed and island children gathered up the floating wood, scraps from the buildings destroyed by the storm, and built this post office. Look up. You’ll see that the building is made out of odds and ends, all pieced together.

Rural mail delivery was established on Sanibel in 1900. The sack of mail was dropped off at Reed’s Landing until the post office was moved to the ferry landing.

Will Reed played on a local baseball team called “The Sanibel Tomato Pickers.” That’s him, in the corner, sorting mail. Mr. Reed’s daughter Hazel became postmistress after her father.

Miss Charlotta’s Tea Room (1926). This building, built by the Baileys, was originally meant to be a gas station to service trucks transporting produce. The hurricane of 1926 changed those plans when it destroyed the Bailey Packing Company on Mathews Wharf. The gas station became a temporary store until the Baileys rebuilt the store in 1927. (This time on the shore, and with their own gas pumps). The building was then given to niece, Charlotta Matthews, to use as a tea room, servicing those arriving or departing by ferry. The women might order tea or refreshments that came from the Island Inn (operated by Miss Charlotta’s mother, Hallie or better known as Granny) while the men could go out back and play miniature golf on the island’s first golf course. In 1934, the Kinzie Brothers started a new ferry service that docked at the end of Ferry Road, and Miss
Charlotta closed the Tea Room. The building was used to house island school teachers until the 1950s.

**The Burnap Cottage (1898).** This cottage was built by Sam Woodring as a fishing camp. It sat on the tip of Tarpon Bay. Note the photos of Sam’s widow, Esperanza Woodring, who, at his death, took over and became the leading fishing guide on the island.

The cottage became a home. An extension and a second story were added. Note the picture (hanging in the corner) showing the building lifted up and prepared for moving to our museum. When it got here, volunteers called “The Hammerheads” restored the cottage to its original condition.

The name Burnap refers to Hiram Burnap, a retired businessman from Toledo, Ohio, who added the cottage to his southern fishing retreat in 1902. He and his friends used it until his death in 1910.

The Fresnel lens in the back room, was on a lightship before it was moved to the Sanibel Lighthouse, where it was in use from 1962 to 1982.

The stained glass window and small organ is a reminder that this building was also used by itinerant preacher George Gatewood for Sunday services. The window, at one time, lighted the stairs to the second floor.

Note the picture of The Algiers, our first “mega-mansion.” It was brought here from New Orleans. A trench was dug and it was floated ashore. Unfortunately, the owner died and the boat was never lived in, and after auctioning off as much as could be removed, the rest, considered a hazard, was burned by the city as practice for island firefighters. Outside the door is the bell and the anchor from the boat.

The shell collections are from three lighthouse keepers, Roscoe McLean, Clarence Rutland, and Bob England.
The School House for White Children (1896). The school was originally located on Bailey Road and Periwinkle and then moved farther west on Periwinkle in 1903, using rollers, a winch, and mules. An addition was added in the 1930s to accommodate grades 1-4. Older children, through grade 8, were in the original part of the building (the part we have here). The student whose desk was the closest to the stove was responsible for keeping the fire fed on cold days. Grades were separated in rows running from front to back, and a play area was in the corner for younger students who had finished their lessons. One of the first teachers, Lettie Nutt, received $2.50 per student per semester.

Another school on Tarpon Bay Road (now Lily’s Jewelers) opposite the Bailey Shopping Center, educated the black children. When Sanibel’s present school was built in 1963, it was still segregated. But after peacefully petitioning for integration, the very next year it became the first integrated school in Lee County.

When the present school was built, this building became a theater, the Pirate Playhouse. The chalkboard stayed on the wall even through its 40 years as a theater. When the Playhouse closed its doors, Sam Bailey, who had been a student in this building, was instrumental in bringing it to the museum and seeing it restored to the school he remembered.

The Rutland House (1913). The house was built in 1913 and was located on Periwinkle Way, just to the west of Periwinkle Trailer Park (opposite the Dairy Queen). This is a fine example of a Florida “cracker house.” It has high ceilings for ventilation and is raised off the ground to protect against flooding. The house is constructed of slash pine. The resin hardens and protects the wood from insects and water (but is more susceptible to fire). The hip roof is tin, meant to reflect heat, deflect windstorms and collect rain water.

Clarence Rutland was the son of Irene Rutland and Henry Shanahan, whom Irene married after her first husband’s death. Henry Shanahan was the lighthouse keeper in the early 1900s. Clarence purchased this home in 1928 and lived here
until his death in 1982. He was a fisherman, farmer, and contractor. He and his wife, Ruth, had no children, but everyone referred to him as Uncle Clarence. Ruth was ill and died 30 years before Clarence. After Clarence Rutland’s death, the building was brought here and for a number of years it was our entire museum.

The Calusa room, on your left as you enter, tells the story of the island’s original inhabitants, before the arrival of Ponce De Leon. In the kitchen you will note what could be done without electrical service. The bedroom will remind you that, until the 1950s, Sanibel was the mosquito capital of the world. When people could afford them, screens were put in windows, but when mosquitos covered the screens, no one could see out!

The Museum Store, on the back porch of Rutland House, sells a variety of items related to Sanibel History as well as many books on the island’s history.
BRIEF HISTORY AND TIMELINE OF SANIBEL AND SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

1500-1720'S  Native Americans live on the barrier islands (Calusa, then Spanish Indians, then Seminoles).

1513 The Spanish first encounter the Calusa.

1521 Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon is wounded by a poisoned arrow in a skirmish with Calusa warriors, possibly in Southwest Florida. He dies a short time later in Havana.

1756-1783 England controls Florida.

1783-1821 Spain controls Florida.

1821 Florida becomes a U.S. territory. Richard Hackley gains the title to parts of SW Florida from the Duke of Aragon, later disputed by the U.S. government. Hackley sells his title to a New York group of investors in 1830. In 1905, title is later declared invalid by the courts.

1833 The New York group enlists 60 settlers to farm Sanybel. The settlers leave two years later because of the second Seminole War.

1835-1848 Forts are built along the Caloosahatchee (River). Unknown Spanish and Seminoles plant agave (hemp), wild pineapple (cord/rope), and other Mexican exotics on Sanibel.

1845 Florida becomes the 27th state.

1849 Robert E. Lee surveys the SW Florida coastline and recommends that a fort be established at Cayo Costa. An area encompassing SW Florida becomes Monroe County.

1850-1860 Cuban fisheries are established on Sanibel.

1860-1868 Cattlemen on the mainland control the area.

1868 William S. Allen plants and harvests Castor Bean plants on Sanibel.

1873 A great hurricane recorded by homesteaders on Pine Island devastates Sanibel and Captiva.

1884 The Sanibel Lighthouse is built for the cattlemen on the mainland.

1886 Fort Myers becomes a city of a few hundred people. Inventor Thomas Edison builds his winter home in Fort Myers.

1887 Lee County is carved out of Monroe County. Fort Myers is the new county seat.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1888-1926</td>
<td>Homesteaders arrive on Sanibel. 5,000 acres of Sanibel are available for farming. Thirty-one families establish their homesteads of 160 acres each. Approximately 250 people are working and living on the islands, although there is no formal “village.” Homes are spread out.</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>One of the biggest hurricanes of all time wipes out half of Captiva’s land mass, putting an end to farming on that island. The hurricane separates Captiva into two islands. No substantial damage is reported on Sanibel.</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>The Tamiami Trail stalls at Naples. The Everglades is drained in SW Florida and the railroad is extended to Naples. Agriculture on the mainland takes off and depletes the population on the barrier islands. Collier, Hendry, Glades, and Charlotte Counties are formed out of Lee County.</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>Clarence Chadwick buys most of the remaining land on Captiva and plants coconuts and key limes.</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Another hurricane strikes the islands, ending the Florida land boom and destroying farming on Sanibel. Most of the residents leave to farm on the mainland. Only 80 people remain on Sanibel.</td>
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<td>1927-1960</td>
<td>Sanibel becomes a winter tourist stop for shelling and fishing. The population during these years is about 100 people.</td>
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<td>1958-1963</td>
<td>Air-conditioning and mosquito control open the barrier islands to development.</td>
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<td>1960-1974</td>
<td>Developers buy up the old homesteads and Lee County plans to buy the Nature Preserve from the state of Florida and put in a super-causeway from Charlotte Harbor, exiting on Sanibel which will have high-rises for 93,000 people. Conservations groups, led by the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, convince the federal government to buy the nature preserve. The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation forms and 60% of the island is protected from development. In 1963, a causeway is built to develop the east end of the island, but the island’s fresh water supply is compromised because of the dredging of canals and lakes across Sanibel. The Island Water Association forms in 1967 to pipe water from a deeper aquifer, and developers start a resort area along the Gulf shore. Alarmed, conservation and citizen groups form to incorporate the island as a city in order to restrict development. Their effort succeeds and the Sanibel Land Plan is put in place to restrict density and the height of buildings.</td>
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<td>1974-Present</td>
<td>Tourists are now attracted to a barrier island that has preserved its wildlife and native habitat, as well as its beaches and shells. The city of Sanibel has purchased another 10% of island property and now the island consists of about 65% “forever wild” lands and 30% residential, business, and resort property.</td>
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TYPICAL VISITOR QUESTIONS

Cattle
Cattle were not raised on the island because of the “screwworm fly,” a parasitic insect that feeds on the tissue of animals.

Causeway
The causeway was built in 1963 by real estate developer Hugo Lindgren. There was a $5 toll. In 1964 Lee County took over the operation and charged a $3 toll. A new causeway, constructed by Lee County, opened in 2006. The current toll is $6.

Economy
Farming was the main occupation on the island from the 1880s to the 1926 hurricane. From 1927 to 1960, Sanibel residents encouraged tourists to visit during the winter months and spend their money on shelling, fishing, and warm weather pursuits. From 1960 to the present, Sanibel’s economy has centered around residential development and tourism focused on the preservation and conservation of wildlife and native habitats, and on island arts and crafts. Approximately 65% of Sanibel is conservation land, while 35% as been set aside for development. Only 2% remains to be developed.

Electricity
There was no electricity on the island until the 1920s when generators were used. In 1940, the Lee County Electric Cooperative was formed, and lines were strung into rural areas and the barrier islands.

Houses
Island houses were made of slash pine, yellow pine, and cypress. These woods are impervious to insect and water intrusion.

Ice
The first refrigeration and air-conditioning machines were invented and patented in 1851 by Dr. John Gorrie in Apalachicola, Florida, for his malaria and yellow fever patients. Other machines had been manufactured in 1834 and 1850 by other inventors using sulfur dioxide and then ammonia for the compressor, but they were not patented. In the 1840s, refrigerated train cars were used to transport dairy products up north. The refrigerated railroad car was patented in Detroit in 1867. Brewing beer in the north took the idea of refrigeration to new levels in the 1870s. In 1879, there were 35 commercial ice plants operating in the United States. Fort Myers had an ice factory operating by 1900. Punta Gorda had refrigerated rail cars before 1900.

Mosquito Control
Mosquito control and air-conditioning came to the island in 1958, resulting in more visitors and more development.

Population
1880s to 1926: about 250. From 1927 to 1960: about 100. Currently there are 6,500 property owners, of which only 2,500 stay on the island year-round.

Rain
There is not as much rainfall on Sanibel as on the mainland. The Barrier Islands’ air currents depress thunderstorms in the Gulf.
**Roofs**
The few shelters in the 1830s to 1880s had thatch roofs. Wood shingles were then used until the early 1900s, when tin was used to reflect heat, prevent fires, and catch rainwater.

**Seminoles**
Native American tribes came from northern Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Alabama (Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, Apalachee, and Yasamee). They interbred with runaway slaves, Spanish and English anarchists, and filled the gap left with the demise of the Calusa and Spanish Indians from Cuba. General Jackson’s policy was to move Indians out west, and the Seminoles were a runaway tribe escaping that policy. They remain the only tribe that never made peace with the federal government.

**Stoves**
The first stoves used wood before kerosene came into favor.

**Transportation**
Horses were not practicable for use on Sanibel because of encephalitis. Mules fared better and were used until trucks came along with automobiles and ferries.

**Trees**
The Australian pines were brought in by the Baileys in the 1920s to help firm up the shell roads that washed away in the summer rains. They are now being removed from public lands because their shallow root system cannot withstand strong winds. Brazilian pepper trees were brought in by the Rutlands in the 1920s as a winter “holly” plant for the holidays. They are now classified as an invasive species and have largely been removed from the island.

