

Southwest Florida History

Dr Paul Pacter
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Class 5 History North of Naples

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Six Class Meetings

Download PDF of slides:
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- Class 1 Historical Overview
- Class 2 History City of Naples
- Class 3 South and East of Naples
- Class 4 Major Parks & Preserves
- **Class 5 North of Naples**
- Class 6 *A Land Remembered* by Patrick Smith & Other Resources

Southwest Florida History

Today
we'll
look at
places
north
of
Naples.



Historic Sites in Southwest Florida

All of these sites, and others nearby, offer sightseeing, ecology, and recreation.

Please remember that our focus in this course is on the historical aspects of these places.

Immokalee Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch



Website: www.colliermuseums.com

Where: 1215 Roberts Avenue West, Immokalee.

Get There: Immokalee Road east from Naples. Left on W. Main St, Immokalee.

When: Tuesday–Saturday, 9am to 4pm. Closed Sunday and Monday.

Admission: Free.

Immokalee Pioneer Museum Roberts Ranch

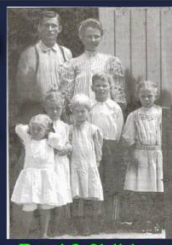
What: Collier County's largest inland community. Cattle ranches and agriculture.

History: First occupied by Calusa Indians and later by Seminole. Area has seen a colorful mix of hunters, trappers, cowmen, missionaries, and Indian traders since it was first settled in 1872.

Name Origin: Early pioneers named the town "Immokalee" in 1897 after a Seminole word meaning "my home" or "his home".

Cattleman Robert Roberts started Roberts Ranch in 1914.

- By 1950 grew to 100,000+ acres.
- Today 13-acre County historic site plus museum.
- 15 carefully preserved buildings. *Total 9 Children*
- Including ranch house, cattle barn, blacksmith, horse barn, smokehouse, tool shed, bunk house, workshop.
- Illustrates daily working life on a SW Florida pioneer homestead in early 20th c.

