

# 'A true treasure'

## ★ MUSEUM

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bling the museum's collection five months ago.

The museum replaced the cycloramas that depicted Ponce de Leon's search for the Fountain of Youth during the early 16th century. It is situated a few yards from the famous warm spring, which has been said to have healing powers by frequent swimmers and was proclaimed to be the Fountain of Youth.

Because of the incessant 87 degree temperature and vast amount of minerals, the spring has been the source of several historical findings, including the oldest human being — dated to be about 10,000 years old.

At one time, Florida Indians inhabited the area near the water hole, which was not full of water until the end of the Ice Age. Archaeologists believe people inhabited caves located along the spring's walls.

But despite the number of findings within the spring over the past 57 years, few of the artifacts in the museum are from the hourglass-shaped water hole.

Evensen said the founders of the museum are looking for people who have artifacts from the spring and who would like to display them.

"We are always looking for donations," Evensen said. "It'd be nice to have some of it back to where it belongs."

Eventually, Evensen said he would like to see schools in the area use the museum as a teaching tool for history, adding he's contacted Sarasota, Charlotte and DeSoto school boards.

"History is something that, if you make it interesting and colorful, the kids will absorb it," he said. "If you just give them dates, kids will skim history. If you actually have a kid holding a mastodon elephant tooth and an arrow, they absorb it. That's our purpose."

In addition, Jackson said

the museum is hoping to create real-life scenarios with human interaction of an Indian site to mimic what a native Florida Indian tribe would have been like during the time the springs were inhabited.

Also near the spring, massage therapy, acupuncture, physical therapy, meditation classes, water exercise classes, a café and picnic tables are available.

Evensen said the museum and the other attractions are going to grow.

"Things are all coming together," Evensen said. "It's just in its infancy right now."

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## Museum interesting for tourists and locals

By ERIN BRYCE  
Staff Writer

NORTH PORT — Brian Evensen's captivating voice resonates within the circular building as he walks through the wall of time and tells the story of large American mastodons and saber-toothed cats.

Surrounded by stacks of artwork depicting early Florida Indian life and fossils dating back to the Ice Age, Evensen's story is brought to life visually by the "Art of Facts and Historical Treasure Expedition" — the new museum at Warm Mineral Springs.

"Florida's basically a treasure chest," said Evensen, who is one of four collectors exhibiting their work at the new museum.

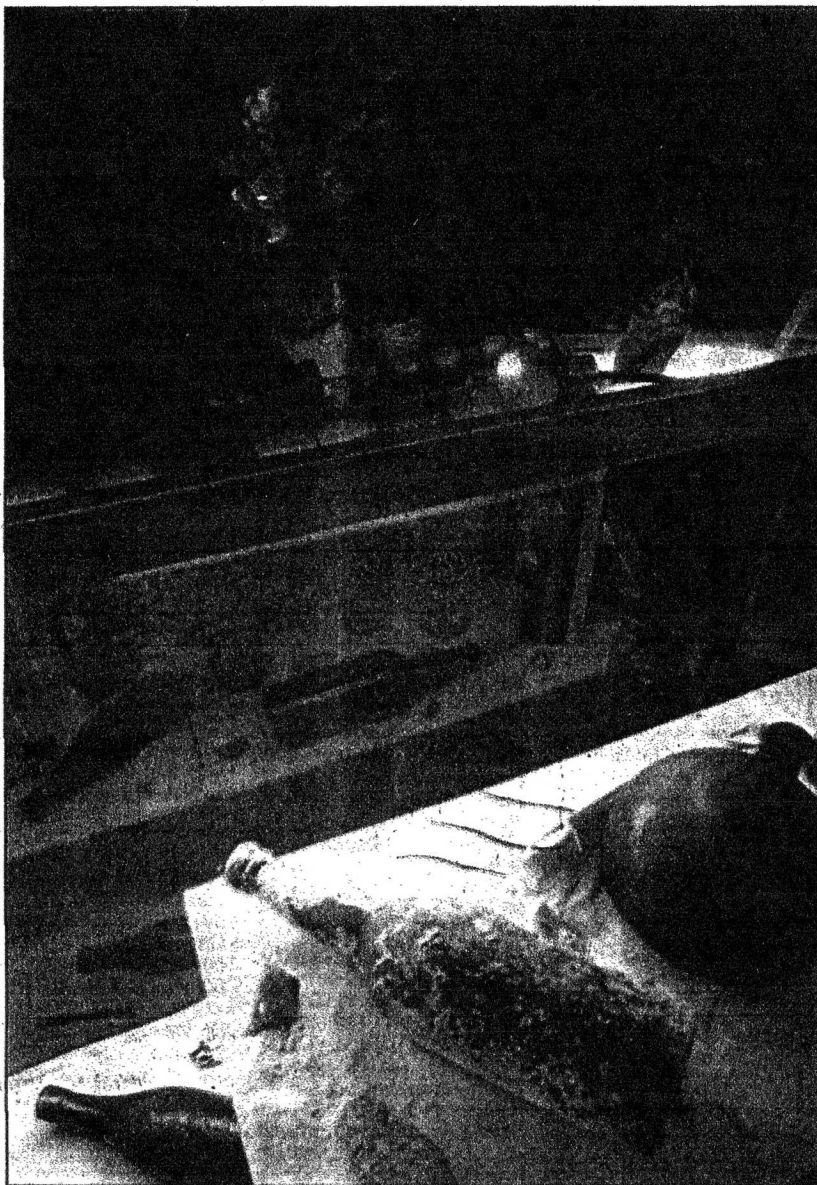
For the past month, the historic showcase has been viewed by about 500 to 1,000 people, mostly tourists. But Evensen, the museum's curator, said he hopes to see more local residents tour the museum.

"There's a lot here to be viewed by the people of this area," he said. "We're going to need the support of the community to make it happen. We put all the work together, and now we need to get the people to come out."

Mike Jackson, a partner in the ownership of the historical site, said the museum is designed to not only give the public a sense of history, but also celebrate the art collection of hobbyists who enjoy finding and preserving archeological treasures.

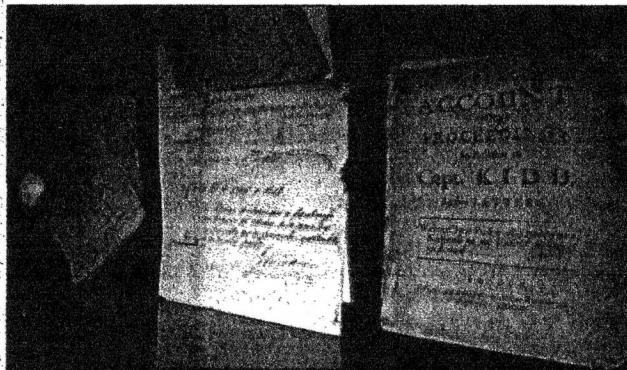
"Not only are we a museum, but we are a gallery for all of this incredible artwork," Jackson said, adding that most of the artwork was donated by the collectors of the fossils and artifacts on display. "I think you'll find we're a true treasure."

Littered throughout the museum's displays, located in an old tower originally built to store the spring's water, are carved canoes and masks by Evensen, reproductions by partners John Durham and Raysha Moore, collections from partner R.L. McBride and several paintings depicting the everyday life of Florida Indian tribes by Dean Quigley. Each of the contributors is a Florida resident. They started assem-



Sun photos by Jeffrey Langlois

Top, Brian Evensen tends to the museum of Florida history at Warm Mineral Springs Wednesday. Below, These papers are from the English who passed through the area.



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