**Water**
Natural fresh water is in the eight-foot aquifer throughout Sanibel. The interior wetlands also contain fresh water, which made farming possible on Sanibel until the end of the 1920s. In 1964, development destroyed the aquifer. The Island Water Association was established in 1967 and began to pump water from the 800-foot level for distribution to all parts of Sanibel.
SHORE HAVEN, OUR SECOND SEARS ROEBUCK KIT HOME

Shore Haven is the museum’s newest acquisition. The exterior has been restored to its 1924 look, with the exception of the sun porch, a modern addition. Subsequent owners did so much renovating and updating that it was impossible to bring the interior back to 1924. Some parts remain, though. The walls are the same ones the original owners put up after the Florida heat destroyed the walls provided by Sears.

The three Mayer brothers from Erie, Pennsylvania (Ross, Martin, and Joe) often vacationed on Sanibel. They were captivated by the island’s charm and in the early 1920s decided to purchase land on the beach fronting San Carlos Bay, not far from the Sanibel Packing Company (later the Bailey Store). The Packing Company was a collection of buildings on Matthews Wharf. The daily steamer docked at the wharf, bringing whatever was needed, wagons from the hotels met guests, and gas pumps were located on the wharf to service the few automobiles that were transported to the island. Owning land and building a home in this busy and convenient stretch along the bay was considered to be a smart move.

Ross and Martin Mayer had children close to the same age and decided to live side-by-side and share facilities. They both chose Sears Roebuck kit homes. Martin and Ada Mayer purchased the Springwood model, now known as Morning Glories and completed it in 1926. The two-story Verona model home, now named Shore Haven, was built by Ross and Daisy Mayer. Daisy loved to fish, and she could often be seen on the fishing pier behind her house.

Shore Haven and Morning Glories shared an artesian well, an electric generating plant, and a bath house. The bath house had a porch and two rooms – one for the girls and one for the boys. Each home had its own servants’ quarters that had a privy, a garage, and a cistern for collecting rainwater.

The Sears Roebuck kit homes were available through the Modern Homes catalog of Honor Bilt Homes from 1909 until the 1940s. The homes were very popular with factory towns; a large company could order as many as needed for their employees and have them constructed in the same location. They were extremely well-built houses, available in three grades. Sanibel’s two examples are of the middle grade.

The electric lights and the bathroom were unusual on the island at that time. The brothers’ families shared a generator that allowed enough power for lights and a plumbing pump but not enough for a refrigerator.
DAISY MAYER – Daisy was an “early islander” winter resident in the 1920s. She and her husband, Ross, lived in a Sears Roebuck kit house that was on San Carlos Bay. They called their home “Shore Haven.” Daisy loved to fish and she could often be seen on the fishing pier behind her house. She also spent a lot of time with her nieces and nephew who lived next door. These children had lost their mother at an early age and were living with their father and a housekeeper in another Sears kit home called ‘Morning Glories.”
Daisy Mayer – Daisy was an “early islander” winter resident in the 1920s. She and her husband, Ross, lived in a Sears Roebuck kit house that was on San Carlos Bay. They called their Sears kit home “Shore Haven.” Daisy loved to fish, and she could often be seen on the fishing pier behind her house. She also spent a lot of time with her nieces and nephew who lived next door. These children had lost their mother at an early age and were living with their father and a housekeeper in another Sears kit home called “Morning Glories.”
THE OLD SANYBEL ISLAND MAP

In 1819, the U.S. Government was negotiating with Spain to annex the territory known as Florida. At the same time, the former U.S. Consul to Spain, Richard Hackley from Virginia, was negotiating with the Duke of Aragon of Spain for a large tract of land in southwest Florida, including any and all barrier islands. After the U.S. government obtained Florida from Spain in 1821, Hackley completed his transaction with the Duke of Aragon and obtained questionable title to the land in southwest Florida. Needless to say, the United States was not pleased.

Once a customs post was established in Key West, agents were sent up the southwestern coast to check for piracy and any other illegal activates. It was recorded that only small fishing huts were sighted on Sanibel, and the islands in Estero and Pine Island bays were populated by Cuban fishermen.

In the meantime, Hackley was busy checking out his land. In 1831, with his title still hazy, Hackley sold part of his tract to a New York group of investors called the Florida Peninsula Land Company. Fifty shares of stock were created, one share equaling 1,800 acres of land. Each share originally sold for $500. This gave each buyer a plot of land from the bay to the Gulf along with a lot “in town.” The U.S. government promptly started legal proceedings against Hackley’s title and his company.

In 1832, the New York group proceeded with their exploration of the land and settled on establishing a colony on “Sanybel.” Workmen were sent to the island to set up huts and cabins for settlers. In early 1833, Dr. Benjamin Strobel and 20 men and women settled on the island. Dr. Strobel explored the island and recorded his findings with the company: flat land, good soil for farming, fresh water, and an average height of five to eight feet above water.

The company had hoped for just such a favorable report. Producing farm crops during the winter months for the northern states would be very profitable. The company contacted Edward Armstrong to complete a survey and map of the island. Once completed, the survey and the maps were brought to New York.

In the meantime, Dr. Strobel also explored Captiva and found deserted huts, gardens, and worked farmland. Later that year, he left the settlement under clouded circumstances and traveled to South Carolina, never to return.

In the winter of 1833-34, another 60 settlers were to come to Sanibel but it was never recorded that they did. In 1834, settlers and Cuban fishermen petitioned the government
for a lighthouse, which was rejected. In 1836, the second Seminole War began and fighting broke out near Ocala. Troops were sent to evacuate all settlers.

In 1905, the U.S. courts finally resolved the litigation against the company. Hackley’s title was invalidated as well as claims by the Florida Peninsula Land Company.

In 1977, three maps of the company’s survey were discovered in Oswego, New York. One of the maps was given to the city of Sanibel and is hanging in the Rutland House hallway.
“MORNING GLORIES,” THE LITTLE SEARS ROEBUCK KIT HOME

This charming cottage was ordered from a 1922 Sears Roebuck catalog. Starting in 1908, Sears featured “Honor Bilt” homes in their Modern Homes catalogues. This was one of the homes – The Springwood model. Morning Glories was completed in 1926. The three Mayer brothers from Erie, Pennsylvania (Ross, Martin and Joe) often vacationed on Sanibel. They were captivated by the island’s charm and in the early 1920s decided to purchase land on the beach fronting San Carlos Bay, not far from the Sanibel Packing Company (later the Bailey Store). The Packing House was a collection of buildings on Matthews Wharf. The daily steamer docked at the wharf, bringing whatever was needed, wagons from the hotels met guests, and gas pumps were located on the wharf to service the few automobiles that were transported to the island. Owning land and building a home in this busy and convenient stretch along the bay was considered a smart move.

Thirty thousand pieces arrived by rail and barge ready to be assembled on Martin Mayer’s bay-front property by carpenters and other skilled workers. The cottage was named Morning Glories after the spreading vines of blue flowers that grew on the island. The cost of the Springwood model was $2,211 unassembled (more information is available on printed sheets throughout the house). The built-ins you see were extras or upgrades, purchased at additional cost.

Inside features from the catalog include:

- Built-in bookcases, buffet, china cupboards, dinette and fireplace
- Kitchen cupboards, a slide-out cutting board, and a hidden ironing board
- Surprisingly large closets (show guests the one in the bedroom)
- Attic access by ladder (since removed)
- A bathroom!

Owner changes include:

- Building a generous porch across the back of the house in 1924. (Wouldn’t you have put it on the bay-view side?)
- Enclosing the side porch to make a small sunroom, probably in the 1950s

Please Note:

- This is a two-bedroom house. The parents’ bedroom depicts a typical bedroom of the times for wealthy northern visitors. The second bedroom depicts a child’s/children’s bedroom complete with small bed and toys. The walls in this bedroom display pictures of the Mayer family, as do some in the living room.
• The electric lights and the bathroom were unusual on the island at that time. The brothers shared a generator with Shore Haven (the museum’s newest acquisition, 2012) which allowed enough power for lights and plumbing pump but not enough for a refrigerator.
• Notice that the light fixtures were installed upside down.
• The home had to be brought by barge to a street wide enough to accommodate the flatbed that carried the house to the Historical Village.

Ross and Martin Mayer had children close to the same age and decided to live side-by-side and share facilities. They both chose Sears Roebuck kit homes.

Martin and Ada Mayer had adopted two children, Isabel and Robert. Five years after moving into Morning Glories, Ada died. Martin hired a housekeeper and governess, Ava, who became part of the family for almost the rest of her life.

Shore Haven and Morning Glories shared an artesian well, an electric generating plant and a bath house. The bath house had a porch and two rooms – one for the girls and one for the boys. Each home had its own servants’ quarters that had a privy, a garage and a cistern for collecting rainwater.

Ross Mayer’s daughter, Grace Mayer Symroski, became the owner of Morning Glories and passed it on to her children, Barbara Mayer, Allison Weir, and Ty Symroski. Eventually, Allison Weir became the sole owner and sold the property to the Allen Larson family. The Larsons generously gave the Morning Glories cottage to the city of Sanibel with a sum of money to move it to the grounds of the Historical Museum and Village.

The Sears Roebuck kit homes were available through the Modern Homes catalog of Honor Bilt Homes from 1909 until the 1940s. The homes were very popular with factory towns; a large company could order as many as needed for their employees and have them constructed in the same location. They were extremely well-built houses, available in three grades. Sanibel’s two examples are of the middle grade.

Lumber yards in the Midwest and in New Jersey supplied all the pre-fabricated parts. Morning Glories came from New Jersey.
CARETAKERS’ COTTAGE

This building came to the village at the same time as Shore Haven. It is a cottage that served both Shore Haven and Morning Glories, sitting between the two houses. It was first built as a multi-purpose building sometime in the 1930s. Sometime after that—the year is uncertain—it was used as a caretakers’ cottage.

The Ross Mayer family caretakers would use it to do some of their chores, such as ironing, and to take breaks during the day. Sometimes they would stay overnight if they missed the last ferry to Fort Myers or didn’t have the money to pay the fare.

Members of the Gavin and Walker families, whose descendants are still Sanibel residents, were among the caretakers who served the Mayer families and used this building.

Today it proudly serves as our Black History on Sanibel exhibit, which we have long hoped to present but never had the space.
1920’s Sanibel — At the end of WWI, the Sanibel farming population was shrinking. To make matters worse for the farming community, the hurricanes of 1921 and 1926 devastated the land as salt-water surges killed the crops. The Tamiami Trail (US 41) was under construction, and railroads, workers, and good farmland from the drainage for the roadbed became available on the mainland. At the same time Big Agriculture convinced the state of Florida to drain the areas around Lake Okeechobee, leaving the Florida Everglades without re-nourishing fresh water. More fertile soil, railroads, workers, and the dredging of the Caloosahatchee opened the river with access to distribute local produce. This made farming more attractive on the mainland. As people left Sanibel, they put up their land for sale at reduced prices.

With the establishment of African American communities in Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, and Dunbar, it was only a matter of time before African Americans came to Sanibel. Isaiah Gavin and his family were the first, to be followed by the Johnsons out of St. Petersburg, the Walkers, Mitchells, Hursts, Bakers, Preschas, and Whitcarrs. These families were also affected by the 1926 hurricane and the falling population. By 1928, only about 90 people lived on Sanibel.

The black families, because of a lack of schooling for their children, periodically traveled between the island and Dunbar and stayed with relatives. The black families looked for a vacant building on Sanibel that could serve as a school. In 1914, a Baptist Church had been built on Sanibel by James Johnson, who became a church trustee. The church was owned by the Florida Baptist Convention of Jacksonville (FBCJ). Some stories say that the church informally opened its doors to black children for schooling as early as 1924. In 1927, James Johnson formally offered the church to the black families for use as a school, and two years later the Lee County Board of Public Instruction (LCBPI) purchased it from the FBCJ for $1,500. The land was deeded to the LCBPI by Elmer Petrow and John and Minnie Bruaw. Since there was a minimum of seven children required to operate the school, other black families moved to Sanibel, including the Jordans, Burns, and Carters. The School for Colored Children on Sanibel operated grades 1-8 as long as seven children were present. The teachers were Angelita George, Hazel Hammond, the Wardell sisters, and Lossie Pearson.

