

THE HISTORIAN

The Newsletter of THE BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Serving Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, the Village of Golf, Briny Breezes and all areas of West Boynton to US Hwy 441
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Voncile Smith, President

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Voncile Smith, Editor

“RIVERS OF FLORIDA” for APRIL 11 MEETING

Bill Belleville, a speaker from the **Florida Humanities Council**, will present the program entitled “Rivers of Florida” scheduled for **April 11, 2005, 6:30 p.m.**, at the **Boynton Beach City Library**. The Historical Society is jointly sponsoring this program with the **Friends of the Boynton Beach City Library**. Please note the location and time change.

Mr. Belleville is an award-winning writer and documentary filmmaker specializing in environmental issues and how a “sense of place” helps shape local culture. He has published more than 1,000 national magazine articles, co-produced and scripted three PBS documentaries, and served as a writer on Discovery Channel oceanographic expeditions in the Galapagos Islands, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

He received his BA in English from the University of Maryland. He has lectured at Rollins College in Winter Park, the University of Central Florida, the University of Arizona, and Seminole Community College. He has also been a keynote speaker at the Earth Kinship Conference, the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Writers Conference, The Natural Areas Association symposium, the New England Aquarium’s Lowell Lecture Series, and C-Span Books, among others. He is the author of *River of Lakes: a Journey on Florida’s St. Johns River* and is currently the Writer in Residence at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg.

His presentation for the Boynton Beach Historical Society and the Friends of the Boynton Beach City Library is part of the Florida Humanities Council’s Road Scholars program. The Florida Humanities Council is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities and coordinates public humanities programs throughout the state of Florida.

All programs of the Boynton Beach Historical Society are open free to the public at-large.



Author Bill Belleville

Did you know that the St. Johns River in Florida is one of the few rivers in the northern hemisphere that flows north?

NEW OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS ELECTED

The Boynton Beach Historical Society elects new officers, directors and trustees during the March meeting each year. Officers elected to serve during 2005-06 are President, **Voncile Smith**; First Vice-President, **Jay Rowley**; Second Vice-President, **Joyce DuBois Haley**; Recording Secretary, **Betty Thomas**; Corresponding Secretary, **Lee Buffan**; Treasurer, **Claire Weems**. Directors elected for new three year terms (2005–2008) are **Lucile Dickinson** and **Fain Weems**. To complete a Director’s term (2005–2006), **Dan Rousseau** was elected. Newly elected Trustees for three year terms (2005-2008) are **Harvey Oyer, Jr.** and **Stanley Weaver**. The new officers, directors, and trustees will be installed at the May meeting, and will begin their terms at that time.

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2004-05**

OFFICERS

President	Voncile Smith
1 st Vice President, Programs	Harvey Oyer, Jr.
2 nd Vice President, Membership	Claire Weems
Recording Secretary	Betty Thomas
Corresponding Secretary	Gloria Gregory
Treasurer	Sue Beaman

DIRECTORS

2005	Lucile Dickinson
2005	Fain Weems
2006	Helen Meisenheimer
2006	Nain Weaver
2007	Gloria Turner
2007	Curtis Weaver

TRUSTEES

2005	Harvey Oyer, Jr.
2005	Stanley Weaver
2006	Virginia Farace
2006	Jay Rowley
2007	Janet DeVries
2007	Marion Weems

**MEMBERS WHO HAVE RENEWED OR
JOINED FOR 2005**

[This information is about members whose dues were received between March 1 and March 31, 2005. Members who paid dues prior to March were reported in the January February, and March issues of *The Historian*.]

Corporate Membership:

Charlotte Oyer
James E. and Patricia M. Jones

Patron Membership:

Bob W. and Jeanne Gayler
Marilyn G. Huckle
Paul D. and Frances R. Price
C. Stanley and Erna Weaver

Family Membership:

Ron and Sarah Bollenbacher
Robert L. and Virginia W. Foot
John Tuite and Frances Tuite McKeral
Leon M. and Harriet S. Weekes

Individual Membership:

Rilla Bates
Sue Beaman
Doris Braunworth
Lucile Dickinson
Lois Oyer Dooley
Jim Edward
Lorraine Keatts Gouge
Gloria Gregory
Helen L. McGregor
Sandra McGregor
Gerald Murray
Patsy Weeks

Thank all of you for joining the Boynton Beach Historical Society for 2005. If you are not already a member, won't you please consider joining? See attached form.