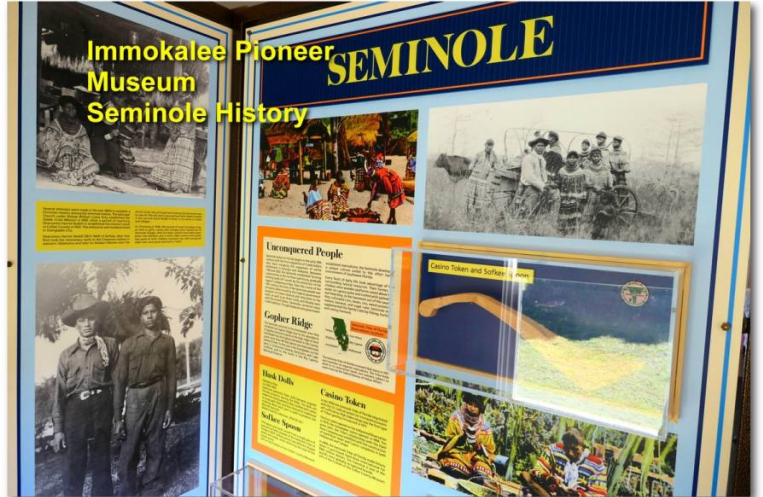


Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch Immokalee

**Main exhibit hall
Built as 1st Baptist Church 1916**



Pioneer Museum at Roberts Ranch Immokalee



Immokalee Pioneer Museum Seminole History



Roberts Family Home 1924

Home to Robert and Sarah Roberts and their Nine Children



Roberts Family Home Kitchen 1924



Roberts Family Home Living Room 1924

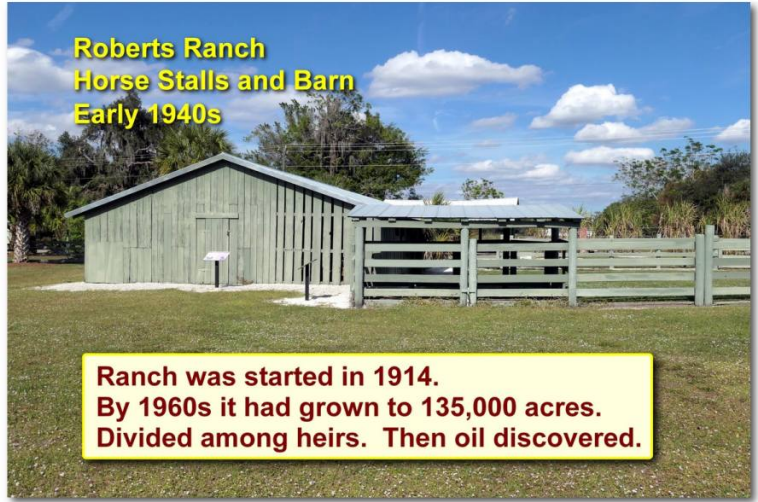


Roberts Family Home Bedroom 1924

**Roberts Family Home - 1924
Dining Room**



**Roberts Ranch
Horse Stalls and Barn
Early 1940s**



**Ranch was started in 1914.
By 1960s it had grown to 135,000 acres.
Divided among heirs. Then oil discovered.**

**Roberts Ranch
Fertilizer Spreader - 1940**



**Roberts Ranch
Smokehouse
1926**



**Roberts Ranch
Bunk House
1930s**



**Roberts Ranch
Sugar Cane Mill
(Press)**



**Roberts Ranch
Sugar Cane Boiler
1921**



**Roberts Ranch
Well - Dates from 1870s**



Immokalee Oil Well Park


Immokalee Oil Well Park

Where: SR-29 between I-75 and Immokalee.

When: Daily dawn to dusk. Free.

What: 1940s oil derrick.

- Oil discovered near Immokalee 1940s.
- First well drilled 1943.
- To date, 297 wells drilled.

- Wells were drilled by Sun Oil (Sunoco) and Humble Oil (Exxon) 
- Most success was in 1960s.
- Of the 297 wells drilled, only 5 remain active. Dec 2024 output:**
 - 14,800 barrels of oil.
 - 1,100,000 cubic feet of natural gas.

Oil Well Park 1940s Oil Derrick

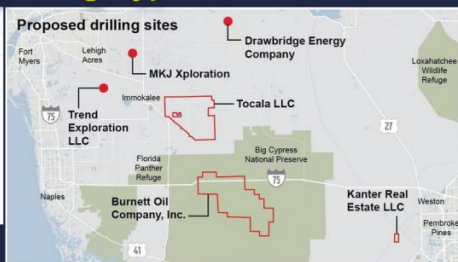


South Florida Sun Sentinel - Feb 3, 2019
"More oil drilling proposed for southern Florida".

Proposals. Not yet permitted.

Photo of drilling in Big Cypress Preserve.

More oil drilling proposed for southern Florida



Bonita Springs Historic Downtown Area

Bonita Springs - Liles Hotel - 1927 Now Historical Society Museum



"Temporarily closed" since Hurricane Ian!

Bonita Springs Liles Hotel 1927





Wonder Gardens:

Website: wondergardens.org

Where: 27180 Old 41 Road, Bonita.

When: Daily 10 to 4 (9 to 4 in season).

Entry: Adults \$15. Seniors \$13.

What:

- 300 resident animals including birds, reptiles (gators, tortoises).
- Banyan trees and other plantings.

Wonder Gardens History

Established: 1936 by the Piper Family
– Originally named: "Reptile Gardens".
– Renamed "Wonder Gardens".

April 2013: Piper family closed Gardens. Non-profit formed to rent property from the Pipers and operate it.

2015: City of Bonita Springs loaned the non-profit \$3 million to buy the Gardens.

- The loan was defaulted, and the City took over the property.
- In 2024, the City had entered into a new 10-year contract with the nonprofit to continue operating the Gardens.
- In 2025, the Gardens adopted a master plan for revitalization.

Wonder Gardens Entrance, Old 41 Road



Wonder Gardens Flamingoes
Over 50 years old



Wonder Gardens
Parrot



Wonder Gardens



Wonder Gardens - Greenhouse



Estero Historical Society

Estero Island Historical Society Museum
at Matanzas Pass Preserve
1921 Beach Cottage



Estero Island Historical Society Museum
at Matanzas Pass Preserve
Rainwater Collection Barrel – 1946



Estero Koreshan State Park

Koreshan State Park

Website:

www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/koreshan-state-park

Where: 3800 Corkscrew Rd., Estero FL.

Get There: Just west of US-41 at Corkscrew Road.

Park: Daily 8am to sunset.

Historic village: Daily 8am to 5pm.

Admission: \$5 per car, or annual pass.

What: Village was the home of a unique and eccentric pioneer group of 200 people that chose to live on the banks of the Estero River.

In 1893, the Koreshans, a religious sect founded by Dr Cyrus R Teed, moved here. They built a settlement based on a commitment to communal, celibate living.

The enterprising Koreshans established a farm, nursery and botanical gardens, bakery, and public store.

Koreshans' Main Beliefs

Cellular Cosmogony (Hollow Earth Theory):

Earth is contained within a concave sphere.

Immortality: People do not die. They are reborn.

Celibacy: To attain immortality, abstain from any sexual conduct.

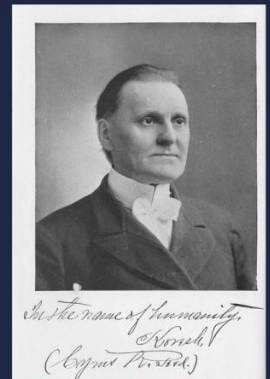
Collectivism: Community ownership of all property. Work without pay.

