

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Jan. 28, 2021**

## **Restored Circus Train Car Installed at Historic Venice Train Depot**

Venice, FL -- A retired circus train car made its final stop today at the Historic Venice Train Depot, where the Venice Area Historical Society (VAHS) installed the car to help tell the story of Venice's role in U.S. circus history.

The outside of the train car has been restored over the past four years and VAHS is now working on interior exhibits. Train cars such as this one served as transportation, living quarters and mobile advertising for circuses that crisscrossed the country for decades.

"VAHS is delighted to be able to preserve a part of Venice's circus and railroad history to share with the people of Venice and visitors. We were able to find the ideal car for this exhibit, one that was owned by Ringling Bros. and that has a connection to Venice," said George Miller of VAHS.

"There will also be three rooms inside illustrating how performers lived on the circus train. Venice served as the winter quarters for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1960 to 1992 and as we develop the exhibits inside, we are lucky to be able to draw on the memories and expertise of some of our area's remaining circus performers."

The train car, which VAHS bought from the Florida Railroad Museum, was built by Pullman-Standard in 1953. Originally called the *Short Leaf Pine*, the 85-foot-long rail car had its last brake check in Venice, in 1993.

"Our Society volunteers have devoted eight years to planning and executing this project and we thank the many donors who have contributed to its success," said Mary Huba of VAHS. "And we are thrilled to now donate the car to Sarasota County for the public's education and enjoyment."

VAHS has to date raised nearly \$350,000 to purchase, refurbish, and transport the car as well as to prepare the Depot site, which includes bringing electrical service to the site and constructing a walkway from the deck of the on-site caboose to the new car.

The Historic Venice Train Depot, at 303 E. Venice Avenue, was built in 1927 and was central to the founding and development of Venice. It also served as the train stop for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey performers and animals each winter, as they left the road for several weeks to reside in Venice.

VAHS anticipates that the interior of the Car will be available for tours beginning in fall 2021. The exhibits inside will include:

- An overview of the circus and Venice's circus legacy
- The arrival of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in Venice and the construction of the Venice Arena
- Innovations in the Circus during the Venice years
- A profile of Clown College, an initiative unique to Venice
- Special stories about the relationship between Venice and the Circus

Members of the public are able to view the exterior of the train car during daylight hours at the Historic Venice Train Depot campus.

Donations for interior displays can be made by clicking on the "Donate Now" button on the website [veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](http://veniceareahistoricalsociety.org) or by mailing a check made out to VAHS, to:

Circus Train Car Project, Caldwell Trust Company, 1400 Center Road, Venice FL 34293.

For more information, contact:

George Miller, Depot Manager  
Venice Area Historical Society  
941-412-0151  
PO Box 995  
Venice, FL 34284-0995

[information@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org](mailto:information@veniceareahistoricalsociety.org)

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

**Venice Area Historical Society**

*"Come, celebrate history with us!"*