

Historical Overview of The Legacy Trail



The Legacy Trail is a gift of significant historical and environmental lands which promote a sense of community among Sarasota County residents and provide a place for visitors and residents to use and enjoy. Uses include viewing wildlife in different habitats, relaxing in a mostly undeveloped environment, a travel corridor to other places in the County, discovering and studying local history and recreation such as walking, rollerblading, bicycling.

The first passenger coach ran on the brand new Seaboard Air Line Railway Sarasota to Venice extension on November 12, 1911. The Venice Train Depot, built by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, was opened March 27, 1927. The railroad helped Venice survive during the Florida real estate bust and the Great Depression.

The cadets and faculty of the Kentucky Military Institute traveled by rail to winter classes in Venice from 1933 to 1970. The railroad also transported patients to Dr. Albee's Florida Medical Center from 1932 to 1942. Many servicemen and goods were transported over the rails to Venice and the Army Air Base during WWII (1942-45).

On April 30, 1971, the last passenger train arrived in Venice. Limited freight service continued until January 1992. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus used the Seaboard Air Line / Legacy Corridor to reach its winter quarters in Venice from 1960 to 1992.

Sarasota County purchased and restored the Venice Train Depot. The restored Depot was dedicated October 24, 2003. The Historic Depot serves as an historical resource with tours by the Venice Area Historical Society and as a regional transportation hub for Sarasota County Area Transit. The Depot will also serve as a trailhead for the multi-use trail.



In 2004 after more than a decade of planning, the county's \$11.75 million purchase of the scenic CSX railroad corridor was accomplished in partnership with The Trust for Public Land and celebrated on April 4, 2005. At nearly 12.5 miles long, the 100-foot-wide CSX corridor stretches from just south of Clark Road in Sarasota to Center Road in Venice.

The Legacy Trail links to the Venetian Waterway Park (VWP) at the historic Venice Train Depot at the Venice Avenue Bridge, where trail users can continue south on VWP mainland trail to the Shamrock Park Nature Center or cross the Intercoastal Waterway to the VWP island-side trail and south to Caspersen Beach and Park. It is about 15 miles from the trail's beginning point near Sawyers Loop Rd. in Sarasota to either of the southern trailheads at Caspersen Beach or Shamrock Park.

The Venice Area Historical Society is a great source for information about the Venice Train Depot and The Legacy Trail corridor.



The Legacy Trail links to the Venetian Waterway Park trails at the historic Venice Train Depot on Venice Avenue