Cyrus Teed as Messiah: Teed claimed to be the 'seventh' messianic leader (Jesus was the sixth).

Koreshan State Park

Has 11 carefully restored historic buildings erected by the Koreshans between the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There is an interpretive center with education materials, including a video. Docents are available on weekends.



Cyrus R Teed
Alias "Koresh"
Hebrew for Cyrus

Planetary Court - Home of 7 Ladies Who Were the Governing Council at Koreshan



Planetary Court Interior



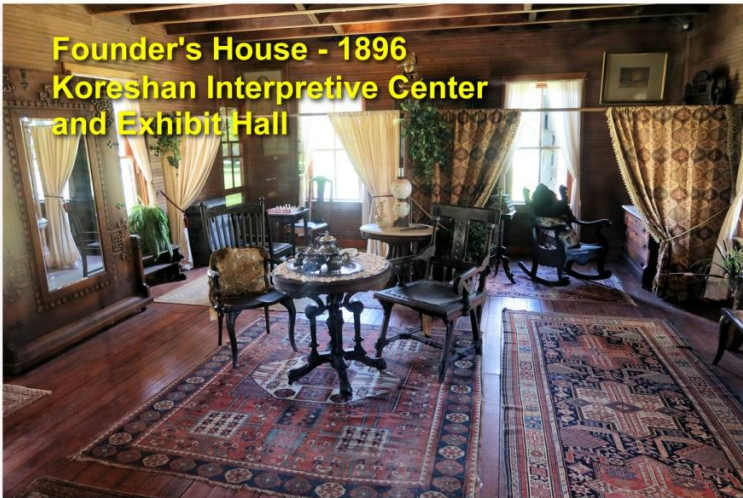
Koreshan Unity Settlement Art Hall - 1905 - Concerts and Religious Activities



Founder's House - 1896 Interpretive Center Exhibits, Photos, Videos



Founder's House - 1896 Koreshan Interpretive Center and Exhibit Hall



Koreshan Generator Building 1908



Koreshan State Park - Grave of Hedwig Michel 1892-1982 - Last Surviving Koreshan Member



Fascinated by Koreshan? Visit the Florida State Library website:
www.floridamemory.com/learn/exhibits/koreshan/



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|--|--|--|
| <p>MENU (Partial):
 Overview
 Origins
 Millennial Fervor and Utopian Communalism
 Burned-Over District
 Teed's Illumination
 Koresh</p> | <p>Inside the Hollow Earth
 The New Jerusalem
 Followers
 Becoming Koreshan
 Working Together
 Building a Utopia
 Koreshan Estero
 Koreshans at Work</p> | <p>Cashing In
 Brawl in Fort Myers
 A New Era
 Spreading the Word
 Support
 On Their Soapbox
 Publications
 Satellite Branches</p> |
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Fort Myers Edison and Ford Winter Estates

Edison and Ford Winter Estates – Fort Myers

Website:

www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/

Where: 2350 McGregor Blvd, Fort Myers.

Get There: I-75 to Colonial Blvd Exit #136. West on Colonial Blvd about 6 miles to McGregor (just before The Gulf). Right on McGregor. About 3 miles, on left.

When: Daily 9am to 5:30pm.

Admission:

- \$28 self-guided tour. Download Internet app. 25 stops.
- \$35 tour led by site historian.

Both include the historic homes and gardens, and admission to Museum and Edison Botanic Research Labs.

On these tours you do not go into the houses. You look in. You do into museum and research labs.

Edison's Winter Home:

- 14-acre Site on Caloosahatchee Riv.
- Queen Anne New England Style.
- Built 1885 in parts in Fairfield, Maine.
- Sent to Ft Myers on 4 sailing ships.
- Assembled in Fort Myers in 1886.
- **One of the first pre-fabricated buildings in America.**

Thomas Alva Edison was America's greatest inventor. Examples:

Electric power generators and distribution systems. Phonograph. Motion picture camera. Electric light bulb. Microphone. Fluoroscope. Rechargeable battery.

Edison called his home "Seminole Lodge". Was his winter workplace and place of relaxation until he died in 1931.

Thomas Edison's Home
Fort Myers
1886



Thomas Edison's Home
Living Room



Thomas Edison's Home
Dining Room



**Thomas Edison's Home
Bedroom**



**Banyan Trees
Planted 1927
With hope of extracting latex for tires**



**Edison and Ford Museum
Edison's 1916 Model-T**



**Edison's Botanic Research Laboratory
Goal: Find a US plant that could
produce rubber in case of foreign
shortage.**



Ford Home

Edison's good friend Henry Ford bought the house next to Edison's in 1916. It was built in 1911. Named "The Mangoes".

Henry Ford manufactured the first automobile that many middle-class Americans could afford, starting in 1910. The car became a practical conveyance that profoundly affected 20th century society worldwide.