With the coming of WWII and the Sanibel population still around 90, it was difficult for the school to stay open. Black families would still travel to Dunbar, especially if their children were in grades 9-12. Eventually the school closed its doors. The Carter family lived in the building for a while, but it was in a state of disrepair when the Lee County School Board put both Sanibel schools up for sale in 1962. A new school had opened on Sanibel in 1963 but was segregated. Black children were required to attend school in Dunbar. In 1964, forward-thinking parents on Sanibel, led by both black and white mothers, convinced the Lee County School Board to integrate the Sanibel School. Thus, Sanibel became the first integrated school in Lee County. The old School for Colored Children was restored and has served as a bank; it is now Lily and Co. Jewelry Gallery. It is on the corner of Tarpon Bay and Island Inn Roads, across from the Bailey Shopping Center.
1930s to Present – With the end of any profitable farming by 1930, the owners of vacant farm buildings turned them into guesthouses, bed-and-breakfast lodging, and hotels. Sanibel and Captiva were advertised up north as a mecca for fishing and shelling on beautiful beaches. Along with other islands, Sanibel’s African American families turned to other trades and businesses to make a living. When the causeway opened in 1963, the island population was still about 90-110 people, but soon it began to increase. By 1974, when Sanibel incorporated as a city, there were 2,500 registered voters. Today, there are 6,500 property owners and 2,500 year-round residents. Sanibel continues to be home for the descendants of many of the early African American families.

MARY BELL
Mary Bell was the original owner of the Seahorse Shop and Cottages. Many recall that it had the most unusual little outdoor market atmosphere with a row of doors that opened back, leaving the entire front adrift with the sounds and winds of the sea. It provided an outlet for the shell jewelry made by her husband. Today the Seahorse Shop is the second-oldest retail shop on the island. Mary’s involvement in numerous pre-city issues aided in the incorporation of Sanibel.

MOZELLA JORDAN
Mozella Jordan was a crusader for equality in education for all island children. Along with Mary Bell, she was instrumental in the Sanibel School becoming the first integrated campus in Lee County. Mozella and her husband were the first African American couple to purchase property on the island. Mozella was dedicated to her family and church. She became Sanibel’s most popular caterer.
SANIBEL PACKING CO. d/b/a BAILEY’S GENERAL STORE

“If we don’t have it, you don’t need it!” That was the motto Sam Bailey gave to his family’s general store, and a humorous one for a general store located on a still Pretty-isolated island. The store carried everything from ladies’ garters to pigs’ feet in gravy to all manner of tools. (An eight-year-old reportedly came up with a needed item not thought of: toilet paper – better than the corncobs and Sears catalogs found in some outhouses.)

Here are some interesting facts:

- The Bailey family came to Sanibel in the 1892 and successfully farmed. In 1899, they bought the complex of buildings that made up a plantation store on Mathews Wharf in San Carlos Bay.
- The hurricane of 1926 destroyed Sanibel’s commercial farming, as well as Mathews Wharf and all the buildings on it. Only the steel safe, now in the corner, remained. It had to be dragged out of the water.
- The “new” Bailey’s General Store, built in 1927, was built safely near the bay on a beach ridge. The building has structural hurricane defense features, ensuring survival through decades of storms.
- The store was the island’s communication center with telegraph and telephone service, a freight dock and, a ferry landing. People voted here, socialized, and shopped for everything essential.
- The store was moved to this site in 1992 and meticulously restored to its 1930s appearance, including the original cash register, desk phone, and glass-fronted cases.
- Most of the cans are displayed with labels that came from a company that reproduces old labels specifically for museum use.

While it might look like the back room was an afterthought, it was built at the same time as the main room of the store. The back room was reserved for bulk items and some storage. Now it houses exhibits about Sanibel’s farming and transportation history, ferry exhibits, and a large white box that replicates the one used for smoked meat and hard cheese – before refrigeration.

In the 1950s a shed extension was added to the back room, the front portico was enclosed, and the entrance shifted to what is now the south side. Some pictures on display reveal this different set-up.

This second Bailey’s General Store has found a permanent home at the Historical Village after almost 40 years of service to the Sanibel community. After the Baileys moved their store to what is now the Bailey Shopping Center at Periwinkle Way and Tarpon Bay Road, the building was used for a number of purposes, including as the island’s first early childhood education center.

Bailey’s General Store is still owned and operated by the Bailey family.
A POEM BY SAM BAILEY (1924 – 2010)

“A Brief History of the Old Store”

In 1900 was the beginning of Bailey’s store,
However some of us (the building and I) did not arrive until ’27 and ’24.

Things were good in the early days
When transportation was boats and one-horse shays,

Progressing fast from farmers and fishers
To land grabbers and Yankee well wishers.

From out of the bay after the ’26 deplorium,
Came this building, Sanibel’s finest (and only) emporium.

On our store dock came all freight and mail to carry,
And right next to it, the auto ferry.

This was the lifeline of all the folks here,
The meeting place for islanders and visitors far and near.

Our shelves were stacked with supplies and goods,
For everybody coming from the beach or the woods.

From tweezers and needles to double team plows,
From overalls and tools to ladies’ things that were the cat’s meows.

Dried beans, canned beans, slab pork, et al,
Bananas, vegetables, honey and fruit—winter, summer or fall.

Our slogan—and you should really heed it,
This I quote, “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”

Our father and the real father of this store,
Was Frank P. Bailey, but yet there was much more.

He fathered three sons as you see here now,
Born, he thought, to fill his shoes and follow the plow.

But plan and ideas don’t always come out right,
However at the end of the tunnel there was some light.

I’ll get to that in a sec or two,
But then came the Depression and many dreams blew.

Getting the boys interested in the store was tough as a rock,
One wanted to ride horses, another was a jock.

The oldest, after wandering and meandering around,
Arrived back on Sanibel and his niche was found.
After three years he took over the reins—in 1952,  
And established a record our dad would be proud of, too.

This old building has seen many come and go,  
And it’s great to see these old clapboards again to glow.

For in 1966 she was put to rest to stay,  
New Bailey’s was relocated at the corner of Periwinkle and Tarpon Bay.

But now it’s back in its glory and glee,  
Here it stands again proudly for all to see.

WELCOME TO BAILEY’S!!!
THE GARDEN

Sanibel was an agricultural island with several advantages:

- The slightly warmer temperatures almost always assured a successful crop, and an earlier one than on mainland farms.
- There was fine topsoil and abundant water (the ponds that became the Sanibel River).
- Large grassy areas meant few trees needed to be cleared before crops could be planted.
- The island had an undulating topography of higher ridges and lower swales. In the dry season, farmers planted crops in the swales and collected scant rainwater. In the wet season, crops were planted on the ridges to prevent root rot from too much water.

But there were disadvantages:

- Crops had to be shipped to a railroad terminal to go north; the closest one was in Punta Gorda, until the early 1900s when the railroad came to Fort Myers.
- Hurricane damage ended commercial farming in the 1920s after topsoil was either too salty or was washed away.

Please note in the garden:

- The garden at the Historical Village is meant to illustrate that Sanibel was a farming community. Early settlers grew vegetables and citrus in their “truck gardens,” enough to feed their families. In fact, the Bailey Store did not carry much in the way of produce, because families grew their own.
- Typical crops included tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, cucumbers, and watermelon. Our garden includes these and other vegetables as well as a mango and several citrus trees. Sanibel grapefruit at one time won recognition at state fairs and would have cost $1.25 each in New York City or Boston during the winter. Sanibel tomatoes were also highly prized and featured on the menus of the top hotels in New York City at $1.50 each.
- The garden also has castor beans, which were grown commercially after the Civil War for a few years as a cure for yellow fever. There are also coconut palm sprouts, pineapple (more popular in Punta Gorda), and agave (grown where the Sanctuary Golf Course is today) for its fiber that supplied material for the St. James City rope factory on Pine Island.

Please note that other plants growing in the village are native.
The Calusa used the area’s native plants in a variety of ways:

- Blue Porterweed – beer was made from the leaves
- Jamaica Dogwood – a hallucinogen was created from the bark
- Stopper – the leaves were brewed to calm intestinal problems
- Coontie – a flour and meal were ground from the tubular “cones”
- White Indigo Berry – dye was made for clothing
- Myrsine – The berries attract birds and butterflies
- Tobacco Bush – used as a filler for “cigarettes”
- Gumbo Limbo Tree – the bark was used for skin rashes
- Sea Grape – the “grapes” were used to make wine and jelly
- Dogwood – Also called “fish poison,” the Calusa would throw leaves on the water, which would stun the fish. They’d float up to the surface, and the fisherman could just grab them.

How coconuts got to Sanibel: Clarence Chadwick had them planted during the very early years of South Seas Plantation.
There have been several post offices on Sanibel. The first one appears to have been the Nutt home, Gray Gables, where Laetitia Nutt handled mail as post mistress from 1889 until 1895. She picked up the mail at the lighthouse pier. George Cooper also collected mail at St. James City on Pine Island. From 1891 to 1895 he dropped it off on his wife’s sewing machine at their home (could you call her sewing machine the second post office?), now known as the Old House Store.

The third post office was the front porch of the bay-front, two-story Reed home, and Will Reed became post master, a job he held until 1940. Rural delivery was established in 1900 and the mail was delivered each day to Reed’s Landing. During the hurricane of 1926, the Reed home was destroyed. Debris was recovered from the bay and used to build a one-story home and this small post office (the fourth post office). Look up and notice that the boards don’t match.

Will Reed was a member of the 1910 Caloosahatchee Valley championship baseball team, the Sanibel Tomato Pickers. His daughter, Hazel Reed Goddard, was post mistress after him.

- The fifth post office was built on Ferry Road, run by Scotia Bryant; it soon proved too small.
- The sixth, used until 1964, became a private home on Ferry Road.
- The seventh is now a restaurant near the Cooper Home in the Old Sanibel Shoppes (The Over Easy).
- No. 8 is the present post office on Tarpon Bay Road.
- There was also a post office in the Wulfert area operated by post mistress Jennie Doane in the early 1900s.

Please Note:

- The different sizes and widths of wood used in the building – because they were salvaged.
- The number of postal patrons whose names are on a letter of appreciation to Scotia Bryant, post mistress.
MISS CHARLOTTA’S TEA ROOM

This little building, moved to the village from its bay-front location in 1992, has had many lives. Built by the Baileys to be a service station in 1926, it never fulfilled that mission because of the hurricane that year. It was built because when ferry service started, the Bailey brothers realized that cars on the island would need easier access to service and gas than that provided by the pumps at the end of a long pier. But the hurricane changed everything.

- The not-quite gas station became a temporary store while the new Bailey’s General Store (the one in our village) was built with gas pumps under a portico.
- Frank Bailey’s sister-in-law Charlotta Matthews suggested that the building be used as a tea room to serve ferry and store patrons.
- Most of the cooking was done at the Matthews (now the Island Inn), and she brought pastries, soup and sandwiches, and beverages to the tea room.
- Three winter resident men, eager for more to do than gossip and wait for their wives at the tea room, built a nine-hole miniature golf course in the rear.
- The tea room operated in tourist season (fall, winter, spring).
- After 1937, the ferry landing relocated east toward the lighthouse and the tea room permanently closed. The building was converted into the school teacher’s home.

Please Note:

- No pictures of the interior have been found, so displays are a “best guess.” Children of that era only recall that they were told to stay out. “You’re too wet and full of sand!”
- Charlotta never married, always kept busy, and was nicknamed Scooter. Her nephews – Francis, Sam, and John Bailey – called her Aunt Char or Chebum, a nickname that has yet to be adequately explained!
The Packing House, Buggy, Wagon, and Car

The Packing House is NOT open to the public, but folks should be encouraged to stroll by to look at the rusting artifacts from island farm land and examples of early island transportation. The building contains items not on display, archiving materials, and some supplies.

- The Packing House is a newly built structure based on pictures of the Gibsons’ packing house and the remains of one found in the Wulfert area.

- The buggy, or surrey-with-the-fringe-on-top, is similar to one bought by Frank, Ernest, and Harry Bailey for their mother from Reverend George Fitzhugh shortly before 1900.

- The wagon represents the most common land transportation. The old sand roads showed three ruts: the outside ruts were from wheels, the inside from the mule doing the work.

