



## What is One Book One Community?

This is the 18th year the Sarasota County library system has participated in the "One Book, One Community" program, which started in 1996 in Seattle to help foster the expression of ideas within the community through the shared love of reading. One Book engages participants in reading and thoughtful conversation by sponsoring a community-wide reading experience and hosting programs to explore the themes of the featured book. The Book Selection Committee typically spends many weeks reading and reviewing books.

For more than 70 years, the Palmers made major contributions to the physical and economic growth of the Sarasota district and nurtured its emergence as a cultural center. Their major achievements included successful efforts to increase the amount of arable land, provide rail and highways connections, revolutionize cattle and hog raising, and lead the fight to make Sarasota a separate county in 1921. Bertha's prowess as a businesswoman became apparent at the time of her death in 1918 when her estate was found to be twice as large as the one inherited from her husband, Potter Palmer.

**READ THE BOOK, JOIN THE DISCUSSION, SHARE THE STORY.**

To learn more, go to [scgov.net/onebook](http://scgov.net/onebook)



**FIND YOURSELF**  
AT THE LIBRARY



**Sarasota County Public Libraries**

1660 Ringling Blvd. | Sarasota, Florida 34236

941-861-5000 | [www.scgov.net/library](http://www.scgov.net/library)

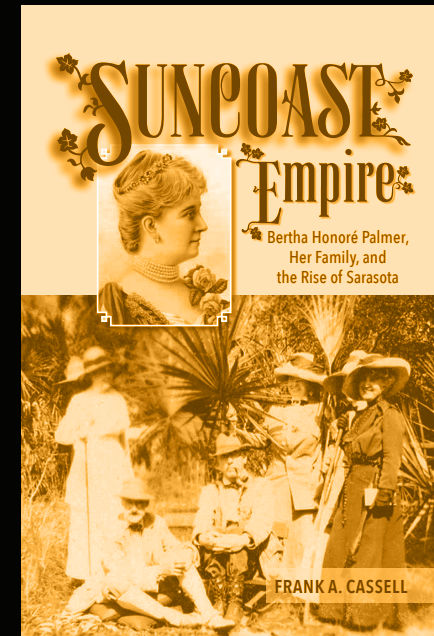
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**2021 SARASOTA COUNTY  
CENTENNIAL ONE BOOK**

# Selection



**FRANK CASSELL'S**

# Suncoast Empire

Bertha Honoré Palmer, Her Family, and the Rise of Sarasota



**Sarasota County**

**CENTENNIAL  
1921 • 2021**

# Centennial



## About the author

**FRANK A. CASSELL** is professor emeritus and president emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. He earned his master's and Ph. D. degrees at Northwestern University, and taught and served as an administrator at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Roosevelt University in Chicago before taking the presidency at Pitt-Greensburg. His published books and articles highlight colonial and early national periods of American history, the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and his experiences as a university president. The University of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees named a new academic building at Pitt-Greensburg in his honor in 2012. He has won awards for excellence in teaching, outstanding historical research and community service.

He retired and moved to Sarasota with his wife Beth in 2007. He now serves as vice chair of the History and Preservation Coalition of Sarasota County, and chairs their Centennial 2021 Steering Committee.

Suncoast Empire: Bertha Honoré Palmer, Her Family, and the Rise of Sarasota received Florida Book Awards 2017 silver medal for nonfiction. His latest book, *Creating Sarasota County*, was written to provide historical support for the Sarasota County Centennial 2021 celebration.



*The family winter residence in Osprey, The Oaks*  
IMAGE COURTESY OF SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORICAL RESOURCES



*The Palmers developed an agricultural community at Bee Ridge, leading to the building of a new hotel near the corner of McIntosh and Proctor.*  
IMAGE COURTESY OF SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORICAL RESOURCES



In the early 20th century, **BERTHA PALMER** was one of the best-known and wealthiest women in America. She was an art collector, women's rights advocate, businesswoman, owner of Chicago's Palmer House Hotel, and had elegant homes in Chicago, Paris and London. In 1910, she traveled to the small and rough settlement called Sarasota on the west coast of Florida and spent much of each year for the rest of her life investing in cattle and farming, and creating communities out of marshlands, pine forests and tropical jungles. The society queen and social reform advocate excelled as a frontier entrepreneur, just as she had in every other endeavor in her life. She managed to make a good deal of money and changed Sarasota forever.



*Bertha Palmer and members of her family in Sarasota in 1911*  
IMAGE COURTESY OF CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM



*Picket Brand Celery Label, 1938*  
IMAGE COURTESY OF SARASOTA COUNTY HISTORICAL RESOURCES



*Venice Freight Depot, built by Bertha Palmer*  
IMAGE COURTESY OF GULF COAST HERITAGE, INC.