Ford died in 1947.

**Henry Ford's Home
Fort Myers
1911**



**Henry Ford's Home
Living Room**



**Henry Ford's Home
Dining Room**



Fort Myers Beach Mound House

Mound House (and Calusa History)

Historic property (1921) of the Town of Fort Myers Beach.

Website: <https://moundhouse.org/>

Where: 451 Connecticut St, off Estero Blvd, Fort Myers Beach, FL.

Get There: Bonita Beach Road becomes Hickory Blvd in Bonita, then Estero Blvd. 13 mi. from US 41 Bonita Beach Road.

When: Wednesday to Saturday 9am to 4pm.

Admission:

- Adult: \$10.
- Students: \$8.
- Children: \$5.

What: Historic house built on a 2.77-acre Calusa Indian Shell Mound.



Cream color bricks made from ground shells.
No longer can enter shell mound due to heavy damage from Hurricane Ian.

History of Mound House

1906: One-room kitchen-dining house. Settlers lived on their boat.

1909: Expanded the house to include living room, sleeping area upstairs, porch.

1921: Expanded to 2,945 sq foot "mansion" with 3 bedrooms, bath, wrap-around porch, garage.

Today house is restored to 1921 condition.

1970s: In-ground swimming pool 18'x34'.

2000: Acquired by Town of Ft Myers Beach.

Subsequently: Swimming pool removed.

Visit House: Upstairs two exhibit rooms:

1. History of Calusa Indians.
2. History of settlers on Estero Island.

Calusa Mound: Inside was bigger than swimming pool. Could go inside until Sept 2022. Hurricane did major damage, and mound is **not safe to enter.**

Fortunately, I have saved my photos!

House Sits on a Calusa Shell Mound



Mound House 1921 Living Room



Calusa Tools 1200 to 2000 Years Old



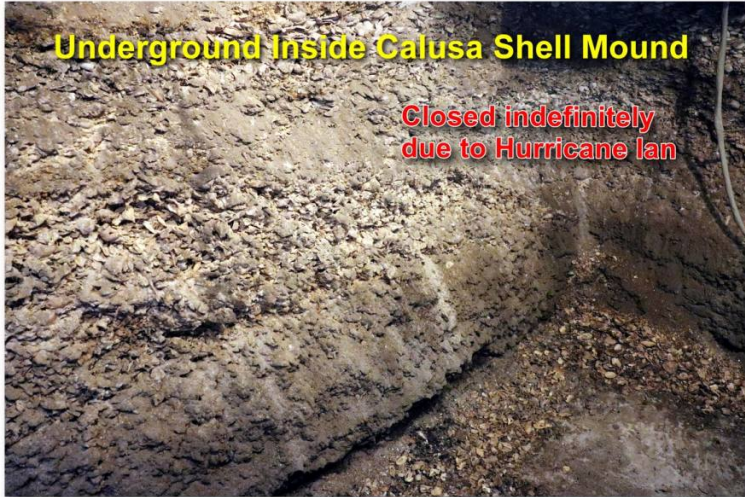


Exhibit - Early Settlers of Estero Is.



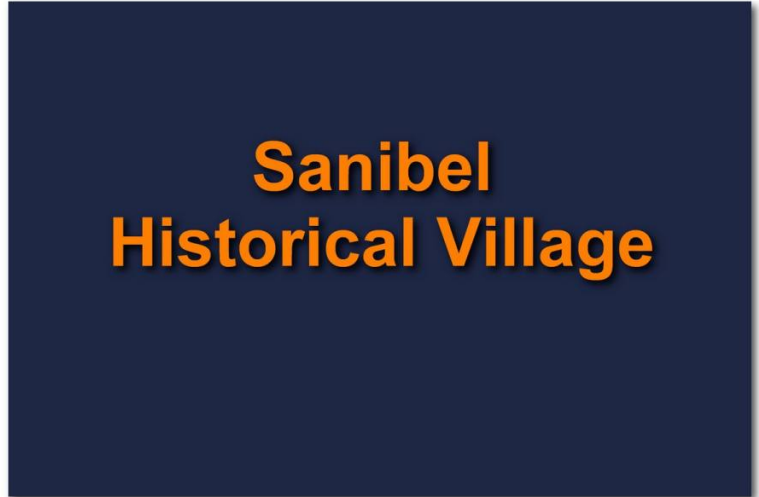
Underground Inside Calusa Shell Mound

Closed indefinitely due to Hurricane Ian



Underground Inside Calusa Shell Mound

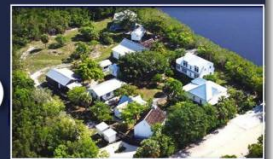
Closed indefinitely due to Hurricane Ian



Sanibel Historical Village

Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Website: Sanibel.museum.org/
Where: 950 Dunlop Road, Sanibel, FL.
Get There: Cross Sanibel Causeway. Right on Periwinkle 2.5 miles.
When: Wednesday-Sunday 10am-2pm (to 4pm January-April).
 Closed August to Mid-October.
Admission: Adult \$15.