ANOTHER UPDATE ON JANUARY FISH TALE

Cheryl Muster has added a postscript concerning her uncle, Captain Jim Thompson, whose "fish tale" about the giant fish of undetermined species appeared in the January newsletter. She writes, "Our local 'Red Lobster' restaurant in Ocala has the famous picture of Jim Thompson and his monster fish posted right inside the door! I wonder how many more restaurants have it here in Florida." Apparently a famous picture indeed.

AN OLD NEWS ARTICLE

One of our members, Jim Edward, has sent the following article from *Tropical Sun*, October 5, 1907. Note the headline and the mix of information included in the article:

**THREE VALUABLE HORSES
POISONED AT BOYNTON**

Winter Visitors Arriving--The Kopp
Residence Nearly Completed--A
Launch Party to West
Palm Beach

Boynton, Oct. 4.—The wet and dry election is creating considerable interest among our citizens.

We are expecting Boynton to poll a heavy vote for "dry"—this is surely a case that affects every citizen in the county.

Mr. and Mrs. Peatree, of Chicago, and son Harry are now occupying their property on Lake Worth, near Boynton. We are pleased to know these people expect to make Boynton their future home.

Three valuable horses belonging to the Boynton Hotel Co. died of poison the early part of the week. These were all fine animals and it will be hard to replace them at present. This makes six horses that have died here in the past six months.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Freedlund were in West Palm Beach Tuesday.

Mr. W. H. Cox returned Sunday night from St. Louis, Mo., where he was called a few weeks ago to attend the bedside of Mrs. Cox, who was critically ill in that city. She has since been successfully operated on and is now out of danger. She will return to Boynton as soon as possible.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pence, Mrs. H. B. Murray and children, Mrs. John J. Schabinger, of Delray, and sons Earnest and John Jr., accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Cullen Pence to Palm Beach Thursday, on a shopping trip, aboard the Saundusky.

Mr. and Mrs. B. L. Kapp have most completed their handsome residence and are now occupying same.

OLD HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

A special thanks to those of you who wrote letters or notes to support saving the historic Boynton High School building. Currently the CRA is drafting a proposal for use, authority, and funding to submit to the City Commission at its April meeting. *The Historian* will report on progress.

IN MEMORIAM

Melvin Eugene Weaver, a member of the Historical Society, died March 18, 2005. Melvin and Charlotte Weaver had been active in the Boynton community throughout his adult lifetime. Both of them were the primary forces behind the establishment of the Boynton Beach YMCA. We send our condolences to Charlotte, to their children, and to the other members of the Weaver family.

Several years ago Melvin sent *The Historian* copies of several papers he had prepared. One of them was his speech at the ground breaking of the YMCA which follows.



Melvin Eugene Weaver

YMCA Ground Breaking
May 25, 1999
10:00 AM
Speech by
Melvin E. Weaver

I would like to wish you a good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and let you know how much I appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedules to attend the ground breaking for the Boynton-Delray YMCA Family Center. Charlotte and I are really excited about this project and proud to have the opportunity to play a small part in it.

The other day I was thinking back on how it first came to my attention that the Y was interested in acquiring this parcel of ground. I remembered back those many months to an early morning when I entered the office at Cypress Creek Country Club and spotted among a stack of unopened mail a letter from the YMCA of Boca Raton. For some unknown reason that letter piqued my interest and I opened it right away.

The purpose of the letter was to inform the Weaver family that the YMCA was searching for a piece of property in the area to build a YMCA complex, and these 11.4 acres was the first choice among several parcels they were looking at. The letter also contained a proposal for acquiring the property. I was immediately thrilled with the idea. I remember thinking how appropriate it would be to help in creating a permanent facility dedicated to improving the quality of life of the citizens of the community on what turns out to be the last piece of property the Weaver family still owned from the original 1495-acre dairy farm our father started in 1922. I thought it appropriate in the sense that the children of M.A. and Marion Weaver, who were all born, raised, and prospered in this community, had a once in a lifetime opportunity to partially repay the community for the lifetime of care, advice, safe environment, moral and ethical guidance and many happy memories the community had afforded us as youngsters growing up here.

