From Voncile...

In May I began my sixth successive year as the Society’s president. Although the five past years represent positive achievements for our group, on some issues we often are stymied.

Let’s look at the gains first. The Historian has been mailed regularly, eight issues a year, during each of the five years I have completed. We have a website and an e-mail address. Our membership has increased substantially, and, thanks in large measure to Janet DeVries, our efforts for archival preservation have improved. Janet has also contributed in so many other ways including website maintenance, program facilitation, and most importantly, moral support.

I am grateful, too, for the continuing help and support of the other Officers and Board members. Two people I commend in particular are Bev Cormany who has been a wonderful membership chair, and Claire Weems who has served so faithfully as our treasurer.

A major loss for the Board was the resignation of Stanley Weaver (for health reasons). Stanley and the Weaver family have been so committed to the community for so many years, and Stanley’s advice and continuing participation will be much missed by all of us.

A topic of continuing frustration has been the fate of the historic 1927 high school building. City officials have continued to drag their feet when it comes to assigning the building to local groups who are interested in preserving it to establish it as a cultural center. [See inside article.]

Some of the objectives I have mentioned each year still await implementation. These include the collection of more oral histories, and a more active effort to collect histories pertaining to minority groups. We continue to seek more materials—photos, letters, journals, and similar memorabilia—which will help to assure a better picture of what has helped to build our community. And there is always needed effort to prevent the destruction of historically significant sites. This last issue could be facilitated by the enactment of a City Ordinance creating an historic preservation board.

To accomplish these will require commitment, time, and legwork on the part of members of the historical society. I hope more of you can step forward to help. Our preservation efforts depend on you.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM

WHAT: A Presentation by the New Executive Director, Michael David Hall

WHEN: Monday, September 10, 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: The 1913 Schoolhouse Children’s Museum

We begin this 2007-2008 year with a presentation at the Schoolhouse by the new museum Executive Director, Michael David Hall.

A native of Illinois, Michael Hall brings with him 22 years of experience in the museum field. He received his BA in American History and Business Administration and then was employed as site manager of a 3,000 acre farm and wildlife area in Illinois which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He entered; historic preservation after receiving his MA in American History and Museum Studies at Western Illinois University. He moved to Indiana and became a curator and then director of the Montgomery County Historical Society and oversaw [continued on page 2]
The Boynton Beach Historical Society’s website is boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org. You can contact us at our e-mail address boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com or mail inquiries or information to our mailbox at P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

The Historian is mailed eight times a year—September, October, November, January, February, March, April and May—to all members. No copies are produced in December, June, July and August. Back issues and an index prior to the current year are posted on our website.

IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to report that Edythe Guthrie Hood, a long time Boynton Beach resident and community activist died on August 21 at age 94.

Edythe Guthrie, who was originally from Caanan, Ohio, first came with her parents to Lake Worth in 1919. In 1935 she lived in Lake Worth with her new husband, Charles Howard Hood, who was from Medina, Ohio. In 1938 they moved to Boynton Beach where she continued to live throughout her lifetime.

For years Howard Hood operated a service station on Federal Highway. He served as Mayor and was also otherwise active in the community. Edythe and he had six children—Sally Hood, Nancy McNamee, Judith Boswell, Charles Richard Hood, Thomas H. Hood, and Kathleen DeCamara.

Edythe was active and involved in many civic organizations. She was a 50 year member and past president of the Boynton Woman’s Club, first president of Seacrest (now Atlantic) High School PTA, and first president of St. Mark’s Women’s Club. She served on many City boards including the Library Board, Boynton’s Disaster Board, and the first Interracial Board. She was an Election Board Clerk for 30 years.

She was active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames, Founders and Patriots, and in the Court of Honor. She was a realtor for many years and served on the Board of Realtors in various capacities. She had also been a member of Bethesda Hospital’s Auxiliary Board, and was a director of the Community Concert Series Board. She belonged to the Boynton Book Club and had been a long standing member of the Historical Society.

The Historical Society is grateful for the many contributions of this long-time community member. We extend our best wishes and condolences to all the members of her family—her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren who were fortunate to share her life for so many years.
Once again the future of this historic building is in jeopardy. Several years ago the City Commission assigned the building to the Community Redevelopment Agency. The CRA in turn called for proposals to rehabilitate and use the facility. After deliberation over what they considered to be two viable submissions, the CRA leased the building for a token amount to Five Towns College from the Northeast which indicated they would establish a Southern campus in the building. Early this year, Five Towns College withdrew their offer.

Soon after that the City Commission disbanded the Board of the CRA and took over Board functions themselves. The hired staff of the CRA remains intact.

Currently a group of consultants is gathering information to make recommendations concerning the whole redevelopment area assigned to the CRA. This includes the Ocean Avenue corridor which, of course, includes both the 1913 Schoolhouse Children’s Museum and the 1927 historic old high school.

One of the problems the Historical Society has encountered in trying to discuss its role in transforming the old school into a functional structure has been the inability or the unwillingness of some members of City government to understand that no group can go out and raise money to work on the building if they do not have some type of lease or assignment giving them control of the building. We cannot raise money, either by donation or grant, unless we, or a group we support, has control of the building.

A representative from the Florida Department of State, Division for Historic Preservation has been meeting with some of us to discuss how important it is to preserve historic sites in Florida. Unfortunately many people who have moved into Florida in more recent times appear to have no appreciation of the value of these undertakings. Sometimes these people are elected or appointed to decision making positions in government.

A mountain of separately funded studies all support the advantageous impact historical preservation and the establishment of cultural centers has on an area’s economy. We have access to these studies, but the appropriate people must look at them.

There is substantial money available for historic preservation and restoration through both the state and federal government and through private foundations.

While rehabilitation of the building will be very expensive (estimates suggest $6 to $9 million), a comparable structure could not be built new for that amount.

Cosmetically the building is somewhat of a mess because of 16 years of neglect by the City. But two totally independent well-regarded restoration architects as well as a construction firm specializing in historic restoration have evaluated the building as still sound and worthy of reclamation.

Currently we are part of a group lobbying for control of the building. We have representatives from the Palm Beach County Arts Council and the Historical Society of Palm Beach County working with us.

Boynton Beach has only three historically significant public buildings—the 1913 Schoolhouse, the Woman’s Club, and the 1927 historic old high school. The old high school was designed by William Manley King a well-respected Mediterranean Rival style architect of the 1920s. The building also has elements of an up and coming style of that period that would make South Florida famous, Art Deco. The building deserves to be saved. If it is destroyed, an important relic of the area’s history as well as that of Boynton Beach will be lost forever.
Boynotn Historical Society

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THE HISTROIAN

Boynotn High School Students ca. 1930
Julia F. Fain on left, next to Hazel Lacy, Christine Jordan, and Margaret Meridith. Doria Auvin is seated in front. Upper row from left, Lou Anna Ward, Flossie May, Martha Myers, and Gracie Woodruff.

[Photo courtesy Julia Fain's son Corky Dalton via Anne Weems Michael]