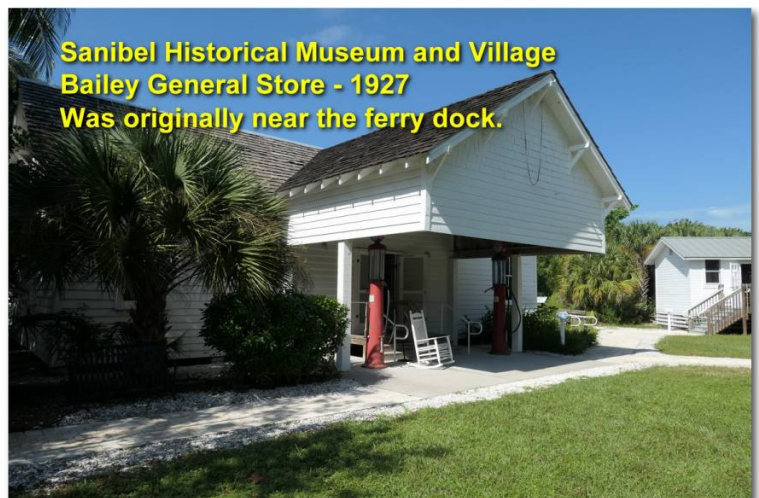
Ten historic Sanibel buildings restored to their original state (1896 – 1927).
 Shore Haven (1924).
 Bailey General Store (1927).
 Caretaker's Cottage (1925).
 Morning Glories Cottage (1925).
 Sanibel Packing House (1900).
 Sanibel School House (1896).
 Post Office (1926).
 Burnap Cottage (1898).
 Miss Charlotta's Tea Room (1926).
 Rutland House (1913).



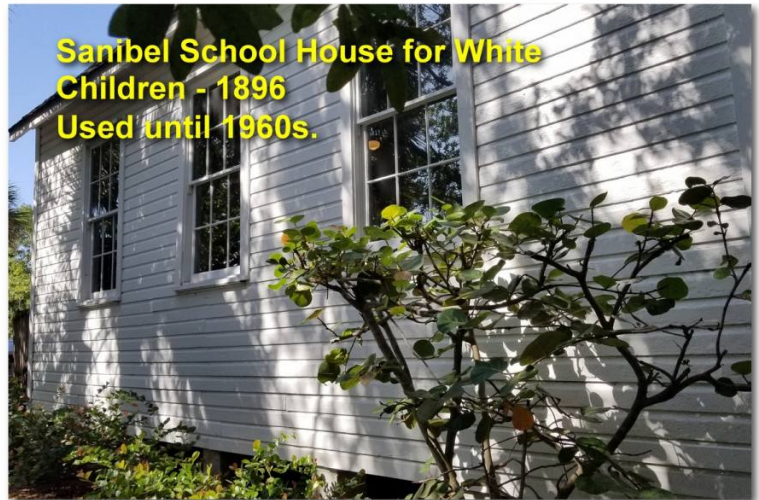
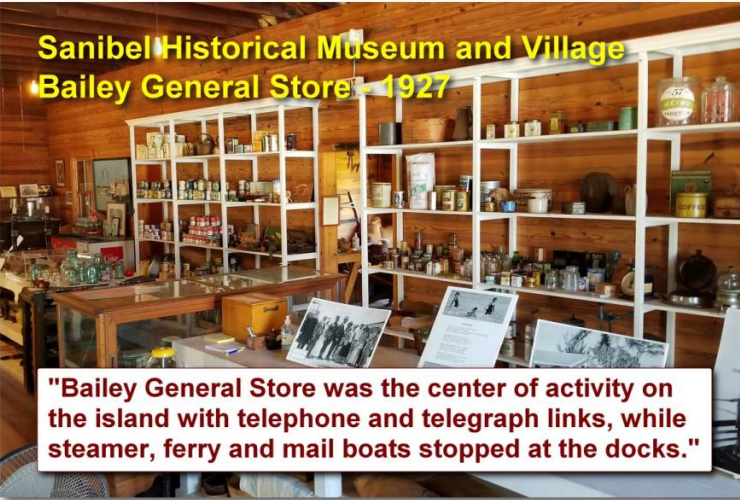
Sanibel Historical Museum and Village



Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Shore Haven - 1924 - Sears Roebuck kit home
Beachfront Home



Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Bailey General Store - 1927
Was originally near the ferry dock.





