

Written and Delivered on Saturday, April 27th, 2019 by Mel Kelly

“Ten years of accomplishments and history for this museum and its leaders – I am proud to have been part of the initial planning and implementation – thank you all for sharing in our ten chapters and helping our visions come true!

Chapter #1 – Carrabelle’s Waterfronts presentation was judged number one by the presiding review board (out of more than four dozen statewide submissions) – it was at that time that the seed of this museum was planted.

Chapter #2. Carrabelle historic figures themselves, Ms Lillian Smith and Ms Mary Westberg came to the City Commission pleading that the Historical Society be allowed to use the former city hall building for a museum. Their message was so effective that Commissioner Sands finally had to ask them to sit down to give the commission the chance to approve their request, which they did unanimously!

Chapter #3. Waterfronts organizer and historian Tamara Allen, together with Artist and historian Joan Matey, began the planning for the best use of the abandoned building here on Ave B.

Chapter #4. The building proved to need much love and repair; electric outlets didn’t work and were pulling out of walls, spalling walls were crumbling from moisture, wiring was frightening and mostly unusable, junk had accumulated on both floors, rain water ran down the upstairs walls, and too many more obstacles to list!

Chapter#5. One of the first, and most historically important donation was received from Ms Rita Millender, who entrusted Tamara and Joan with the medical bag used by midwife Tillie Miller. And the museum began to find its own history.

Chapter#6. Tamara used her grant writing expertise in earnest, asking for state help on behalf of repairs, upgrades and improvements with important city support for each grant submission.

Chapter#7. Grants began to come in to help the building come alive as a community treasure.

Chapter#8. Drawings and plans created and developed the vision for each of the four display rooms (including a small gift shop) and the much needed office space.

Chapter#9. As the museum displays grew, local contributions of historic items were donated and displayed, helping to bring the pictures and stories of Carrabelle and her people to life.

Chapter#10. Visitors came, praising the displays and education presented in each room. Guests were fascinated to see the former jewelry cases donated by David Butler which were turned into archeological displays of history preceding our nation’s founding. They saw our salt kettle

and displays about the railroad, fishing, timber and turpentine industries. They enjoyed the ongoing mural depicting the Carrabelle harbor - the busiest in all of Florida in 1900. They could see the Civil War display and the story of the 'skirmish' that took place just off Marine street on the river. They looked carefully at the local family pictures and household items of life in the old days, school memorabilia including local yearbooks eagerly shared by grandpas with grandsons, and even the menu and pictures of the famous Julia Mae's restaurant with pie baker extraordinaire, Ms Merle. Visitors read about the story of the sinking of the sailing vessel Tarpon which connected Panhandle communities for many years – before roads and bridges - delivering mail, passengers, cargo and news -and providing employment for many local families. They enjoyed taking 'selfies' in the REAL, original, Carrabelle police station phone booth started by long-serving police chief Albin Westberg, father of one of our founders, Ms Mary. Pictures and stories represent leading local citizens. Don't miss the commemorative edition of the Times newspaper, showing the opening of the Carrabelle hospital! Visitors purchase gift shop items including local photography of bear visits, stuffed white squirrels representing those WWII transplants to this area, educational books and t shirts featuring designs of arrowheads and historic symbols, locally drawn scenic gift cards and much more. A variety of brochures are available for visitors to learn about other local museums, area attractions such as ANNER, St George Island and St Mark's lighthouses and all of Franklin County.

I was very proud to be part of this museum's birth, and even more proud to be here with you all for this wonderful tenth anniversary celebration! And so, in honor of builder Marvin Justiss, whose vision and labor built this building, and to Tamara and Joan and all the working volunteers whose vision and labor built this museum - I wish you all a very Happy Anniversary!"