ALACHUA SENATOR WITH BOYNTON TIES TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING MAY 15

Florida Senator Rod Smith will be the featured speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society held in conjunction with The Mizner Foundation, which is also holding its Annual Meeting. The date, time and place is Sunday, May 15, 5:00 p.m. at the Boynton Woman’s Club, 1010 South Federal Highway. The meeting will be a covered-dish dinner. Please bring a dish large enough to serve eight of salad, vegetable, or dessert. The two organizations will furnish meat and beverages.

During his youth, Senator Smith who now represents the 14th Senate District, worked in agriculture with his family in the Boynton area. He graduated from Seacrest (now Atlantic) High School and Palm Beach Community College, and later in 1974 the University of Florida College of Law. He is a cousin of several of the DuBois families who still farm in the area. Other family ties include the Parks, the Lambs, and the Coopers. Senator Smith chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee and is also a member of the Environmental Preservation Committee. He will discuss both these areas and how they are currently impacted by state funding.

Other business for the meeting will include installation of new officers, board members and trustees of the Historical Society, and the election and installation of new board members for the Mizner Foundation.

Please join us.

ONCE UPON A TIME, THE TOWN OF BOYNTON . . . NOW A LOOK AT THE TOWN OF MANALAPAN

The original Town of Boynton was named for Major Nathan S. Boynton and is now the only city of any size in the state that retains the name of its founder. Other towns and cities have been named after people, but these honored individuals were not the founders of their namesake cities.

The original Town included portions of ocean front property that has become separately incorporated communities. Manalapan, Ocean Ridge, Briney Breezes, and Boynton Beach were once a part of the Town of Boynton. In future issues, The Historian will discuss all these communities, but in this issue, we will give our attention to Manalapan.

According to the homepage of the Town of Manalapan, George H.K. Carter was granted a homestead on the yet unnamed land in 1889 by President Benjamin Harrison. But C.W. Pierce reports that the name was George Charter, and Pierce was with him when he filed his homestead claim in Gainesville in 1886.

Today Manalapan is a small, quiet community dedicated

(Continued on page 2)
to controlled development. The configuration of the community is unusual because it consists of two separate areas, contiguous only by water. One part runs along the coast (A-1-A) south of the Lantana public beach to the Boynton Inlet (South Lake Worth Inlet); the other shares Hypoluxo Island with the Town of Lantana where it occupies approximately the southern one third of the island.

Hannibal Pierce moved his family from Jupiter to Hypoluxo Island in 1872. Within a year they had a few new neighbors: Charlie Moore, H. F. Hammon and Will Lanehart, and Mr. and Mrs. W.M. Butler and their daughter Mary.

Life was difficult. Their major source of lumber and other supplies came from shipwrecks. The nearest location for buying staples was Titusville which required a trip by boat that took several weeks. In the early years venison and bear could still be found east of the island. The settlers competed with the bears in the summer months for the sea turtle eggs which were a major food item for both.

Their hardships and shortages contrast markedly with the luxury Manalapan now represents. By the 1930s the Vanderbilts had two large estates there. Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, once the Duchess of Marborough, bought a two story frame and stucco house and the land surrounding it on the southern part of Hypoluxo Island that had once belonged to the Dimicks. The Dimicks had been given title to the land by the Pierces to satisfy a mortgage Dimic held.

Consuelo enlarged the house, demolishing portions of it. In 1959, it and 100 acres around it, were acquired by the current Mayor of Manalapan, Bill Benjamin. Mr. Benjamin still retains the house and about six and one-half acres. He has dredged, filled and bulkheaded waterfront portions. Neither Benjamin nor Harvey Oyer know exactly where the Pierce house stood, but it was in the general vicinity of the Consuelo Vanderbilt mansion.

During World War II, when the southern portion was still largely uncleared, the U.S. Military used the dense jungle area for survival training maneuvers.

Consuelo’s brother, Commodore Harold Vanderbilt, owned a mansion on the ocean side of Manalapan. He was instrumental in incorporating the settlement in 1931 when the state granted a charter to the Town of Manalapan. Jerome D. Gedney served as the first Mayor. Harold Vanderbilt was Mayor 1952-1966.

Another privilege that town residents have enjoyed is membership in La Coquille Club which was founded about 40 years ago with typical resort amenities—pool, spa, and beach facilities, club room, and tennis facilities. When plans for the recently developed Ritz Carlton Hotel were approved, the Town Commission required the incorporation of “The La Coquille Club” as a modern version of the former club which once occupied the same grounds. Town residents and property owners pay no initiation fee or annual dues to the Club and upon registration have priority for membership.

The year-round residents currently number about 325 and seasonal visitors may swell the population to around 500. The Town has a modern municipal building and a Town Library. It has its own police and fire departments, and its own municipal water plant which also provides water to the residents of Hypoluxo.
Don Besecker is draped in automobile seat belts in 1963. He is standing at Don’s Firestone, directly behind where Don’s Goodyear is now located as Easy Pay Tire Store at 629 North Federal Highway, in that year cars did not come equipped with seat belts, and the Boynton Beach Jaycees provided the belts and installation for $6.00. It was a fundraiser for the Jaycees, and Don, as a Jaycee, donated his services for the installation. The camera is looking south, and today Beck’s Towing is located where the vacant field occurs in the picture. The street on the right is Railroad Avenue.

The Jaycees are a nationwide organization whose purpose is to develop young citizens for leadership positions in the community. At that time members were to leave the organization at age 35, but many, termed “Exhausted Roosters,” stayed on in leadership positions and new member leaders did not develop to continue the organization. When it was organized in 1959, the Boynton Beach Jaycees was a dynamic organization which led to strong lifetime friendships. The members from this period still meet for an annual dinner. [Photo courtesy Don Besecker, photographer was Stan Sheets.]

MEMBERS WHO HAVE RENEWED OR JOINED FOR 2005

[Dues received between April 1 and April 30 only. Members who paid prior to April were reported in earlier issues of The Historian]

Corporate Membership: Scobee-Combs-Bowden Funeral Home
Family Membership: Warren R. and Mary R. Hartman
Janet DeVries
William R. and Mary R. Hartman
Gay and Steve Voss
Curtis E. and Myrtle E. Wright

Individual Membership: Marvin T. Benson
Madeline A. Hawkins
Cheryl Muster
William Raleigh Weeks

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE HISTORIAN WILL BE SEPTEMBER
WHEN THOSE JOINING AFTER MAY 1 WILL BE REPORTED.
The Mizner Foundation of Boynton Beach, Inc.

Spring Covered Dish Dinner

Cordially invite Members and Their Guests

Guest Speaker: Hon. Rod Smith, Florida Senate

Social Hour 5:00 p.m.
Dinner at 5:30

Sunday, May 15, 2005

1010 South Federal Highway
Boynton Beach, Florida

For more information:
Vivian Smith
(561) 736-5653

Donna Traeger
(561) 736-6579

The Boynton Beach Historical Society

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE
BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Memberships are for the Calendar year. Check the appropriate line and return this form, 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 ___

THE HISTORIAN
Boynton Beach Historical Society
P.O. Box 12
Boynton Beach FL 33425-0012