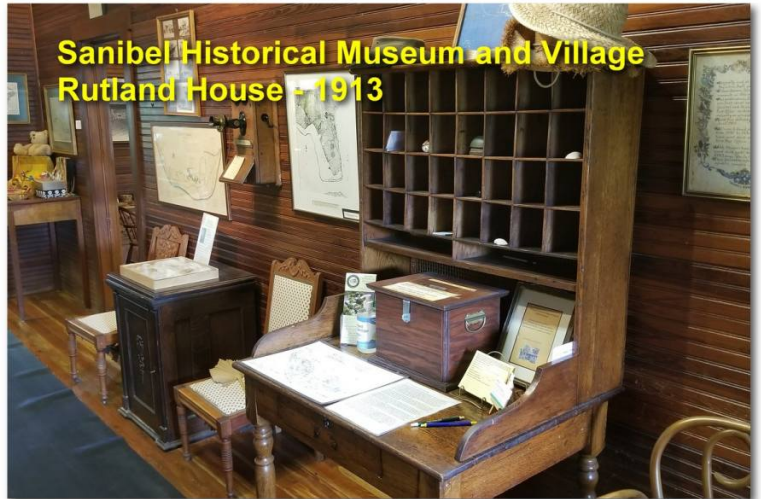
Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Sanibel School House - 1896



Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Post Office - 1926



Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Rutland House - 1896
Cracker Style: Built on Stilts, High Ceilings,
lots of windows for air flow.



Sanibel Historical Museum and Village
Rutland House - 1913

Sanibel Ding Darling NWR Calusa Shell Mound

J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge US Fish and Wildlife Service Website:
www.fws.gov/refuge/JN_Ding_Darling/
Where: On Sanibel Island.
Get There: I-75 or US-41 to Sanibel Causeway (toll \$6 Sunpass). Right onto Periwinkle. At end of Periwinkle, right onto Tarpon Bay Rd, then left onto Sanibel-Captiva Road.

When: Daily except Fridays and national holidays. **Closed Fridays!**
Admission: \$10 per car to drive 4-mile Wildlife Drive. \$1 for hikers or bikers.
What: 6,400 acres of mangrove forest, submerged seagrass beds, marshes, and hardwood hammocks.
One of America's largest undeveloped mangrove ecosystems.
4 mile one-way drive with spectacular views of lakes and bayous.

History of Ding Darling NWR
1945: Founded in 1945 as Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge. Preserve migratory bird habitat.
Named for: Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, a prize-winning cartoonist and conservationist.
He founded the Federal Duck Stamp Program and the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which funded wetland preservation.
Early 1940s: He successfully blocked a state land sale that would have opened over 2,000 acres on Sanibel to development, convincing Florida's governor to preserve it instead.

Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge

- Habitat of 245 bird species.
- Many birdwatching opportunities. Especially December through March.
- Home to raccoons, bobcats, river otters, alligators, and marsh rabbits.
- Hiking trails.
- Small exhibit building.

White Ibis



Ding Darling 4-mile Wildlife Drive

- Wulfert Keys Trail
- Calusa Shell Mound
- Observation Tower
- Cross Dike Trail
- Mangrove Overlook
- Indigo Trail



Start of Drive

Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge

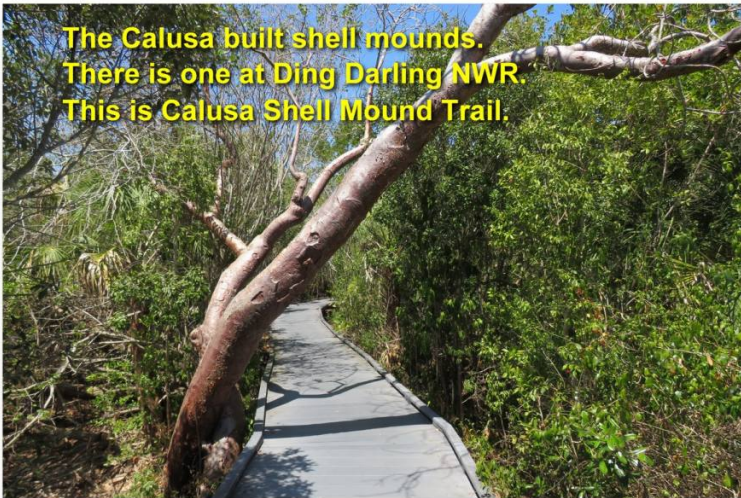


Calusa Indians:

