

SOUTH BREVARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. Box 1064  
Melbourne, FL 32902-1064

## S.B.H.S. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL

\_\_\_New \_\_\_Renewal

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(Please include your email address.)

This is a gift membership from :

\_\_\_\_\_

### ***Membership Levels:***

Individual	\$20.00
Family/Library	25.00
Senior (age 65)	10.00
Student	10.00
Business	50.00
Lifetime	250.00
Donation	_____

Please make checks payable to South Brevard Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, FL 32902-1064.

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## South Brevard Historical Society, Inc.

Founded 1966

P.O. Box 1064, Melbourne, Florida, 32902-1064

[www.southbrevardhistory.org](http://www.southbrevardhistory.org)

April 2013

### **Saturday, April 13, 2013 - 3:00 p.m.**

Melbourne Public Library  
540 E. Fee Avenue, Melbourne



## **Seeing Florida with a Priest: Growth of Catholicism in East Central Florida In the Early Twentieth Century** *Presented by Ben DiBiase, Educational Resources Coordinator, Florida Historical Society*

With the world's eyes trained on the Catholic Church as they celebrate a new Pope, we are pleased to present a program about the early Catholic faith in our area.

Mr. DiBiase will look at specific information about churches in Brevard, with a focus on the mission priests themselves and their involvement in the growth of Catholicism in East Central Florida. He will address the development of Catholicism in an area of rural Florida which at the time had a predominantly non-Catholic population.

While working as The Rossetter Scholar in 2010/2011, Mr. DiBiase began this research. At the time he also worked as a docent and museum assistant at The Rossetter House and Gardens. He frequently heard stories of the Rossetter family welcoming traveling Catholic priests into their home and even holding services in their living room. He spent many hours at the Diocese of St. Augustine archives piecing together the lives of these early mission priests, which is now the basis for his Master's thesis.

Please join us as we hear how these people helped shape our community as we know it today.

## DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS....

“On My Continuing Education”

As I've learned more of Brevard and Florida's history through programs, reading and conversations with researchers and writers I've come to see how Florida's history is so under represented and under appreciated in the grand scheme of American history.

Through planning our programs, I began to learn of the many ways we can examine a topic whether that topic is an era, a city, a war, a local historical character or a building. My mantra has become “everything is history”.

Now, I've decided to try examining history in a way similar to the micro and macro views of economics. I haven't seen this connection before but usually if I think of “a new thing” that “thing” has already been thought of and done away with.....

So with my theory in mind, our April program on the “growth of Catholicism in East Central Florida” offers me a chance to test my micro and macro view of history. I would suppose that the “growth” part fits into U.S. migration patterns along with the macro/migration view including migration from rural to urban areas of our country. The micro part fits the Brevard story of the Indian River Catholic Colony in the area of present day Malabar, Valkaria, Micco and Grant. Advertising for that land development was targeted at immigrant families who had settled in the Midwestern U.S.

The personal story of one of those IRCC settlers, Michael Joseph Dzurak, is recorded in “The Promised Land” series written by his daughter-in-law Carolyn Durak and illustrated by his son, Michael Durak. I recommend the series for its account of the disappointments and hardships faced by those settlers. Plus you'll find familiar names of families who have left their mark upon Brevard's history. See you on the 13<sup>th</sup>!

Carol Andren  
SBHS President (321-725-4115)

## UPCOMING SBHS PROGRAMS

May 11, 2013

***Growing up in South Melbourne***

Presented by Eugene Johnson

All programs at the Fee Avenue Melbourne Public Library  
540 E. Fee Avenue, Melbourne, Florida

### AROUND BREVARD

Sat. April 6 2: 00 PM

***Gallery Walk – Historical Illustrations***

David Edwards

Florida History Society Headquarters  
435 Brevard Avenue in Cocoa Village

Fri. April 19 7:00 PM

***Florida on Fire***

Dr. Rachel Wentz, Regional Director

Florida Public Archaeology Network – FPAN

Florida History Society Headquarters  
435 Brevard Avenue in Cocoa Village

Sat. April 20 10:00 AM

***Fellsmere Railroad Tour***

Hosted by National Railroad Historical Society

With stops from Vero Beach to Fellsmere

Carpool/caravan; participants may join/leave at any time

For information contact CabooseMikey at

[quailkeyrailway@bellsouth.net](mailto:quailkeyrailway@bellsouth.net)