- The 1926 Model T truck is the actual one purchased by the Bailey brothers for use by the store. Brother John generously gave it to the museum from his farm in Jacksonville. It was restored using parts from another truck.
THE BURNAP COTTAGE

Retired Toledo, Ohio, businessman Hiram Burnap added this 1898 cottage, which was built by Sam Woodring, to his southern fishing retreat in 1902. It was used by Burnap and his friends as a fishing camp until Burnap’s death in 1910. The cottage was sold to George Scoville in 1917. His sister Mabel Critchley eventually inherited the tiny home and lived there for many years until she sold it to the Brewster family in 1946. The Brewsters put a two-story addition on the back and rented it out part-time. The day that Nellie Brewster died in Pennsylvania, a light went on in the second floor bedroom of the Burnap Cottage. Was it Nellie’s friendly spirit passing through one last time? Esperanza Woodring certainly thought so. LeClare Bissell, a subsequent owner, donated the house to the village. It was barged out of Tarpon Bay to a road wide enough for the flatbed trailer. After it arrived at the village, the top story was removed and the structure was transformed back into the Burnap Cottage.

Please Note:

- The lighthouse lens (used from 1962 to 1982). The lighthouse keeper would have had to wear an apron lest his suspenders scratch the lens. There is other lighthouse memorabilia in the back and in a case, as well as the ship’s wheel from the Algiers.
- The lighthouse’s pattern of flashes was changed in 1933 to two sequential white flashes every 10 seconds, which it remains today.
- The case displaying Woodring Point homes and their residents. The point was named for the Woodring family, which settled there in 1888 and are still there and still fishing.
- The stained glass window over the collapsible organ is a reminder that this building was also used by itinerant preacher George Gatewood for Sunday services. The window, at one time, lighted the stairs to the second floor.
- The Algiers print. The Algiers was a Mississippi ferry fashioned to look like a riverboat. It was retrofitted with a paddle wheel, converted into an elaborate riverboat home, and then brought from New Orleans and floated onto Sanibel’s Algiers Beach with great difficulty. The owners never lived in it. The bell, the anchor, and the ship’s wheel were saved before the Algiers was dismantled to make way for a city beach park.
- The photo hanging over the chest in the corner is of the cottage as it left Woodring Point. Notice the second story, which was removed because it was not historic and was unsafe.
- The shell collections are from three lighthouse keepers: Roscoe McLean, Clarence Rutland, and Bob England. The small shells in boxes in the lighthouse case were collected by Mae England from various postings.
MABEL CRITCHLEY

Mabel Critchley inherited the Burnap Cottage from her brother George Scoville. Scoville bought it from Hiram Burnap in 1917. Sam Woodring built the cottage as a fishing retreat in 1898 and sold it to Hiram Burnap. Mabel was the third owner. She lived in the bigger house next door and had visitors and locals stay in the cottage. Mabel was from Coney Island, New York, so had frequent visitors from the north. She was a close friend of Esperanza Woodring. After Mabel sold the big house and the cottage to the Brewster family, she spent her next four or five winters at Esperanza's house.

Another interesting point about the Burnap Cottage is that some of the scenes from the movie “Night Moves” with Gene Hackman were filmed at the cottage.
THE “ALGIERS”

In the early 1950s, Lathrop Brown and his wife Helen Hooper Brown spent vacations on Sanibel. She loved the shells and he would fish or shoot skeet as part of the Island Gun Club he created. Lathrop was a congressman from New York and Franklin Roosevelt’s best man and college buddy. Helen was the daughter of the wealthy Hooper family of Boston.

Both Lathrop and Helen loved unusual homes. They had previously bought a lighthouse on Cape Cod and a windmill on Long Island New York, fixed up to become a summerhouse or bed and breakfast, and then sold for a nice profit.

In 1958 they decided to buy 30 acres on Sanibel with 1,000 feet of beachfront. Then they purchased the Mississippi River ferryboat, “Algiers,” which had carried them between New Orleans and Algiers, Mississippi. They had it made seaworthy and then arranged for it to be delivered to Ft. Myers. There it was converted into a houseboat with two floors (decks), six bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms, servants’ quarters, two living rooms with terrazzo floors, a marble fireplace, a commercial kitchen which included six-oven, six-burner gas range, a refrigerator/freezer/ice-maker, a sink disposer, two dishwashers, a freezer unit, and a microwave. An elevator provided access between floors as well as main staircases on the decks. They had a swimming pool and a reflection pool off the boat.

A canal had to be cut from the gulf across the beach and into their land with a tail forming an “L” shape. A young engineer, Miles Scofield, took the job that lasted almost two years while the boat was being converted. When the day to move down the Caloosahatchee and around the island to the beach arrived, a fresh breeze came up, the channel filled with sand, and Scofield employed the fire department’s pumper to keep the channel open. Unfortunately, the truck overheated, the exhaust set the beach grasses on fire, and the pumper burned completely while folks watched the rising water lever. In spite of it all, the Browns were pleased.

The Browns were destined to never live there. Shortly after the move, in November 1959, Lathrop Brown died. Helen returned to Boston, and the “Algiers” was left to a caretaker with a shotgun and mean dog. After her death in 1979, the city purchased the boat and the land. In 1982 an auction took place to sell as many parts of the old ferry as possible. What was left was burned and the land turned into a park, the pond filled in to keep the alligators away, and only the street name, Algiers Lane left to remind us of the ferry’s history.

Was the “Algiers” the first beachfront “mega-mansion” on Sanibel, harkening of things to come?
THE SANIBEL SCHOOL FOR WHITE CHILDREN

This building was constructed in 1896 at the corner of what is now Bailey Road and Periwinkle Way. In 1903, it was moved to a location on Periwinkle Way and Purdy Road (which runs next to Tahitian Gardens shopping center). There it remained for over 100 years until the move to the Historical Village.

- The 1903 move up Periwinkle, then a sand road, was made with rollers underneath, a winch, and mule power.
- Between 1910 and 1919, it was used as a church on Sundays.
- Some time before 1930, the belfry disappeared. But the original bell is now back in the belfry, having been found in the brush on the property next to the school. Local tradition recounted that Frank Bailey donated it to the scrap metal effort during World War II.
- In the 1930s, a one-room addition was placed on the west (now north) side to accommodate grades 1 through 4. Older children through grade 8 were in the original building. More windows were added to allow more light. All of these features have been removed to return the building to its original one-room state.
- The school was segregated, as were all schools in the South, but both black and white parents petitioned to desegregate the new school being built in 1963. They succeeded, and that school became the first integrated school in Lee County.
- The School for White Children was vacated in 1964.
- The next year, the empty school became a theater and home. First known as the Pirate Playhouse, it became a venue for local, and later professional, talent for 40 years.

Please note:

- The student whose desk was closest to the stove was responsible for keeping the fire fed during cold days.
- The chalkboard stayed on the wall even through the 40 years as a theater.
- A play area in the corner was for younger children who had completed their lessons.
- Grades were separated in rows running from front to back.
- Lettie Nut, one of the first teachers, received $2.50 per student per semester.
- Teacher Nancy McCann wore bobby sox and taught baseball at recess.
- Teachers were allowed to punish misbehavior. Sam Bailey remembered sitting in the corner for his indiscretions.
Memories of the Sanibel School
By Christine Gault (Daughter of Mary Bell)

I remember the outhouse out in back of the school, how smelly and scary it was to me, a scrawny six-year-old. I remember the yawning hole into which I could fall if I wasn’t very careful. My memory has the corners draped in spider webs and big black spiders staring at me from their lair. Lizards scooted about. I tried very hard to hold my urge as long as I could to avoid that terror.

There wasn’t running water. To wash our hands we used water from a pump out back. There wasn’t a phone. No surprise, the only phone available to us when we moved to the island was down by the ferry landing.

My mother, Mary Bell, tells me that when we were deciding to move to Sanibel in 1953, she made sure there was a school but never thought to make sure there were bathrooms. Soon after our arrival she and Fanetta Stahlin, the mother of one of the two families that moved with us from Michigan, made the trip on the ferry to Punta Rassa. They drove past cattle ranches, orange groves, and gladiolus farms all the way to Ft. Myers. There they demanded that the school board provide bathrooms. The following year a brand new addition was added to the back of the school with two bathrooms – one for the boys and one for the girls. I remember the smell of those bathrooms – new cement. Since there were only about 15 children from first to the sixth grade, this was luxurious.

There were several teachers at first. Later I was told that teaching on Sanibel was considered a hardship assignment that didn’t attract many applicants. Mr. Combs, an islander, briefly taught us when there wasn’t anyone else available. Sometimes Mrs. Rhodes, our bus driver, substituted. I remember that she would sometimes declare nature study days and take us all to the beach. Once on our way from school she screeched the bus to a halt, lumbered out of the driver’s seat and out the door. A few minutes later she returned with a gopher tortoise that she set up side down on the floor by her feet. It was to be her family’s dinner.

I remember one day Linda Jack, the daughter of another family that moved to the island with us, went into insulin reaction. The teacher didn’t understand diabetes and didn’t understand the danger. My older sister Mary Jo did. She took Linda outside on Periwinkle, flagged down a car, and convinced the driver to take them to the Sea Horse Shop, our family’s business. My mother took the girls down to our house on the bay and managed to stabilize Linda’s blood sugar by dribbling orange juice into her mouth.
Miss McCann was the teacher who stayed. I remember she made us sing the same song every morning, “Good Morning to you, good morning to you. We’re all in our places with sunshiny faces. Oh this is the way to start a new day.” She made us line up and show her our hands and nails. If they weren’t satisfactory, we were sent off to clean them. Or maybe that was one of the earlier teachers.

Miss McCann loved baseball. Every year we had to listen to the World Series. At recess we all played softball. With so few kids, all of us were needed to eke out two teams. We played in a large open field next to the school. To start the game, Miss McCann tossed an upright bat to one of the captains. Fist over fist the two captains alternated until the one whose fist last fitted on the bat won the privilege of making the first choice of teammates. I was always the last to be chosen. Since I was the smallest kid, I was pitched grounders that I mostly missed anyway. I hate baseball.

I remember there was a big old stove near the door farthest away from the entrance – close to where the stove is today. My older sister, Mary Jo, remembers burning her arm on that stove. There was a huge blackboard across the wall behind the teacher’s desk. Of all the jobs listed on the board, cleaning the blackboard was my favorite. I loved how shiny and dark the naked board looked. My next choice was cleaning the felt erasers. I remember the muffled sound of the erasers as they knocked together and the clouds of dust that engulfed me.

I remember storing the lunches we brought with us every day in the refrigerator in the back room. Little red cartons of milk were delivered every day.

I remember a large metal swing set on the other side of the school from the ball field. The repetitious brushing of our feet across the ground wore shallow scrapes under each swing. After rains, it was often damp in those depressions. One day there was quite a hubbub because a large animal print was found there. It was thought to be a panther print. My memory is that someone made a plaster cast of it. A few days later, all the kids in the school were walking down Periwinkle to visit the annual shell fair. We were all very excited. The big boys went first as scouts. I have a memory that after we had gone quite a distance, they came running back to tell us they had seen the panther. We had to turn around. I was so disappointed. Maybe the boys were merely pranksters, but if so, they must have been mad at themselves because instead of spending the day at the shell fair, we spent it back at school.

Since there were so few of us in all six grades, we were split into basically two grades – first through third, and fourth through sixth. It must have been difficult for any teacher to address the needs of all of her students in that situation. And I don’t remember much of the actual lessons. I do know that although there were some weaknesses in my early education (such as spelling and punctuation); I learned a lot at that school. And what great memories it gave me.
MARY BELL
Mary Bell was the original owner of the Seahorse Shop and Cottages. Many recall that it had the most unusual little outdoor market atmosphere with a row of doors that opened back, leaving the entire front adrift with the sounds and winds of the sea. It provided an outlet for the shell jewelry made by her husband. Today the Seahorse Shop is the second-oldest retail shop on the island. Mary’s involvement in numerous pre-city issues aided in the incorporation of Sanibel.

MOZELLA JORDAN
Mozella Jordan was a crusader for equality in education for all island children. Along with Mary Bell, she was instrumental in the Sanibel School becoming the first integrated campus in Lee County. Mozella and her husband were the first African American couple to purchase property on the island. Mozella was dedicated to her family and church. She became Sanibel’s most popular caterer.
THE RUTLAND HOUSE

The Rutland House was built in 1913 by Charles and Dan Waldron for W.E. Swint, who purchased a portion of the Andrew Wiren homestead. The house was originally located on Periwinkle Way across from the Dairy Queen, about where the Periwinkle trailer park is now. The home is typical “Cracker” architecture, constructed of hard Florida pine and supported off the ground by concrete pillars made with beach sand. This would allow seawater to flow under it during a hurricane. The house was designed to stay cool during the hot summers. The high ceiling (approximately 12 feet high) and wide central hallway provided good air circulation, as did the large windows.