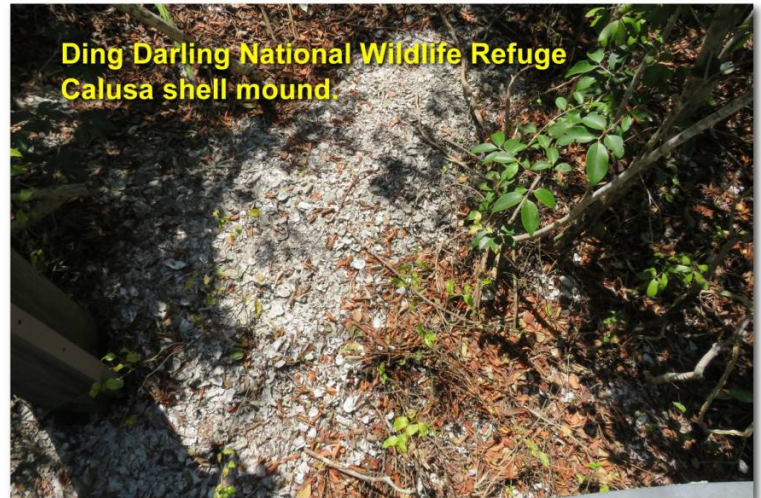
- Native SW Florida since 3,500 BC.
- 60 villages along SW Florida coasts.
- Est. 10,000 to 50,000 people.
- Powerful military.
- Fishing, trapping, sailing, trading.
- Late 1700s: Wiped out by invading Indian tribes from Georgia and Alabama.



The Calusa built shell mounds. There is one at Ding Darling NWR. This is Calusa Shell Mound Trail.



Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge Calusa shell mound.



Sanibel Bailey Homestead

Bailey Homestead Preserve, Sanibel

Managed by: Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation

Website:

<https://www.sccf.org/preserves/bailey-homestead-preserve>

Location: 1300 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel.

Hours: Trail open dawn to dusk.

What: Historic home of Sanibel pioneer family, garden center, 1-mile walking trail.

28 acres of which:

- Front 9 acres include the Homestead, retail garden center, and walking trail.
- 19-acre wildlife corridor includes freshwater wetlands and interior ridges.
- Historic structures: 1896 Bailey family home and a 1908 windmill.
- **Baileys were pioneer Sanibel farmers and business owners (packing house, grocery, hardware store).**
- **The home is open only for events.**

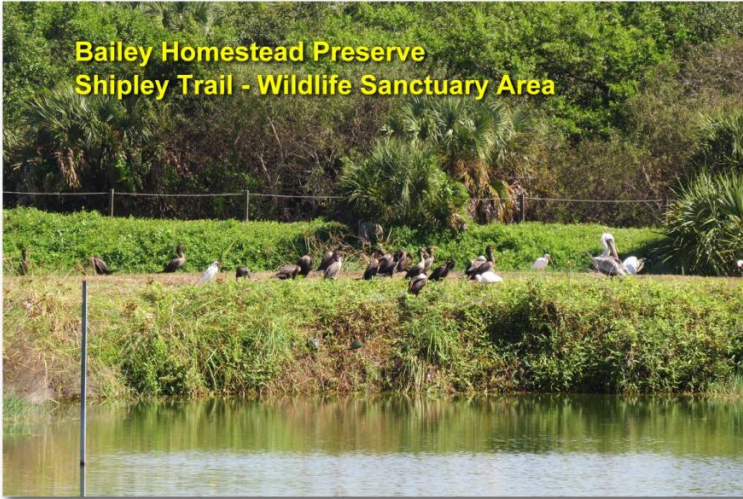
Bailey Homestead - 1896



1908 Windmill



**Bailey Homestead Preserve
Shipley Trail - Wildlife Sanctuary Area**



**Sanibel
Lighthouse**

**Sanibel Lighthouse
98 Feet.
First lit 1884.
Still operating.**

*Damage from
Hurricane Ian (incl
replacement of one
of the four legs)
has been repaired.*

*Sadly, the
lighthouse
keepers
cottage was
lost to Ian.*



**Sanibel Lighthouse - 1884
Operated by US Coast Guard.
Grounds open to public.
Lighthouse itself not open.**

*This historic lighthouse
keeper's cottage is gone.*



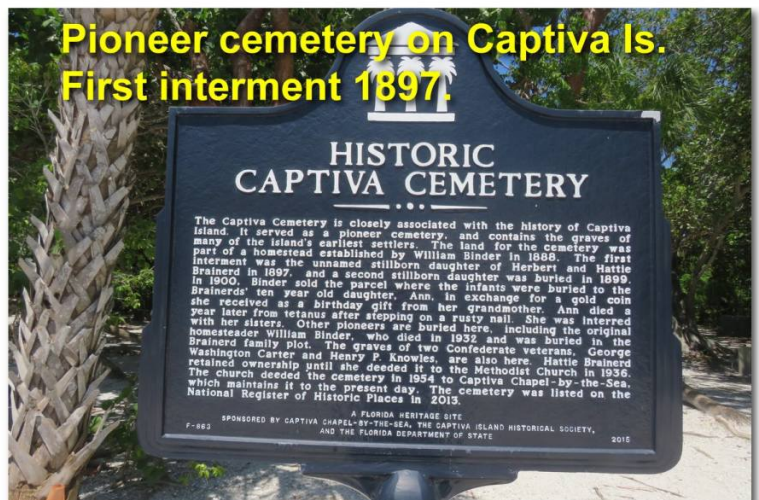
**Captiva
Cemetery and
Chapel by the Sea**

