

Bal Harbour Village, Florida, Celebrates 70 Years With A New Flag, History Exhibit And Sunset Concert On The Beach

BAL HARBOUR, FLA. August 2016 -- When you're home to the most iconic luxury shopping center on earth, why not celebrate in style? The Bal Harbour Village, which has become famous for the Bal Harbour Shops, has planned many exciting festivities for its 70th anniversary in Fall 2016. A historic photography exhibit and performances explore the enclave's interesting past and give back to the community that makes it such a pleasant place to live, work and visit. A sunset concert on the beach kicks off the high season for snowbirds and tourists in early December; its line-up and date will be announced soon.

To commemorate the grand occasion, the oceanside village commissioned a new flag whose minimal white design features two blue waves below its new logo in black. Mayor Martin Packer and the village council will unveil the flag during a small reception at the Founder's Circle in August, the official month it was incorporated in 1946. The ceremony is scheduled for Monday, August 29, at 6 p.m.

"We're very proud of our new flag. It highlights the bright blue Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay that Bal Harbour resides between and the white sand beach that draw residents and tourists from all over the world to our little piece of paradise," said village manager Jorge M. Gonzalez. "And to think we have the best shopping and hotels too. It's a lot to offer for such a small village."

Many visitors are already familiar with Bal Harbour Shops, the main destination for designer fashions and upscale restaurants that celebrated half a century last year, as well as luxury properties including the St. Regis and Ritz-Carlton. But there's more to the story, so the village reached out to Dr. Paul George, a professor of history at Miami-Dade College and beloved local treasure in his own right, to collaborate on a special project with Claire Breukel, head curator for the public art program Unscripted Bal Harbour. Their exhibit of historic photographs will be displayed at the Sea View Hotel and along Bal Harbour's beach walkway from November through Art Basel Miami Beach 2016 in December. A tour led by Dr. George will accompany the exhibit.

"We're thrilled to have Dr. George involved in our 70th anniversary and couldn't have asked for someone with more knowledge of Miami-Dade County's history," said Gonzalez. "Dr. George is not only a native but serves as a historian at HistoryMiami museum and has taught at many notable universities and written

several books. We look forward to learning about his research of our area and sharing it with the public.”

Situated on the northern tip of Miami Beach, Bal Harbour saw little activity until WW2. Its military connection began when the sliver of sand between the Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay was used as a U.S. Army barrack and training ground for soldiers heading into combat overseas according to Dr. George. The U.S. Army was attracted by its natural state and remoteness, which is pretty incredible considering it’s less than 8 miles from South Beach.

“If you look at aerial photographs of Bal Harbour in 1945, there’s virtually nothing there,” he said, of its lack of development aside from a channel cut during the twenties to connect the bodies of water. “Local officials named it Baker’s Haulover Inlet or Cut after Philip Edward Baker, who fished in the area in the 19th century, and Native Americans who portaged their dugout canoes across the narrow strip of land.”

Bal Harbour Shops came along a mere 20 years later and forever changed the fate of the fledging village. The center’s midcentury modern architecture and open-air design with gardens and koi ponds, an exception to the movement toward enclosed malls at the time, immediately catered to a well-heeled clientele.

“It’s absolutely amazing that a place can become internationally renowned within such a short time,” said George. “By the sixties, everyone knew about Bal Harbour.”

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