Clarence Rutland purchased the home in 1928 for $2,000 and lived in it until shortly before his death in 1982. The house was donated to the city of Sanibel and moved to its present location on Dunlop Road. It became the first historic building in the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village.

The Rutlands were farmers. Othman Rutland had emigrated from England and moved his family to Sanibel from northern Florida after the “Big Freeze” of 1896. The family rented the Wiren home. When Othman died in 1899, his widow Irene raised turkeys along with her five children. Irene later married the lighthouse keeper, Henry Shanahan, a widower with seven children. The blended Shanahan/Rutland family eventually included 13 children. Clarence Rutland was one of those children.

Clarence and his wife Ruth (Wiles) had no children of their own but everyone called him Uncle Clarence. He was a jack-of-all-trades, a farmer, a fishing guide and a contractor. He grew coconuts and Key limes on his land.

Following are some items of interest in the Rutland House:

- The front room (actually a bedroom) has many displays about the Calusa; note the mound house.
- In the parlor, please note the photographs. Clarence and Ruth Rutland are smiling for the camera. Ruth was ill for some time and died 30 years before Clarence.
- The explosion of the Battleship Maine in Havana Harbor in 1898 gave the United States an excuse to go to war with Spain and led to Teddy Roosevelt’s fame. News of this explosion was telegraphed from Havana to Punta Rassa (the telegraph line crossed Sanibel). The actual telegraph machine is on display in the Bailey General Store at the Historical Village.
• Robert E. Lee, whose birthday was celebrated in the South, is pictured in profile. The Civil War generals (faces attached to pre-drawn bodies) are pictured in the corner.

• On the piano are the photographs of the Dickeys of Captiva. Mrs. Dickey was an accomplished pianist (her teacher studied under Franz Liszt) who had this piano delivered to their Captiva winter home before the bridge and ferry.

• The two-drawer chest belonged to the Eyber family of Captiva whose daughter was married to Andrew Kinzie of the Kinzie Brothers’ Steamship Line (and later car ferry). Kinzie’s daughter, Charlotte, married Duane White, a city of Sanibel “founding father.”

• The claw-legged table is from the Bailey family and the phonograph on it came from a home on Coconut Drive.

• The rocking chair was Clarence Rutland’s, the only item in the house that belonged to the Rutland family.

• In the dining room display case is a chocolate set which belonged to Sam and Francis Bailey’s grandmother, Mary Beers Bailey. Above the case are her sketches of her childhood home in Virginia. The dining room table and chairs and buffet came to the museum via the ‘Tween Waters Inn and before that from the Grays of Bristol, Virginia, who had shipped it to their home on Captiva in 1915.

• The glass-fronted china cabinet was bought from Sears Roebuck in 1924 for the Mayer home, Shore Haven, also purchased from Sears. The rose-patterned china belonged to Ruth Rutland.

• The photographs on the walls are from Elise Lilley Fuller’s collection and were taken in 1910 before and following the devastating hurricane of that year. She is the little girl petting the last deer on Sanibel. Both of them were hurricane survivors.

• In the bedroom, the furniture (beds, table, quilt rack and commode) came from the “Club House,” a fishing and hunting lodge on Woodring Point that was built in 1908 by a group of Cincinnati businessmen. It is said their wives were uncomfortable with the rough style of living and the independent ways of Sam Woodring, who was not above bending the law. Some of the ladies persuaded their husbands to build homes on the more “cultured” beach side near The Matthews Hotel (now the Island Inn). In the room is a Herman Rausch 1888 sewing machine, operated with a foot treadle. It cost $50 when it was newly purchased. For the same amount, a porch could be added to a home.

• Under the bed is a chamber pot for use by those who were unwilling to brave the dark and the mosquitoes on the way to the outhouse or privy. Colloquial names are frequently given to this functional equipment. One favorite is “guzundah,” so named because it “guzundah” the bed. For the particular, there is also a wooden box with a set of lids to contain the contents.
Mosquito nets were absolutely essential in the days before mosquito control – and so was any kind of spray that would deter the pests. Study the photograph near the sewing machine and note its title, “Grandfather’s Survival Kit.” When people could afford it, screens were placed on every window. Still, there were so many mosquitoes covering the screens, a person couldn’t see out of them.

In the kitchen, imagine having to cook, clean and care for your family with the kinds of equipment on display. Is a “crock-pot” a convenience? Only if you plug it in! The equivalent in this kitchen is the “Fireless Cooker,” which has stones that were heated up before preparing the casserole. And the cordless vacuum cleaner is heavy, awkward and no better than a broom.

The icebox (don’t call it a refrigerator) might not have consumed much energy, but how long did a block of ice last? By the way, Bailey’s Store did NOT deliver ice. One had to go to the store, collect the ice and get it back home before it melted. Ice first came to the island with the “run boats” that made the “run” through Charlotte Harbor and San Carlos Bay, picking up fish being stored in the scattered fish houses.

The Hoosier cabinet was a convenient workstation, as was the table and basin by the pump that brought water into the house from the cistern.

The wash tub, wash boards, and stand would have been left outside on the porch or in the yard where clothes could be hung on bushes or lines to dry naturally. Mary Bell recalled washing clothes inside (because of the mosquitoes) and dressed in not much more than underwear because of the heat. When it was time to hang the clothes outside on the line, she would don a long-sleeved shirt and long pants to help ward off the mosquitoes.

The cook stove burned wood and has a warming area above the four burners. It also would have been equipped with a tub alongside for heating water.
THE CALUSA
Submitted by Alex Werner

The front room of Rutland House is dedicated to historical info about the Calusa, Native Americans who lived on Sanibel.

Where did they come from?
Probably from Central America/Yucatan. Land bridges during the last Ice Age as well as water fluctuations in the Gulf of Mexico allowed for canoe exploration of Florida.

What did they do?
Created small villages along the coast and inland. They fished, hunted small game, did light farming and worked with the natural resources present (shells/native wood) to build their homes and, later, shell mounds. They traded with other tribes (wood carvings/pottery/medicines from plants/seed), and also dealt with tribute and ransom, protecting their territory from other tribes and eventually from the Spanish.

Where was their territory?
From Charlotte Harbor, called Tampa, to the Keys and the east and west coasts of Southern Florida.

How many were there and what did they look like?
No one can really tell but probably in the thousands. The men were tall and handsome; the women were above average height and considered good looking. They all had long black hair and honey-colored skin.

What happened to them?
They eventually died of European illnesses, and the remnants of the tribe were absorbed into the Seminoles/Mikasuki/and Cuban Indians.

What was their relationship with the Spanish?
Very poor and hostile, since the Spanish wanted to convert them to Christianity and establish colonies in their territory.

Are there any artifacts or remains of the tribe?
Shell mounds have been discovered throughout Southwest Florida, as well as skeletons/bones, wood carvings/pottery shards.
Between 3,000 and 5,000 years ago, Redfish Pass and Blind Pass were not there. The 1926 hurricane opened them up. The islands are constantly shifting and changing. In 1895, Frank Cushing began digging Indian mounds on Marco Island, about 40 miles south of Sanibel as the crow flies; he found the Calusa Cat, a wooden artifact now in the Smithsonian.

To learn more, Google “Calusa,” read “The Sea Shell Islands” by Elinor Dormer, go to Pineland on Pine Island and walk the trails and old canals, go to Useppa Island and visit their museum, or call the Collier County History Museum and ask about their exhibits and those from Marco Island.
HOMESTEADING

Prior to 1884, the government didn’t want anyone on the island during the Indian Wars. (The second Seminole War was in 1836.) In those times, there was no “law” closer than Key West. The government singled out the Spanish Indians (part Indian, part Spanish), rounded them up, and relocated them in Arkansas. The islands drew runaways, pirates, and refugees from around the world. Esperanza Woodring told Mary Bell that Black Caesar’s well was behind the Sea Horse Shops. There was a shark factory there too. They used the fins for glue, tanned the hides, and used the livers for oil.

Some people tried to raise castor beans (some are still around) for oil. Some tried their luck at raising sisal for rope and twine. All of these ventures were unsuccessful. Jake Summerlin was a cattle rustler, rounding up not only strays but also some cattle owned by ranchers. His name has been sanitized over the years and a road is named after him.

Because of all the cattle trade with Havana at the time, an International Telegraph line was installed between Cuba and Punta Rassa, crossing Sanibel at the lighthouse. (It was on this line that the country first learned about the sinking of the Maine.)

Once the lighthouse was built in 1884, things changed. The lighthouse was built opposite Punta Rassa because it was then a big seaport. The lighthouse was at first lit by oil, then in WWII by gas, and finally was electrified in the 1960s. Because of power outages, it was not lit during much of the 1970s. People kept trying to keep it lit – which it is now. In 1972, the Coast Guard proposed discontinuing the lighthouse, but feedback provided by local residents and mariners convinced them to keep it lit. The city of Sanibel assumed management of the lighthouse property, except the tower, in 1982, and city personnel were allowed to live in the dwellings rent-free in exchange for helping to maintain and supervise the grounds.

The property was transferred from the Coast Guard to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2000. The BLM accepted an application from the city of Sanibel for custody of the property in 2004; after a lengthy delay, the lighthouse was officially transferred to the city during a ceremony held April 21, 2010. Using a $50,000 state historic preservation grant and money from its beach parking fund, Sanibel City Council awarded a $269,563 contract to Razorback LLC in May 2013 to restore the lighthouse. During the summer of 2013, the contractors replaced sections of deteriorated steel on the tower and then sanded and painted the exterior.

Continued on next page
The homesteaders came in 1888. They had to be 21 or the head of a household, agree to stay five years, cultivate the land, and pay a small fee -- $1.60 per acre. There was also a requirement that a homesteader never raised arms against the United States. As many potential homesteaders had served in the Confederacy during the Civil War, often land was homesteaded in the wife’s name.

In 1889 there were 21 houses on the island, 40 families, and 100 people. By 1980 there were 3,363 permanent residents, and by 1990 there were 5,500. Temporary residents and visitors staying in condos are estimated to boost the population to 30,000.

Laetitia Nutt, a woman of means from Kentucky, accompanied her husband to battle, along with her three daughters, throughout the Civil War. She wrote a journal published as “Courageous Journey.” After the war, the family moved to Louisiana, where her husband was an attorney. After his death, she lost most everything and decided to move to Sanibel. She came with her mother-in-law, brother, and three daughters. She was the first postmaster and also brought some culture to the island. Her daughters were educated and were teachers in the area. They also were very civic-minded, having founded two hospitals in Ft. Myers and the Sanibel Community Center on Periwinkle Way (they donated the land for the Community Center). Only one of the three girls ever married, as none of the suitors was good enough for Laetitia.

Oliver Bowen and family were the first white people to settle at Wulfert. He served in the South Navy, was a good seaman, and later built boats. When delivering a boat to South America, he met his wife and brought her here. He died before the five-year homesteading period was up, but she carried on.

Reverend Barnes was a minister from Kentucky. He spent 20 years in India, where his two daughters and one son were born. When he returned, he homesteaded 160 acres. He built the Church of the Gospels on the shore, hoping to attract sailors when they heard the singing of hymns. A hurricane in 1910 destroyed it. He built a lodge called The Sisters, which later became Casa Ybel. Thistle Lodge was built as a wedding present for one of his daughters, who met and married one of the guests of the lodge.

Mary Bailey was a widow with three sons who had a failing tobacco business. Frank and brother Ernest were partners in the business here. They were not homesteaders, but Ernest optioned six acres in 1894. They farmed and formed The Sanibel Packing Company and general store. Frank was known as the hard worker. He was everything to this island at the time. He was the Justice of the Peace, he extended credit to poor farmers, and was known as a very good man to all the islanders. There was a big freeze in 1898, but they worked, especially Frank, and survived and prospered.
SOME HISTORIC FAMILIES AND EARLY ISLANDERS

Woodring Family – Settled on the island in 1888 (Woodring Point). Flora Woodring was the first white child born on Sanibel.