It also enabled the Weaver children the opportunity to provide a lasting legacy to the pioneer spirit of our mother and father on the very location where the original dairy barn was built in 1922. The actual barn was located about 100 yards to the east of where we now stand.

In 1922, Old Boynton Road was a nine-foot wide shell rock road that dead-ended at what is now Military Trail. Military Trail was only a trail, so called because it was used to move troops and supplies during the Seminole Wars by the military in its struggle with the Indians. The Trail is located where it is because, although you can't see it, it is the highest natural elevation stretching from the E-4 canal to the east and the Everglades to the west. The crown of the Military Trail is twenty feet above sea level. I believe the main reason my father chose to purchase land on both sides of the Military Trail is because of its high elevation that provided better drainage than land of lower elevations. Good drainage is a must for successful dairy farming.

I want to relay to you a few experiences I had as a boy growing up in Boynton Beach because it relates to one of the reasons I'm so pleased about the YMCA locating here.

If you have not lived here for more than fifty years, you may be ignorant of the fact that at one time Boynton Beach had a high school. Its name was Boynton Beach High School: home of the Fighting Tigers. If you have lived here for more than fifty years, you would never have seen me play football for the Tigers. Why, you ask? The answer is simple: there was no football team. We were told that the school wasn't large enough to field a team, but the boys who wanted to play always thought the real reason was that the School Board didn't want to spend the money to build a football field. After all, they never built us a gymnasium or a baseball diamond either.

But don't despair; we did manage to field both a basketball and baseball team. The basketball team played in

[continued on page 4]

[Melvin Weaver YMCA speech – continued from page 3]

the auditorium and the baseball team played at Pence Park, a city owned field. The basket and backboard at the north end of the basketball court was portable because it sat in the middle of the stage and had to be moved out of sight when the stage was being used. It was so heavy it took the whole basketball team to move it. By the end of each season we may not have been all that good playing basketball but we sure could move that backboard in a hurry.

When basketball season was over we had to immediately prepare for the baseball season. Not prepare our minds and bodies, mind you, I mean prepare the field. We had to pull all the sandspurs out of the infield by hand as well as build the pitcher's mound and home plate. The city did at least mow the outfield with a bushhog mower pulled behind a large tractor. I think you're beginning to see why I'm so pleased; finally, after all those years, something for Boynton Beach.

But you know, as time passed and I grew older, a wonderful transformation took place within me. I think it happens to most people to a certain extent. I remember as a kid growing up during the depression and then World War

II the many shortages we had to endure and, while understanding the reasons for the shortages, not liking the fact that we were having them. Now looking back on those years of my youth, they conjure up some of my fondest memories.

As a kid, I had the better of two worlds: living in Small Town USA as well as living in the country, and never realized it until I was a grown man. I could leave main street, the school, the sport field, and home and in ten minutes be here at my dad's dairy farm where I would ride one of several cow ponies, fish, hunt, swim in the canals, camp out, or just explore the "Flatwoods" as nature made them. I remember a pair of eagles that built a large nest and raised their young in a pine tree located between where Old Boynton Road and Boynton Beach Boulevard now are. This whole area was covered in slash pine trees, saw palmetto, wire grass and rattlesnakes. It recently dawned on me that while I was growing up I was so spoiled by the good life I didn't realize what I had.

I had my own private YMCA. Now the time has finally come for the whole community to have its **YMCA!**

**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE
BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Memberships are for the Calendar year. Check the appropriate line and return this form, or a facsimile, with your dues to The Boynton Beach Historical Society, Post Office Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

Individual Membership __\$25.00 Family Membership __\$35.00

Patron Membership __\$50.00

Corporate Membership __\$100.00 or more

Member's Name _____

2nd Member's Name _____

Street /P.O Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

If you are willing to serve on a Committee, check all that apply:

Public Relations___ Education___ Membership___
Minority History___ Refreshments___ Archives/Preservation___
Fund Raising___ Program___

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