



South Brevard Historical Society, Inc.

Founded 1966

E Newsletter

November 2022

SATURDAY, November 12th

3:00 pm

MELBOURNE PUBLIC LIBRARY

540 E. Fee Avenue, Melbourne

JOIN US FOR OUR NOVEMBER PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE GRANT HOUSE
also known as the **BENSEN HOUSE**



**To be presented by Cheryl Welch, member of the Grant Historical Society
and Historic House Volunteer.**

This “catalogue” house is furnished in the style of the early twentieth century and offers a genuine feel for “the way it was” back then. Also on the grounds is an old railroad depot with a story of its own. Cheryl will introduce us to early families of the Grant-Valkaria area as we explore the histories of the cities and towns of South Brevard County.

Next Month’s Program: “SHARING MEMORIES”

Friends of Weona Cleveland share their memories of Brevard’s beloved historian.

Saturday, December 10th 3:00 at the Fee Avenue Public Library

DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

Carl and I like to take a “day away” occasionally and one of our favorite “loops” is to drive south on A1A, usually stopping at Sebastian Inlet then proceeding south to the Wabasso Causeway. We cross over the Lagoon and often head east toward Fellsmere where we have lunch at Marsh Landing Restaurant. While in Fellsmere several years ago we walked around and I “noticed” the historic marker honoring the first woman to vote in Florida. I think I was surprised because even though I had never asked that question, I would have expected the answer to where it had occurred to be a large city, perhaps Jacksonville, Tampa or Miami. Zena Drier is the subject of this month’s Special Feature.

As I prepare to mark my sample ballot for Tuesday, my thoughts wander to the way in which Melbourne was named. The name Melbourne was chosen as it was the name assigned to the longest of the three actual straws (probably from a broom) each representing a suggested name. The longest straw won, drawn in a true, early “straw ballot” by a few early residents. One might say it was a “clean sweep”. That outcome has continued unchanged through the years.

Carol

Carol Andren, President SBHS
(321.725.4115)

THINGS TO DO:

NOTE: FYI – Two event flyers are attached to this newsletter: The MOB Christmas Tour of Homes and the Brevard County Library 50 Year Celebration.

- November 11** **Melbourne Liberty Bell Museum “Veterans Day Program”**
11 AM – 1 PM **following the Melbourne Veterans Day Parade.....**
Presentations on the early history of the American Revolution
plus you can view American history through the museum’s
varied collection of historic artifacts.
- November 20** **Museums of Brevard showcased at the Warbird Air Museum**
1 – 4 PM **A unique opportunity to view the historic homes and resources of**
Brevard County.
- December 1** **50th Year Celebration of the Brevard County Library**
3 – 5 PM **Join other library lovers for refreshments, stories, displays**
at the: Catherine Schweinsberg Rood Central Library
308 Forrest Avenue in Cocoa
- December 2** **Beginning of the Museums of Brevard (MOB) Annual Christmas Tour**
8 Tour eight of Brevard’s historic homes decorated in holiday
finery. More information on the attached flyer or go to:
greengables.org and order via the GG website.

SBHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers: President, Carol Andren; Vice Presidents, Denise Bozeman and Jim Poulos; Secretary, Barbara Arthur; Treasurer, Annita Full. Directors: Martha Beaujean Collins, Wiley Elliott, Kathi Harbaugh, Diane Newman, Janie Stewart.

The South Brevard Historical Society, Inc., is a non-profit corporation and an IRS 501 (C) 3 organization. All contributions are tax-deductible by limits of law. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling 1-800-HELP FLA. P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, Florida, 32902-1064

Visit us at: www.southbrevardhistory.org

SPECIAL FEATURE:

Did you know?

The first woman to vote in FL was from Fellsmere!



ZENA DRIER of Fellsmere

voted in 1915



THE HISTORIC MARKER TEXT:

BIRTHPLACE FOR EQUAL SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN IN FLORIDA

Location: On Broadway, block #99; lots 12-14

County: Indian River

City: Fellsmere

Description: "The population of Fellsmere is of a high type of intelligence, with lofty ideals and wise execution. Progressive in all things, perhaps no better indication of the fact may be given than the unanimous vote of the town granting unrestricted suffrage to women." Fellsmere Tribune, March 8, 1916. At a February 1915 meeting at the Dixie Theater, Fellsmere citizens accepted the articles of incorporation unanimously. The charter included a unique proposal that women be granted full and equal privilege for suffrage in municipal elections. Local bills seldom received close scrutiny from legislators, and the equal suffrage provision went unnoticed. In signing the act that created the town of Fellsmere, Governor Park Trammell, in effect, gave women the right to vote in its municipal elections. In the June 19, 1915 city election, Mrs. Zena M. Dreier was the first woman to cast a ballot in Fellsmere, in all of Florida, and south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The town residents took much pride in this unique woman's right, and urged neighboring municipalities to follow the 'Fellsmere Way' to equal suffrage. In 1919, a U.S. Constitutional amendment granted suffrage to women. But history will note that Fellsmere led the way.

Sponsors: THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN--INDIAN RIVER AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

above information from the website: <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=14303>

(Photo source: Vero Beach Magazine obtained with assistance of Indian River County historians)

For additional information:

<https://www.mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2020/03/05/fellsmere--tiny-florida-town-pioneered-women-s-suffrage>

<https://frontier-florida.blogspot.com/2018/08/1st-florida-woman-voted-in-1915.html>

Indian River Historical Society

<https://www.irchistorical.org/>

About Fellsmere by Richard Votapka

https://www.cityoffellsmere.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/2151/fellsmere_firsts.pdf