

Wednesday, January 24, 2018

Historical Society holds quarterly luncheon

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The Sebring Historical Society held their quarterly luncheon last Saturday at the Civic Center. Mike Jarvis, President of the Society welcomed a crowd of over 100 people.

"I believe this is the largest group we have seen here for a meeting. We need to set up extra tables," said Jarvis. He also led the Pledge of Allegiance and introduced the Sebring Historical Society board. A prayer was led by the Reverend Mr. Maurice McGee. A buffet lunch was served prior to the start of the guest speaker, Attorney John Anthony of Tampa.

Anthony purchased and restored the 99 year-old white Highlands Bank and Trust Building on corner of Circle Drive and North Ridgewood Drive. His 86 year-old father, Al Anthony, has been at his side during the restoration.

Anthony began with telling us who he was. His family came from Italy and changed their name to Anthony to be able to fit in and create their own family heritage. Anthony grew up in Massachusetts. "Nostalgia is different from heritage," said Anthony. "This is not just about restoring a building. It's about preserving our heritage."

Anthony frequently came to Sebring to try cases at the courthouse. "I saw such great potential here and wondered when will this area (the Circle) take off? I want to be part of it. I have known Mayor John Shoop a long time and he has always been knowledgeable regarding opportunities here."

Anthony purchased the building on June 13, 2016, for \$115,000. Electrical and plumbing systems had to be totally worked. Seven tons of material had to be removed and discarded.

"It would be difficult to overstate the full extent of neglect for this unique landmark, especially given its structural integrity, its architectural

uniqueness, and its geographic prominence on the Circle," said Anthony. "It was difficult to

describe the state it was in, but I had decided to place an offer. When I went inside, the place was loaded with stuff from the 1960's, some of the walls did not line up right, but I loved it!"

You can look inside the windows of the ground floor and see the progress that has been made. Anthony installed a beautiful bar that was from the Peace River Country Club.



Restoration of the historic bank building on the Circle in downtown Sebring is nearly complete.

Through all the digging, the only artifact found was a small bottle. Anthony is saving the bank vault and some old steel file cabinets. Plans for the renovated building include an upscale restaurant on the ground floor and offices on the second floor.

"We all want to see the downtown Circle area come back to life. George Sebring built the Circle with the fingers of the community branching out."

Anthony said he spent additional money to ensure the building complements the others and greatly appreciated the financial incentive offered by the CRA.

Several people told stories about the downtown area in the past, including Beverly Singley. Singley is the daughter of Billy Sebring and the great-granddaughter of George Sebring.