Laetitia Nutt and Family – Settled on the island in 1888 (Gray Gables on Gulf)

Rutland Family – Settled on Sanibel in 1888

Capt. William Reed and Family – Settled on the island (San Carlos Bay) in 1888. William Reed, Sr. was postmaster in 1894. His son Will, Jr. took over the job in 1895 and was postmaster for 40 years.

Rev. George Barnes – Came to the island in 1889 and later brought families from Kentucky to Sanibel. He was pastor of the first church on Sanibel, Church of the Four Gospels.

Henry Shanahan – Settled in Sanibel in 1890 and became the lighthouse keeper in 1892.

Rev. George Gatewood – An itinerant preacher who came to Sanibel in the 1890s. He used the Burnap Cottage to hold church services.

Doane Family – Settled in the Wulfert area in the 1890s. They owned the west Sanibel packing house and operated a post office that covered the western part of the island.

Doyle Family – Were on the island in the 1890s. They sold the eastern packing house on Mathews Wharf to the Baileys in 1899.

Bailey Family – Mary Beers Bailey and her three sons, Harry, Frank, and Ernest, arrived from Kentucky in 1895. They became farmers and store owners.

Matthews Family – Will and Hallie Matthews and their family came in the 1890s. They hailed from Kentucky.

Kinzie Family – Came to Sanibel in the early 1900s. They operated a ferry business and opened up a new ferry dock in 1934.
Some Profiles on Early Islanders

Daisy Mayer – Daisy was an “early islander” winter resident in the 1920s. She and her husband, Ross, lived in a Sears Roebuck kit house that was on San Carlos Bay. They called their Sears kit home “Shore Haven.” Daisy loved to fish, and she could often be seen on the fishing pier behind her house. She also spent a lot of time with her nieces and nephew who lived next door. These children had lost their mother at an early age and were living with their father and a housekeeper in another Sears kit home called “Morning Glories.”

Leisure time activities for the Mayer family included swimming, boating, fishing, and playing board games. The Mayer children found plenty of things to keep them busy, including trying to stuff their little brother up the fireplace. Morning Glories had an attic and the children remember sleepovers and playing up in the attic.

Nancy McCann – Nancy was the schoolteacher who taught at the Sanibel School in the 1950s. She wore bobby sox rolled down over her pastel two-inch stacked heels. She was a big baseball fan and was the pitcher for her students during recess time. She had a system for her students when they were “up to bat.” If you were a little kid, you got five strikes. If you were a little bigger, you got four strikes. If you were big enough to play regular baseball, you got three strikes. The sixth graders always played in the outfield. When the World Series was being played, Miss McCann would let her students listen to the games on the radio during class time.

Charlotta Matthews – “Miss Charlotta” operated the Tea Room next to the Bailey Store from 1927 to 1934. Her mother, Hallie Matthews, owned The Matthews Hotel (now the Island Inn). Charlotta, who was called “Chebum” by her nephews and “Scooter” by others, had a lot of energy. She not only helped her mother at The Matthews but also prepared and brought cakes, pies, and sandwiches over to the Tea Room. The Tea Room was the center for sharing gossip and a gathering place for those waiting for the ferry or an order to be filled at Bailey’s Store. Charlotta was one of the few women who drove at the time. Mostly, men would drive their wives to the store and tearoom. A few of the men built a miniature golf course out back to pass the time while their wives shopped and visited.

Miss Charlotta also handled the bookkeeping for the hotel and drove the hotel’s old wooden station wagon over to the ferry landing to pick up hotel guests. When her sister, Annie Mead Matthews Bailey (Frank Bailey’s wife and mother to Francis, John, and Sam) died at an early age, Miss Charlotta helped care for the three boys. She was a most respected and hardworking early islander.

Frank Bailey – Ernest came to the island in 1994, followed his mother and two brothers, Harry and Ernest. Once he arrived, he did not leave the island for 18 months as the family sought to become established and build a home. Frank farmed as much as 600 acres and purchased the Sanibel Packing Company in the late 1890s. The business packed and sent
Sanibel tomatoes were highly prized and in great demand until the 1926 hurricane ended commercial agriculture on Sanibel. When the Bailey Store was rebuilt after the hurricane, it carried groceries, water, hardware, clothing, and farming supplies for truck gardens. Frank worked with his three sons, Francis, John and Sam, who coined the motto, “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.” The store at the Historical Village was in operation on San Carlos Bay, near where the causeway now enters the island, from 1927 until 1966. Frank Bailey loved Sanibel and was most generous to islanders and island projects.

**Francis Bailey**, Frank’s son – Born in 1921, he returned to Sanibel after college and after serving in the Army. Beginning in 1952, he joined his father managing the Sanibel Packing Co., known as Bailey’s General Store. He bought out his two brothers, Sam and John, and was a fixture in the store until his death at age 92.

**Henry Shanahan** – Henry Shanahan was the second lighthouse keeper on Sanibel. He was born in Ireland and came to Sanibel in the late 1880s. He was a short, strong man who always had a clay pipe jutting from his mouth. After working as the assistant lighthouse keeper, he applied for the head job when the first keeper resigned. The Lighthouse Board, at first, refused to appoint him to the position because he could not read or write. But Henry said he would not continue as an assistant. The board then waived the educational requirements and Henry became one of the most able and meticulous lighthouse keepers ever to serve on Sanibel. He and his wife raised 13 children. His family lived in the keeper’s quarters in “happy confusion” for 14 years. Several of his sons were assistant lighthouse keepers and two sons, Henry and Eugene Shanahan, followed in their father’s footsteps.
SANIBEL’S PIONEER WOMEN
(Notes by Gayle Pence and Nanette Laurion)

1884–1894 – The Early Years and Homesteading
In 1880, Sanibel Island was opened to homesteading. There were few requirements, and if one could withstand the sweltering heat, relentless mosquitoes, lack of most creature comforts, and almost total isolation, it was just about bearable. Quite simply, to be given 160 acres of land, one would have to be at least 21 years old, be able to work the land for five years, and have never borne arms against the United States Government. Since most of the island men had gone to war, a large number of the homesteads were registered under the names of women. The Woodrings were the first homesteaders. The population grew to 120, and the Barnes family built the first hotel and called it “The Sisters.”

ANNA WOODRING
Anna Woodring and her family homesteaded on Sanibel in 1895. At the age of 44, after 25 years of marriage, she was widowed. At that time, she became the sole provider for her five children. She established a boarding house in the family home and called it “The Woodring House.” It catered to fishermen, tourists, and “drummers.” The Woodring House was Sanibel’s first lodging establishment.

JEAN BARNES
Jean Barnes and her husband built and Jean operated “The Sister’s Hotel” (today’s Casa Ybel). It was greatly through her efforts that the first church was erected on hotel property. Jean was married to the Reverend Barnes. They moved here from Kentucky, encouraging many others to follow.

JENNIE DOANE
Jennie Doane, as postmistress of Wulfert, shipped out more than 1,000 crates of fruits and vegetables a week. As an advocate for women’s suffrage, she was both opinionated and strong willed. One of her opinions was that a woman had the right to dress according to the job she held. Jennie wore pants under her skirt, which was considered rather “fashion forward” for the time. Uninvited guests reported being served “six walnuts rolling around on a plate.”

JANE MATHEWS
Jane was a single-minded woman who saw life on this rather remote island as both an adventure and an opportunity. She homesteaded 160 acres. Jane erected two piers: Mathew’s Wharf, a commercial pier on the bay that made it possible for the ferry to dock and supplies to be delivered, and a pleasure pier on her own gulf-front property.
that featured both a bathhouse and a pavilion. Jane lived next door to Hallie Matthews. Although they shared the same last name, they were not related. Jane paid to take her meals at Hallie’s. Others followed and Hallie found herself in the home restaurant business. When Jane died, Hallie inherited Jane’s house through a trade with Jane’s niece, and The Matthews hotel was established.

**1895-1910 – Great Expectations**
Sanibel’s reputation as a farming community continued and Sanibel tomatoes, considered to be just about the best, were served in upscale restaurants across the country. Land was plentiful and in 1896, with the population at 350, the first Sanibel School was built. The Spanish American War raged and in 1899, Frank Bailey founded the Sanibel Packing Company.

**HALLIE MATTHEWS**
Hallie was a Sanibel homesteader who built three houses directly on the beach. Folks arriving to enjoy the island “flavor” would be allowed to stay in one of the cottages as long as they agreed to take their meals with Hallie. Hallie, a rather “no nonsense” lady, was admired for her determination and business savvy. She is credited with establishing The Matthews hotel, which later became The Island Inn. Hallie was grandmother to Francis, John, and Sam Bailey.

**LAETITIA NUTT**
Laetitia and her daughters were the island’s first teachers and full-time residents. They founded and ran the private Sanibel Home School. Laetitia’s Homesteading Certificate, in her name alone, is dated 1895 and signed by President Grover Cleveland. Laetitia ran a boarding house in her home, The Gables. She was also the island’s first postmistress. Laetitia was regarded as strong, positive, and resourceful. It was the Nutt family who donated the land for the Community House.

**1911-1928 – SUN AND STORMS**
The Kinzie Brothers started the ferry service to Sanibel in 1926. A year later, Charlotta Matthews opened her tea room at the ferry landing, and the first Shell Fair was held.
ANNIE MEADE MATTHEWS BAILEY
Annie Meade Matthews, a schoolteacher, was the wife of Frank Bailey and mother to Francis, John, and Sam Bailey. Annie was actively involved in the Community Association and was a devoted member of the Community Church. She died young, and her sons remember her with great affection and pride.

CHARLOTTA MATTHEWS
Affectionately dubbed “Chebum” by her nephews, Francis, John, and Sam, she established and ran Miss Charlotta’s Tea Room at the ferry landing. Charlotta wore numerous hats throughout her days in Florida, including that of manager of the day-to-day operation of The Matthews, which later became the Island Inn. By her family, she is most remembered for her devotion to all of them before and after the untimely death of her sister, Annie Meade Bailey.

1929-1954 – Depression and War
Remarkable changes occurred on this tiny barrier island. In 1939, the population had decreased to just 100. Electric service came to Sanibel in 1942 and was followed by the founding of the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge in 1945. The island was heavily impacted by the 1949 hurricane that brought 163 mph winds. Once again, our island sisters firmly planted their hats on their heads and persevered.

ALICE O’BRIEN
Alice O’Brien (born in 1891) was from St. Paul. Her family was in the lumber business and she would arrive on Captiva aboard her yacht “The Wanigan,” so named for a trunk used in lumber camps to store anything that just might be wanted again. According to her family, Alice was an astute businesswoman, adventurer, sailor, philanthropist, fisherwoman, and animal lover. She supported the early organization of the Sanibel and Captiva Island Association. She was a dear friend of “Ding” Darling and his wife and shared their concerns regarding the negative impact of beach erosion and red tide on our islands. In the early 1960s, she provided the much-needed seed money for the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation. In WWI, she was a mechanic and Red Cross ambulance driver. Alice died in 1962 while on her way to visit the Darlings.

ESPERANZA WOODRING
Esperanza was the wife of Sam Woodring, Jr. and came to Woodring Point in 1917 at the age of 16. She remained in the same house until her death in 1992. Her husband’s death in 1942 left her with five-year-old Ralph to rear on her own. She continued to fish commercially and became one of the island’s most sought-after fishing guides. An avid reader, she was self-educated and had a love of the area and its natural environment. Esperanza was determined and resourceful. Her hard work allowed her to retain the Woodring homestead on the bay and to purchase additional property on Periwinkle Way where the Bait Box is located today.
1946-1959 – Growing Again
For nearly 20 years, Sanibel was somewhat forgotten. After the war, people with leisure time and money to spend discovered its fishing, shelling, and sandy beaches. Small family-owned motels sprang up. The Kinzie ferries were back on schedule, telephone lines were strung, and Sanibel made an attempt to shed its unofficial title as “Mosquito Capital of the World.”
MARY BELL
Mary Bell was the original owner of the Seahorse Shop and Cottages. Many recall that it had the most unusual little outdoor market atmosphere with a row of doors that opened back, leaving the entire front adrift with the sounds and winds of the sea. It provided an outlet for the shell jewelry made by her husband. Today the Seahorse Shop is the second-oldest retail shop on the island. Mary’s involvement in numerous pre-city issues aided in the incorporation of Sanibel.