Sun. April 23 2:00 PM

***Civil War Memorial Service***

Honoring veterans of the Union and Confederate Armies

Melbourne City Cemetery, Hibiscus Avenue

For further information: 321.723.6068

Thur. April 25

***“Chasing Bones” book presentation***

Dr. Rachel Wentz, Regional Director

Florida Public Archaeology Network – FPAN

Central Brevard Library 1:00-2:00 PM

308 Forrest Ave, Cocoa

Mims-Scottsmor Library 6:30-7:30 PM

3615 Lionel Road, Mims

## THE GREAT MELBOURNE FIRE

Ed Vosatka

MELBOURNE, February 18, 1919, 4:00 p.m. A lit kerosene heater exploded on the wood boardwalk fronting the Indian River behind Melbourne's Front St. businesses. In less than an hour, the boardwalk, the foot of the City Dock, and the entire downtown were gone; ten buildings encompassing dwellings, businesses, a hotel, land office, and an apartment. The damage amounted to \$26,700 in losses with only one \$3,800 insurance policy. Citizens responding with bucket brigades were held at bay by 100-foot flames fanned by a 40 mph Northeaster. They turned to keeping flames from racing building to building up the bluff and into the heart of the residential district and hotels along New Haven Ave. and the Dixie Highway (now U.S. 1).

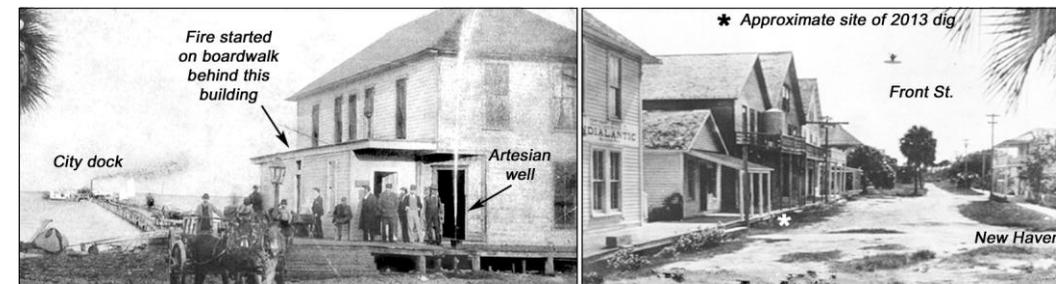
Melbourne's 18-man volunteer fire department responded with their 1916 Waterous gasoline pumping engine and two autodrained hose reels. There was no city water system, only numerous artesian wells fitted with 2½-inch connections. The lone Front Street artesian could produce, unassisted, a jet of water over 25 feet high. Unfortunately, it was at the building where the fire started. The engine crew headed south, cutting through fences and backyards to get to Beaujean's Boat Works (now a condo parking lot opposite the radio station) where they set up their pumper and, with 900 feet of 2½-inch hose, contained the fire on the south. They had the fire under control by 6 p.m., while piling continued burning all night long.

Cadets from the Kentucky Military Institute's winter quarters in Eau Gallie fought the growing grass fires heading west up the bluff. Eau Gallie's fire department also responded, but their engine was in such deplorable condition it had to be towed and careened off the Eau Gallie River bridge and into the water.

What is now called “Historic Downtown Melbourne” is where businesses flourished after the true Historic Downtown Melbourne vanished.

In January 2013, SBHS members unearthed remnants of the fire near the corner of New Haven and Front Street not too far from the fire's point of origin. An intense “sulfurous” smell still emanated from the charred wood siding, framing, and shingles of the buildings and a six-inch-square, three-foot-long timber, possibly from the boardwalk or a dock (longer timbers were too heavy to recover). SBHS members also recovered broken and melted glass bottles, pieces of crockery and ceramic, metal pipes and nails, and a piece of anthracite coal. The most noteworthy find was a 1½-inch fire hose coupling (possibly brass) which contained a 2” x 2” scrap of singed cotton hose. We will place these items on display in the fall.

Story has it that the kerosene heater caught fire and was thrown out of an upstairs window after being shot...yes...SHOT!!



Downtown Melbourne, looking southeast from the corner of New Haven Ave. & Front St.

The SBHS thanks AAA Malabar Mini-Storage, located across the street from the Malabar Town Hall, for their generous donation of air-conditioned secure storage for the Society's collections and archives. We also wish to thank Y. (Rusty) Rutstein, SBHS member and owner of *A Better Copy*, located at 102 East New Haven Avenue, for providing discounted printing services for the newsletter.