

## Sanibel's Heritage Highlights

1500s to 1800s—Calusa Indians dominated the region. Archaeological evidence confirms their settlement of Sanibel. Ponce de Leon is said to be the first European to discover Sanibel, and nearby Captiva, on a voyage in 1513.

### 1800s

1833—A New York private investment company settled the east end of the island as the town of "Sanybel". Faced with Native American unrest, its members returned to New York City around 1837.

1884—Sanibel Lighthouse was built. Homesteaders began settling Sanibel.

1885—The international sport of game fishing took off, when the first Tarpon was caught with a rod and reel by William Halsey Wood.

1890s—Boarding houses and hotels became destinations for winter visitors and sport fishermen.

### 1900-1960

1909—The first annual Shell Fair was held at Casa Ybel Resort.

1920s—Ferry service was established in 1925. When the "Great Miami" hurricane of 1926 devastated island crops, commercial agriculture essentially ended on Sanibel. Tourism became the prominent industry of the island.

1945—The Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge was created.

1953—Sanibel-Captiva Mosquito Control Board was formed and introduced a fish population to control mosquito larva.

### 1960s and 1970s

1961—Lee County initiated a plan to zone Sanibel at a projected population of 90,000.

1963—The causeway connected Sanibel to the mainland, opening the island to increased residential and tourism development.

1964—Sanibel School became the first in Lee County to be racially integrated.

1974—Sanibel was incorporated as a city and declared a moratorium on any new construction until a land use plan could be established.

1976—The Sanibel Plan was adopted based on a carrying capacity of 6,000 dwelling units to mitigate environmental impacts.



# Sanibel's Heritage Trail



Sanibel's heritage is based upon the resourcefulness, persistence, hard work and strong values of its people.



## How to use this Map Guide

This is a guide to reader panels on Sanibel's Heritage Trail. You can further your knowledge and enjoyment of Sanibel's heritage by visiting the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village at 950 Dunlop Road and by consulting the Historical Museum webpage at [www.sanibelmuseum.org](http://www.sanibelmuseum.org)



**AGRICULTURE** — In the late 1860s, land was cleared and tilled for commercial farming. Flooding and cheaper shipping from the mainland ended most farming on Sanibel in the 1920s.

**ARCHITECTURE** — Clarence Rutland's home is characteristic of Sanibel architecture from the late 1800s through the next few decades. The Walker Guest House and St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church are notable architectural examples from later years.

**CAUSEWAY** — Completion of the causeway in 1963 led to unprecedented population growth on Sanibel.

**COMMERCE** — Commercial farming thrived until major hurricanes and a new causeway transformed island trade. Sanibel commerce has since been driven by tourism and building construction.

**COMMUNITY** — The Community House was built by island volunteers in the late 1920s. It hosts Sanibel's annual Shell Fair and island civic and social events.