PRISCILLA MURPHY
Priscilla Murphy established the island’s first real estate company. At the time, Lee County was forever changing the name of Sanibel’s main thoroughfare. Priscilla found the names inappropriate for this island paradise and rather forcefully suggested to the county that the name be changed to Periwinkle Way in celebration of the vibrant flowers that grew wild along its roadside.

MOZELLA JORDAN
Mozella Jordan was a crusader for equality in education for all island children. Along with Mary Bell, she was instrumental in the Sanibel School becoming the first integrated campus in Lee County. Mozella and her husband were the first African American couple to purchase property on the island. Mozella was dedicated to her family and church. She became Sanibel’s most popular caterer.

DOROTHY STEARNS
Dorothy Stearns was a remarkable wife, mother, and grandmother. She was an avid boater and could captain a craft with the best of them. Dorothy was a dedicated sheller and shell crafter, publishing books on the subjects. Her family remembers that her home was filled with shell crafts. She was an accomplished, self-taught artist and the inspiration for the naming of Gramma Dot’s restaurant. She baked the pies and cakes for the restaurant. Dot was involved in the organization of the Shell Fair and had her own booth. Dorothy often used tarpon scales to decorate mirrors. This fun-loving woman enjoyed going out dancing, exercised daily, and was a phenomenal marksman and avid fisherman. Her family shares a smile in remembering a time when, at over 90 years old, she asked, “Do you think that I could pass for 80?”

The 1960s and forward – Island Life Changes Forever
Much to the dismay of most islanders, 1963 saw the opening of a causeway that linked the island to the mainland. Soon after this, Lee County revealed its plans for Sanibel. This plan included high-rises, increased commercialism, and a population of about 90,000. In 1974, the residents of Sanibel decided to take control of their own destiny, designed a mission statement, and voted to incorporate. The city of Sanibel was born.
ZEE BUTLER
In 1974, Zee Butler chaired “Sanibel Tomorrow,” an organization that was dedicated to incorporation. She became the first female mayor and served in both 1974 and 1978. Zee is remembered for her exceptional approach to problem solving and her great stamina. She was ever watchful over city government. In his eulogy Porter Goss remembered her for saving the beaches from “man’s improvements,” protecting the wetlands, and her tireless involvement in the creation of Sanibel’s bike paths.

ELINORE DORMER
Elinore Dormer moved to Sanibel in 1924. She was a noted island historian and is credited with coining the phrase “Old Town Sanibel” in reference to the area around the Seahorse Shop on the island’s east end. As a member of the Historical Committee, she contributed to the drafting of the city’s comprehensive land use plan. Elinore was instrumental in petitioning the federal government for de-segregation in 1964 and was involved in the founding of the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village. She is the author of “The Seashell Islands,” considered to be the most definitive history of the islands.

EMMY LU LEWIS
Emmy Lu Lewis was known as “the great lady of island conservation.” She and her husband began wintering on the island in 1942. She was instrumental in the establishment of St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church and was an active member of the “Ding” Darling Committee (which later became the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation). Emmy Lu was its first chairperson.

We offer thanks to the many island women who embraced this almost forgotten little barrier island and battled through hardships and nearly unbearable circumstances just to call it home.

Here’s to the years when rare shells rolled in endlessly, water was collected in cisterns, mosquitoes embedded themselves in window screens, Periwinkle Way was a dirt road, and the people of Sanibel had the foresight to preserve and protect its unique environment.
SANIBEL’S BEST KNOWN SITES

THE COMMUNITY HOUSE (1928) – The Community House was truly a community project. It started in 1927 on land donated by Cordelia and Lettie Nutt and was completed in 1928 after generous contributions from Sam Woodring and Frank Bailey. Sam provided the seed money and Frank got folks to donate materials. Donating his time as well as money, Curtis Perry, an artist who lived at Island Inn (then known as The Matthews), visited every home on the island seeking subscriptions. Frank Martin, a local carpenter, was responsible for the building. Frank Bailey supervised the construction and served as treasurer. The two had worked together the year before constructing the “new” Bailey Store in 1926.

In 1935, a serious hurricane damaged the roof. Since money was scarce during the Depression, local residents repaired the roof.

Island shell shows were first held at The Matthews but were moved to the Community House in 1936 and called the “Shell Fair.” Dr. Louise Perry, who believed that Sanibel people should help one another and thus took no money for her services, was instrumental in organizing the shell fairs, shell exhibits, and other affairs at the Community House.

Some of the activities at the Community House included evening dances, school functions, tea parties, community plays, and holiday celebrations.

THE CAUSEWAY (1963; replaced 2007) – By 1959, Sanibel and Captiva had become so popular that four ferries could hardly handle the traffic. Cars were lined up for more than a mile to board the boats, which could accommodate only a few automobiles at a time. There was repeated talk of a bridge. Hugo Lindgren, a businessman from Jamestown, New York, offered to finance the bonds for the bridge, provided it terminated on land he owned on Sanibel at Shell Harbor. The Lee County Commission approved this idea, which proved to be controversial. An opposition group took its cause to the Florida Supreme Court – only to lose. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others warned about the impact of a bridge on the natural environment, but the Lee Country government saw the bridge as a commercial venture. The Fish and Wildlife Service recommended the roadway be entirely supported by pilings, but this was rejected as being too expensive. The adopted plan provided for three connection bridges and the dredging of the bay bottom to provide fill for two islands where the water was quite shallow. The islands altered bay life, the bridges, and island life.

When it was completed in 1963, the causeway cost $5 million. It paid for itself many times over with two-thirds of the income going to Lee County, which was charged with maintaining the bridges. The causeway opened on May 26, 1963, the date of the last ferry run.
Over the years, drivers complained about the delay caused when the bridge opened for boat traffic, and boaters were unhappy about long waits in between the drawbridge openings. But it was damage from constant and ever-increasing traffic, the relentless wave action, and lack of maintenance that eventually led to Lee County’s insistence that the causeway be rebuilt. Again, there was opposition; many Sanibel residents believed the first causeway could be rehabilitated. The county prevailed and a new causeway, with a high fixed-span bridge to eliminate the drawbridge, was completed in 2007 at a cost of $50 million.

THE SANIBEL COMMUNITY CHURCH (“The Little Brown Church”) – The Reverend George Barnes, the “mountain preacher” from Kentucky, first visited Sanibel in 1888 while on a vacation. His houseboat ran aground on a sandbar off the beach. Believing this was God’s plan, the Barnes family filed homestead claims near where they landed. Shortly after building a home, Rev. Barnes built a church, known as the Church of the Four Gospels, which reportedly held 200 congregants. This building was severely damaged in the hurricane of 1910 and very little was salvageable. Some church pews were rescued and have been incorporated into the present church on Periwinkle Way, next door to Jerry’s Shopping Center.

After the hurricane destroyed their church, the community worshipped at the School for White Children on Sundays. In 1914, the majority of the churchgoers were Methodists, so the denomination was organized with an elderly English minister named George E. Day, and plans were drawn up for a new church.

The Mitchell family donated land for a new church building, and money was raised from food and bake sales. Construction was underway by 1917, with materials being shipped to the Wulfert boat landing and carted to the church site down the sandy, rutted road by mule-drawn wagons. Islanders donated the labor, and the job was finished in 1919.

Church services were held only once a month when the pastor came from Fort Myers. Sunday school for all ages was held on the other Sundays. By 1925, the church was out of debt but then the hurricane of 1926 altered the island, its population, and the church. With the good topsoil being washed away, most of the farm families left Sanibel. With fewer members, church services were held only when a minister came from the mainland.

In 1938, Reverend Alexander Linn, a Presbyterian Missions worker, was charged with re-opening the church on Sanibel since the Methodists had no plans to do so. Services were held year-round starting in 1950. In the mid-1950s, there was discussion about building a new church, but the Methodist Church agreed to sell the building and land.
More land was purchased for a parking lot. New transepts were added as well as a cement front porch, new front doors, a new pump, and ceiling lights.

The “Little Brown Church” is now Sanibel Community Church.

**THE WULFERT AREA** – Today the area is known as the Sanctuary Golf Club, but at the end of the 19th century, this land supported a small farming community with some interesting characters. The Calusa had been in this area many centuries before, but the first white settlers were Oliver Fellows Bowen and his wife, Mary Dos Santos. Bowen had been a Mississippi River pilot, a pilot for the Confederate River Defense Force, a fresco and sign painter, a resident of Venezuela and, finally, an unsuccessful farmer on Sanibel. Mary, who was his third wife, once remarked, “The only time Oliver ever made any money on Sanibel was when he killed a snake and sold the skin!”

It was Mason Dwight who gave his name to “Dwight Settlement” in 1897. His farming partner was Thomas Holloway, whose house was moved and renamed “The White Heron House.”

Jennie and Lewis Doane farmed, held séances, were rumored to be starting a spiritualist community, kept their coffins in the parlor, and took care of the mail. Lewis delivered and Jennie was the postmaster. When the postal inspector came by to assign a name to the village, she told him “Doane.” Not unexpectedly, Mason Dwight said his own name. Eventually the post officer named the community “Wulfert.” Ahead of her time, Jennie wore calf-length skirts over PANTS!

Josiah Dinkins and his wife, possibly a former fat lady in a circus, put in an extensive orchard and carried on a continuous spat with neighbor Father Stahley. The Gibsons moved in on New Year’s Day, 1900.

Eventually, there would be five generations of Decatur/Gibson/Stokes Sanibelians. Robert Bowman, another settler, never finished his homestead claim but left his name on the beach.

A school was built in 1902 for 19 students, and the Fort Myers Press claimed Wulfert was “an up and coming” town.

Wulfert recovered from the hurricane of 1921, but when the devastating hurricane of 1926 wiped out another crop, the “Florida Boom” came to an end for Wulfert. Land was eventually sold for a fraction of its earlier value, buildings were abandoned, and only a few trees from the original groves remained. Surveys in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed some lime trees, papayas, a fading roadway, and some dumping areas.
There were also some surprises – a large concrete cistern, a wooden-sided well only a foot or two deep, the rusting remains of farm equipment, and the remnants of the Gibson packinghouse. The Calusa had been there long before. A careful archaeological survey found a crescent-shaped shell impoundment, possibly used to capture fish, turtles, and/or more shells. A small area of habitation was also found.

Oddly enough, an Indian shell mound excavated in the area produced 19th century enamelware, 20th century plastic, and on top of it all, a golf ball!
FOUR OLD SANIBEL HOMES

THE WHITE HERON HOUSE — This home is now located near Blind Pass on Sanibel-Captiva Road. It appears to be a farmhouse, which it was when it was built over 100 years ago. Thomas Holloway, a partner with Josiah Dinkins in the Wulfert farming community, owned this home and acres of vegetable fields and citrus groves during the thriving first 25 years of the 20th century. After the hurricane of 1926 and the subsequent “bust,” farmers fled to the mainland. Holloway’s property, a stretch of land across the top of the Wulfert area peninsula, was sold to John Oster. Land in the southeast was sold to Clarence Chadwick. When Oster wanted to move this house to the land he owned on Clam Bayou, Chadwick refused to let him cross the Chadwick land he owned on Clam Bayou, claiming the road he’d travel on was private. Oster found evidence to the contrary. The feud was on. The house was raised and put on a flatbed to be hauled by a tractor led by Oster. Chadwick, in his limousine, had the driver block the road. Picture two men cursing at each other and threatening to call in the law. As the tractor got closer and closer to the limo, the young driver panicked and, in spite of Chadwick’s orders, drove the car off the road and into a tomato field. Oster moved his house, renamed it White Heron, and built a small cluster of cottages around it.

Later the house was owned by a descendant of Wild Bill Hickok. The cottages were sold off as the land surrounding White Heron was developed for homes. Still later, White Heron was placed on the city’s historic register. A large addition was built to the rear and a pool installed. Recently the home has changed hands and the new owners have restored and remodeled it, staying true to the historic nature of this lovely old home.