**Pioneer cemetery on Captiva Is.
First interment 1897.**

**HISTORIC
CAPTIVA CEMETERY**

The Captiva Cemetery is closely associated with the history of Captiva Island. It served as a pioneer cemetery, and contains the graves of many of the island's earliest settlers. The land for the cemetery was part of a homestead established by William Binder in 1888. The first interment was the unnamed stillborn daughter of Herbert and Hattie Brainerd in 1897, and a second stillborn daughter was buried in 1899. Binder sold the parcel where the infants were buried to the Brainerds' ten year old daughter, Ann, in exchange for a gold coin she received as a birthday gift from her grandmother. Ann died a year later from tetanus after stepping on a rusty nail. She was interred with her sisters. Other pioneers are buried here, including the original homesteader William Binder, who died in 1932 and was buried in the Washington Carter and Henry P. Knowles, are also here. Hattie Brainerd retained ownership until she deeded it to the Methodist Church in 1936. The church deeded the cemetery in 1954 to Captiva Chapel-by-the-Sea, which maintains it to the present day. The cemetery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

A FLORIDA HERITAGE SITE
SPONSORED BY CAPTIVA CHAPEL-BY-THE-SEA, THE CAPTIVA ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE. 2016

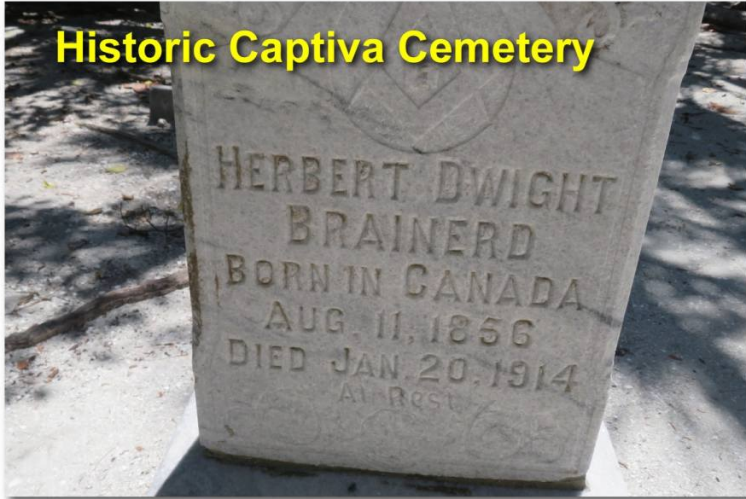




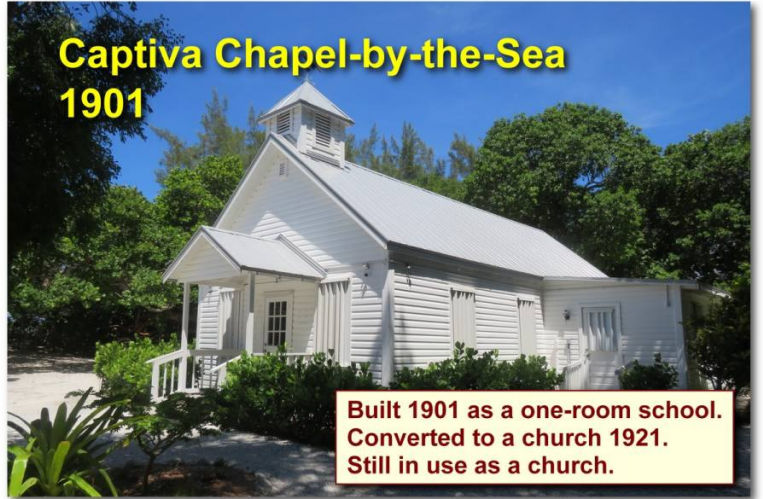
Historic Captiva Cemetery
First Interment 1897



Historic Captiva Cemetery



Historic Captiva Cemetery



Captiva Chapel-by-the-Sea
1901

Built 1901 as a one-room school.
 Converted to a church 1921.
 Still in use as a church.



Cape Coral
Historical Museum



Cape Coral Museum of History

Wed, Thurs, Fri 11 to 4. Sat 10 to 2.
 Closed Sun, Mon, Tues.
 Adults \$10. Seniors \$5.





Coming Up:

- ~~Class 1 Historical Overview~~
- ~~Class 2 History City of Naples~~
- ~~Class 3 South and East of Naples~~
- ~~Class 4 Major Parks & Preserves~~
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- **Class 6 A Land Remembered by Patrick Smith & Other Resources**



End of Class 5

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