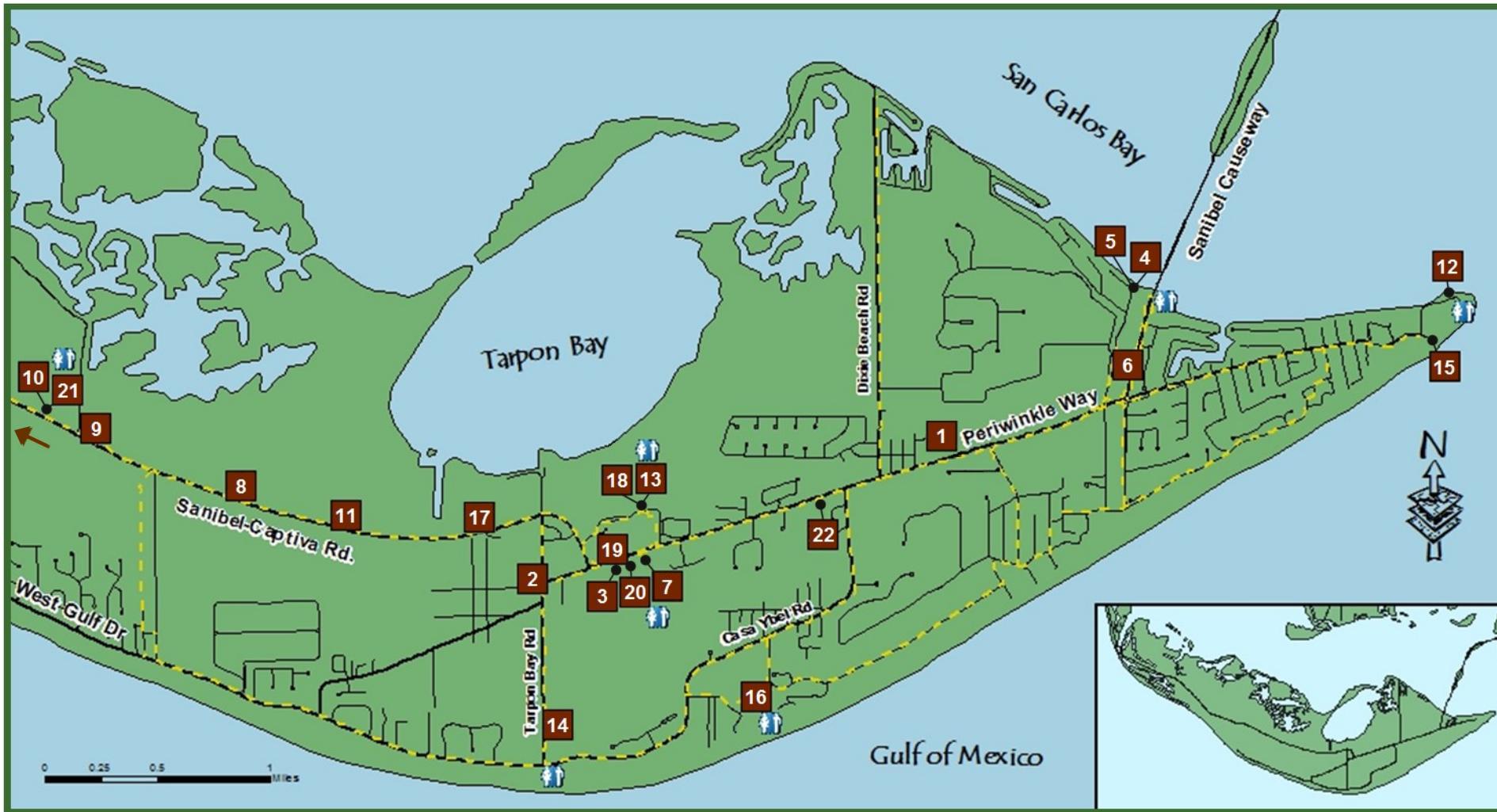
**CONSERVATION** — Named in honor of its principal advocate, the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge protects one of the country's largest mangrove ecosystems. The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation was organized after Darling's death to carry on his conservation work.

**EDUCATION** — The first tax-supported school was built in 1892. A segregated school for black children opened in 1927. In 1964, the current Sanibel School became the first in Lee County to be racially integrated.

**ENVIRONMENT** — The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum presents extensive shell collections and addresses the many ways mollusks and their shells are important in nature and to mankind.

**FISHING** — By the 1920s, there were massive commercial catches off Sanibel. Visiting sport fishermen launched Sanibel's hospitality industry.

**GOVERNANCE** — In 1974, islanders voted to incorporate. As a new city, Sanibel adopted a land use plan that has become a landmark for conservation-oriented city planning.



### Map Key

1 Agriculture	13 Governance
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3 Architecture	15 Navigation
4 Causeway	16 Pioneers
5 Commerce	17 Pioneers
6 Commerce	18 Preservation
7 Community	19 Racial Integration
8 Conservation	20 Recreation
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- - - - - Shared Use Path  
♿ Restrooms    **—** Major Road  
↖ To Captiva History Gallery

**HOSPITALITY** — For many years, beginning in the late 1890s, Sanibel's hotels and boarding houses were destinations for visitors who sometimes would stay the whole winter.

**NAVIGATION** — The Sanibel Lighthouse began operation in 1884 to warn ships of a sandbar that had damaged many vessels. In 1942, a detachment of Coast guardsmen was stationed here to watch for enemy landings.

**PIONEERS** — Early homesteaders are buried at the Sanibel Cemetery. These pioneers prevailed over hurricanes, mosquitoes, heat and humidity. Gavin and Walker families were among Sanibel's first people of color to settle.

**PRESERVATION** — In 1982, the Rutland House was moved to city property. It opened as Sanibel's first historical museum.

**RACIAL INTEGRATION** — In 1962, St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church became the first church in the region to be racially integrated.

**RECREATION** — Saturday night socials, shared meals, fishing, beach walks, shell collecting and playing baseball were popular recreational pursuits for early settlers.

**WILDLIFE** — In 1968, Shirley Walters asked a veterinarian to help her treat an injured bird. The establishment of CROW, the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, would soon follow. Sanibel Island is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including the American Alligator, West Indian Manatee, Bottlenose Dolphin, Gopher Tortoise and nearly 300 bird species.

**WORSHIP** — In 1917, the Sanibel Community Church was built by island volunteers. Organized as an independent congregation, it served as a center for island get-togethers.