GRAY GABLES — The Nutt family home is the oldest residence on Sanibel. Laetitia Ashmore Nutt was the widow of Louisiana state senator, Confederate captain, and attorney, Leroy Nutt. In 1889, she brought her three grown daughters, her brother, and her mother-in-law to Sanibel and was granted a 160-acre homestead. The family built Gray Gables, their charming home, on beachfront land with an eye to using it as a boarding school or boarding house. All the Nutt sisters (Cordie, Lettie, and Nanny) and their mother taught school in Lee County. Ernest Bailey stayed in The Gables (as it was known then) when he first explored Sanibel as a place to relocate with his widowed mother and brothers. Laetitia Nutt was an un-reconstructed Southerner, a stern disciplinarian, and the backbone of the islands’ cultural scene. The Nutt family gave land for the Community House, donated generously to Jones-Walker Hospital (known as Gulf Coast Hospital today), and proudly gave Laetitia’s name to the local chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy.

Their home was placed on the city’s historic register and moved closer to the road and family cemetery. It has been extensively remodeled on the inside. The present owner is the great-grand niece of Laetitia Nutt and has published her aunt’s Civil War diary and developed a “history hall” at Gray Gables.
THE COOPER HOUSE – This home was built by George Madison Cooper, a man who wore many hats in his lifetime. He was the owner of a lumber mill near the Caloosahatchee on Yellow Fever Creek, a merchant with a small fleet of steamers that traded locally and, in Honduras, a storeowner, a farmer and an early homesteader on Sanibel. Cooper’s home was constructed on the corner of what is now Periwinkle and Tarpon Bay Road almost as soon as he claimed his homestead. He then built a bigger two-story home in 1891.

Cooper was the island’s mailman. He would travel to Pine Island, collect the mail, and put it on his wife’s sewing machine when he returned to Sanibel. Islanders would collect their letters and packages at the Cooper home. The home is located near today’s post office and is now incorporated into the Olde Sanibel Shoppes. It has been placed on the city’s historic register as the “Cooper House” and has been restored to an earlier appearance. The home’s second story was reached by an outside staircase, a feature that is now hidden in the back. The Cooper family had a well inside their home. This is no longer visible, but a shop patron must “step down” into a second room. Something else not visible is the ghost, which is reported by the owner to rearrange merchandise in the shop.

THE BAILEY HOUSE – This house started out in 1896 as a hip-roofed square with an option to add a porch for $50 (which Mary Bailey passed on as being “too expensive”). The Fort Myers Press reported, “The Baileys are here to stay and have recently erected a home on Sanibel.” Mary Beers Bailey, the widow of Samuel Major Bailey, a Virginia tobacco farmer and owner of a tobacco products manufacturing company that failed after the Civil War, came to Sanibel in 1884 with her three youngest children, Harry, Ernest, and Frank. She was described as a woman of strong will and pioneering spirit. She acquired a homestead and her sons farmed the land. In 1899, the brothers purchased a plantation store on Mathews Wharf that was the start of the Sanibel Packing Company. As the matriarch of the family, Mrs. Bailey was the recipient of a fine, high-wheeled buggy similar to the surrey exhibited in the shed attached to the museum’s replicated Packing House. Mrs. Bailey was an artist who drew the sketches in the Rutland House dining room and owned the chocolate set in the display case. She, Hallie Matthews, and Laetitia Nutt were the grand dames of genteel Southern society.

The Bailey home, which is situated on Periwinkle Way where Donax comes in, was added onto (including a front porch) as the years passed and the family increased. Frank Bailey married Annie Meade Matthews in 1919 and they welcomed three sons, Francis, Sam, and John. Harry was married and moved to Fort Myers, but Ernest Bailey continued to live in the Bailey House with his brother’s family. When Frank’s wife died at a young age, her sister, Charlotta Matthews, occasionally stayed there to help with the cooking and laundry. As long as the Baileys have owned the property, the house has been painted a dark green.

In 2011, the Bailey Homestead was sold to the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation for $4 million, along with the attached 28 acres. SCCF intends to preserve the Bailey House and surrounding land, and after restoration, it will be open to the public on a schedule to be determined as an environmental education center.
THE MUSEUM STORE

We keep our merchandise in keeping with our mission, with a few exceptions: To preserve, share, and celebrate Sanibel history. We take this to mean “educate” as well.

Notice:

(a) Calusa reproductions, from masks to the Calusa cat (all items have explanatory sheets to go with them.
(b) Books – essential to our mission.
(c) Pine needle baskets – the star of the show and very popular. Cost ranges $40-$80.
(d) Sailor’s valentines
(e) We’ve started carrying some food items, all of the old-fashioned variety. The labels are “Bailey’s General Store, which is most appropriate for our village. Soon they will read “Sanibel Packing Co.,” the original name for the store – even better!
(f) The honey, in fact, is from descendants of the bees raised by Francis Bailey.
(g) We have some old-fashioned wooden toys, including toys made by one of our local “Hammerheads,” an island group of retired craftsmen.

We are trying out some new things, including T-shirts and hats.

Museum members get a 20% discount on all items with no restrictions.

Our register is simple to use, and we provide thorough training to anyone who chooses to work in the store. In addition, there are “cheat sheets” outlining what to do in every possible circumstance to get you through a sale.

Copies of the “cheat sheets” follow – BUT JUST FOR FUTURE REFERENCE if you choose to have additional training to work in the store. Don’t let them confuse you now!
SHORE HAVEN

• Our newest acquisition
• Restored to its 1924 look
• A Sears Roebuck kit home built by Ross & Daisy Mayer
• It cost $4,052 when purchased
• Originally on San Carlos Bay, near where the causeway enters the island
• One brother, Ross Mayer, owned Shore Haven and the other, Martin Mayer owned Morning Glories
• The two homes shared a well, a generator, and a bath house
• One of the earliest homes to have electricity and plumbing
• Was saved by the village after several close calls when it was nearly demolished
• Sears kit homes were available from 1909-1940s
MORNING GLORIES

- 1926
- A Sears Roebuck kit home, “The Springwood”
- It cost $2,211 when purchased (the built-in features cost extra)
- Originally on San Carlos Bay, near where the causeway enters the island
- Arrived in 30,000 pieces to be constructed by workers on the island
- One of the earliest homes to have electricity and plumbing
- Martin Mayer owned Morning Glories and his brother, Ross Mayer, owned Shore Haven
- The two homes shared a well, a generator, and a bath house
CARETAKERS' COTTAGE

- This is the cottage that was between Shore Haven and Morning Glories.
- Was built in the 1930s to be a multi-purpose building.
- Sometime after that it became a Caretakers’ Cottage.
- Caretakers would use it as a place to do some of their chores, such as ironing, and to take breaks.
- Houses our Black History on Sanibel exhibit.
SANIBEL PACKING CO.
d/b/a (doing business as)
BAILEY’S GENERAL STORE

• 1927

• This is the second store – the first, located on the end of the wharf – was lost in the 1926 hurricane

• Was the hub of the island – people voted here, the phone and telegraph were here, Frank Bailey was a justice of the peace

• Produce – especially tomatoes – were gathered here and shipped up north, where they were prized

• Frank’s son Francis ran the store after Frank’s death in 1952; Sam joined Francis in the 1980s after retiring from his career as a football coach in Tampa

• The store’s motto was, “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it”
THE GARDEN

- Garden is here to illustrate that Sanibel was an agricultural island, with warm temperatures assuring a good crop – and the crop was earlier than on the mainland

- The hurricane of 1926 ended farming – salt water covered the island, ruining the soil

- People had their own gardens, so the Bailey Store didn’t carry much produce

- Typical crops included tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, cucumbers, and watermelon – also mangoes and citrus

- The other plants, outside the garden, are native to the area
THE POST OFFICE

- This is the fourth post office – previous three were in people’s homes

- It was built from the debris resulting from the hurricane of 1926 – look at the ceiling to see the uneven boards

- Rural delivery was established in 1900
MISS CHARLOTTA’S TEA ROOM

• Built by the Baileys in 1926 to be a gas station for easier access for cars coming to the island

• Hurricane changed that – it served as the temporary store when Bailey’s Store was destroyed

• Then it became the Tea Room, run by Miss Charlotta Matthews, Frank Bailey’s sister-in-law

• They served pastries, soup, and sandwiches, which she prepared at The Matthews (now the Island Inn)

• A mini golf course was built out back to offer entertainment to the men

• Closed in 1936 when ferry landing moved down by the lighthouse

• Open in tourist season – fall, winter, and spring

• Children had to stay out – too wet and full of sand!

• Sam, Francis, and John called her “Chebum”
BURNAP COTTAGE

- 1898, built by Sam Woodring

- Ohio retiree Hiram Burnap bought it in 1902 and turned it into a fishing camp

- It had a second story addition that was removed when it was restored to its original condition

- Lighthouse lens used from 1962-1982

- Was used by a preacher for a while

- Algiers was a Mississippi ferry fashioned to look like a riverboat – it was converted into an elaborate home and brought ashore on Sanibel – the owners never lived in it

- See more Algiers information to follow
SCHOOL FOR WHITE CHILDREN

- 1896, located at the corner of Bailey Road and Periwinkle Way
- In 1902 moved to a more central location on Periwinkle Way (near Tahitian Gardens shops)
- Was used for a while for church services on Sundays
- When a new school was being built in 1963, both black and white parents petitioned to desegregate the new school – which they did, and the new school became the first in Lee County to be desegregated
- School then became a theater, the Pirate Playhouse
THE RUTLAND HOUSE

- 1913, originally located on Periwinkle Way approximately across from the Dairy Queen

- Typical “Cracker” style home – off the ground, high ceiling, wide central hallway, with large windows on opposite walls – lets the breeze flow

- Made of hard Florida pine, impervious to water and insects – you can’t drive a nail into it

- Clarence, who was known as Uncle Clarence by adults and children alike, was a jack-of-all-trades: farmer, fishing guide, contractor

- There is a Calusa display in the front room
THE CALUSA

- Controlled most of South Florida
- Tribe numbered 50,000
- Fierce, war-like
- First tribe Spaniards wrote about in 1513

- The Calusa tribe died out in the late 1700s. Enemy Indian tribes from Georgia and South Carolina began raiding the Calusa territory. Many Calusa were captured and sold as slaves.

- In addition, diseases such as smallpox and measles were brought into the area from the Spanish and French explorers and these diseases wiped out entire villages. It is believed that the few remaining Calusa Indians left for Cuba when the Spanish turned Florida over to the British in 1763.
THE 1833 SANYBEL MAP

- In 1819, the U.S. Consul to Spain purchased Sanibel (then Sanybel) from a Spanish duke. It is questionable that the duke had title to the land.

- The Consul sold the land to a group of New York investors called the Florida Peninsula Land Co.

- Fifty shares of stock were created; buyers received a plot of land from the bay to the gulf, as shown on the map.

- The U.S. government started legal proceedings.

- In 1833, 20 people settled on the island.

- Another 60 people were to settle in 1834 but there is no record that they did.

- In 1905, the courts invalidated the Consul’s title to the land.

- In 1977, three maps of the company’s survey were discovered in Oswego, New York; one was given to the city of Sanibel.
Homesteaders came in summer 1888

Requirements:
- 21 years of age or head of household
- Agree to stay 5 years and cultivate the land
- Pay a small fee of $1.60 per acre
- Must never have raised arms against the United States

1889 – 21 houses on the island, 40 families, 100 people (the population was the same at the time of WWII – 100 people)
1980 – 3,363 permanent residents
1990 – 5,500 permanent residents
Temporary residents and visitors are estimated to boost the population to 30,000

See following pages for info on:
- Some Historic Families and Early Islanders,
- Some Profiles on Early Islanders, and
- Sanibel’s Pioneer women
• Black families came to Sanibel beginning in the 1920s. Isaiah Gavin and his family were the first, followed by the Johnsons of St. Petersburg, the Walkers, the Mitchells, and others.

• Black children had to go to Ft. Myers to school and take the back seat in the ferry (or had to wait for the second ferry). In 1914, a Baptist Church informally opened its doors to black children for schooling as early as 1924. It eventually became the School for Colored Children and operated grades 1-8 as long as seven students attended. (The school building is now Lily and Co. Jewelry Gallery on the corner of Tarpon Bay and Island Inn roads, across from the Bailey Shopping Center.)

• A new Sanibel School opened in 1963 but was segregated. Black children were required to attend school in Dunbar. The next year, forward-thinking parents on Sanibel, led by both black and white mothers, convinced the Lee County School Board to integrate – making it the first integrated school in Lee County.
The Museum Store is in Rutland House.

We try to have much of our merchandise reflect our mission to preserve, share, and celebrate Sanibel's history.

If you choose to work in the store, we provide additional, usually one-on-one training.

Members get a 20% discount on all items.