



The Historian

The Newsletter of the Boynton Beach Historical Society

Serving Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Briny Breezes, Lantana, Hypoluxo, the Village of Golf and all areas of West Boynton, in addition to supporting the preservation of the history of Palm Beach County and the State of Florida as a whole.

2010 Number 1

January 2010

PERFORMANCE PERSONIFIED!

The Boynton Beach Historical Society is privileged to have a very remarkable person speaking at our January program meeting. This is Gillian Davis, better known to many in the surrounding area as "Miss Gillian." As a wartime waif from England seeking refuge in this country from the German Blitz during World War II, she first made her mark in Hollywood. Professional acting was not to be her lifetime commitment, however. She is skilled in both music and dance and has used this knowledge to bring enjoyment and training in the arts to others. She has influenced many young people through her teaching and has brought enthusiasm to building a better community in other ways which she will share with us. She spends part of each year in Great Britain and has expanded her devotion to music and dance to both continents.



Gillian and her brother Anthony with Mickey Rooney on studio lot c. 1940

[See additional pictures, p. 3]

According to a short biographical article published in *British Floridian Newsletter*, April 1976, her greatest accomplishment or satisfaction came from teaching students ballet. She often composed music for her ballerinas, and she conducted many adult dance classes including ballroom. Plan to hear and cheer this accomplished person.

WHAT? PERFORMANCE PERSONIFIED!
A discussion of her life by
Gillian Wimbourne Davis

WHERE? Boynton Woman's Club
1010 South Federal Highway

WHEN? Monday, January 18, 2010
6:30 p.m.

**ALL PROGRAM MEETINGS OF
BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL
ARE OPEN FREE TO THE PUBLIC**

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2009-10**

OFFICERS

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1 st Vice President, Programs	Janet DeVries
2 nd Vice President, Membership	Bev Cormany
Recording Secretary	Virginia Farace
Corresponding Secretary	Carol Mahoney
Treasurer	Fran McKeral
Editor <i>The Historian</i>	Voncile Smith
Archivist and Webmaster	Janet DeVries

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2010	Gloria Turner
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2011	Steve Anton
2011	Sally Dye
2012	Sheila Rousseau Taylor
2012	Delma Swilley

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2010	Wendy Franklin
2010	Marion Weems
2011	Randall Gill
2011	Harvey Oyer, Jr
2012	Victor Norfus
2012	Dan Rousseau

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The next Board of Directors meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society is scheduled for Monday, February 1, 2010, 6:30, at the Boynton Woman's Club. Any member who wishes to attend who is not a Board member is welcome and may participate in the discussion, but may not vote. A notice of this meeting will be posted on the website.

DUES REMINDER

A special thanks to those people who have sent in their dues for 2010. We forgot to include the date when your dues expire on the last mailing label, but please note that it is printed there this month. Our membership year runs from January 1 to December 31 of each year. Sending out a separate dues notice requires not only volunteer time, but postage. Please help us by renewing now rather than waiting until we mail out individual reminders. Thank you for your help.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS FOR 2010

[The following were received by January 1. Later renewals will be listed in forthcoming issues of *The Historian*.]

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIPS:

Jim Edward
George and Christine Weaver Ternenyi

PATRON MEMBERSHIPS:

Ralph E. and Isabel Myers
Voncile Marshall Smith
Charlotte Tatum Weaver

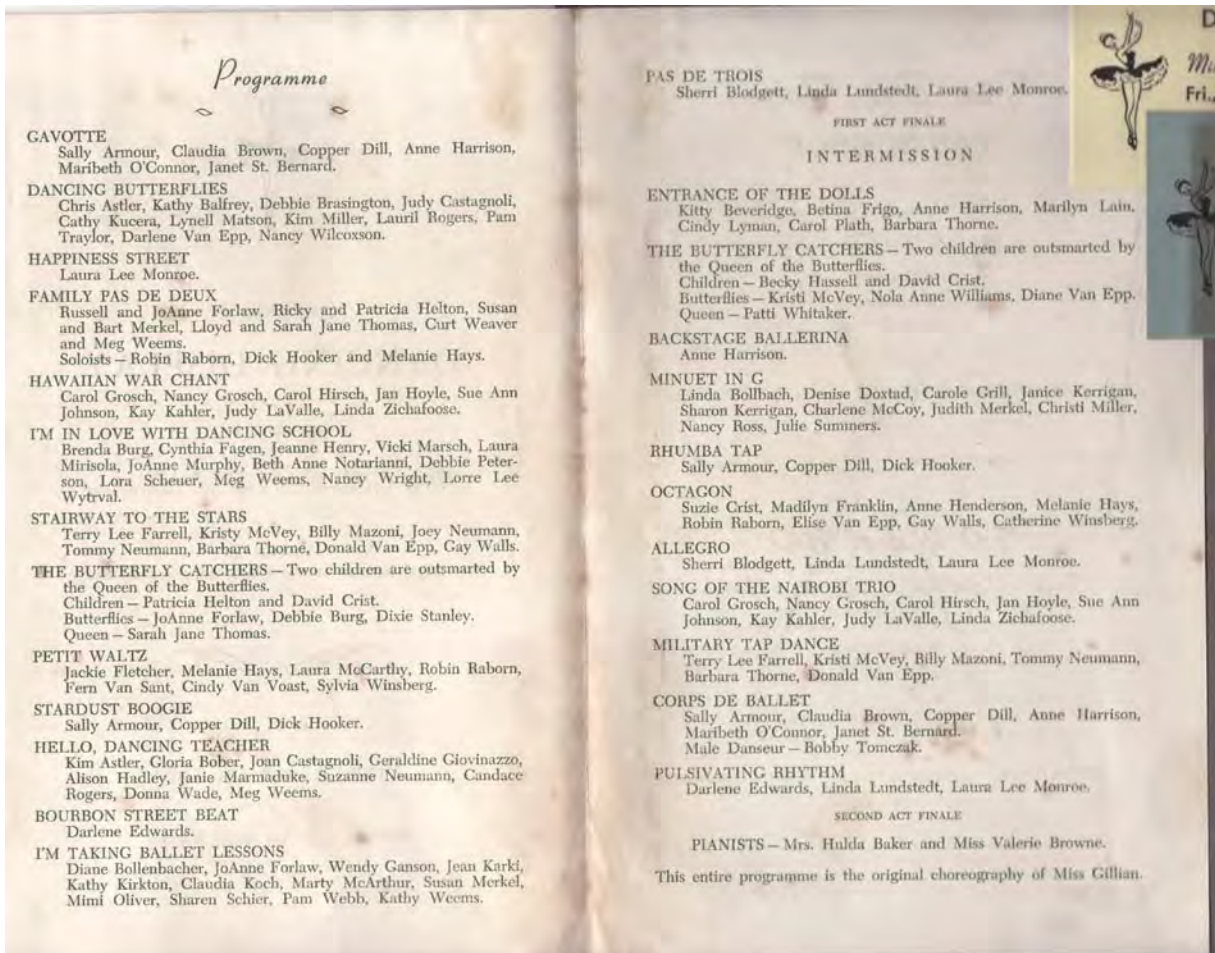
FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:

Billy and Barbara DuBois
Bill and Nancy Earnhart
Richard and Judith Merkel Howard
Ruth J. Jones
Arthur and Sylvia MacMenomay
Robert and Christian Oyer Macoviak
Paul K. and Marianne Nitzsche
Margaret H. Rousseau and J. Robert and Jayne Rousseau
Helen, Charles and Fred Senior

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS:

Helen Adams Bonomini
Beverly Cormany
Diana Dennis
Judy Duxbury
Donna W. Harmening
Nadine Smith Hartling
Suzanne Kruse
Carol Mahoney
Denise Smith McCulloch
Rosemary Mouring
Gerald Murray
Lyn Smith Orletsky
Esther M. Orr
Harvey E. Oyer, Jr.
Richard E. Philpott
Sandra L. Pike
Camilla Smith Richardson
Nancy Rosa
Marlene Ross
Eleanor Murray Sala
Barbara G. Scott
James Marshall Smith
Anne Watts
Lloyd C. Weeks
Raymond E. Weeks

Among the above, we welcome new members Arthur and Sylvia MacMenomay, Rosemary Mouring, Marlene Ross, Barbara G. Scott, and Lloyd C. Weeks. Thank you for choosing to join us.



The Programme for Miss Gillian's "Dancing Display, 1961," contains a number of names familiar to many members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society—Traylor, Merkel, Thomas, Weaver, Weems, Bollenbacher, Lyman, and Raborn, among others.



Gillian and Anthony arrive as refugees in 1940s



Hulda Baker, May 1960

Hulda Baker played the piano for many years for the various programs Miss Gillian scheduled. She was the mother of Marvin and Kelly Baker and Gladys Baker Knuth and is shown at age 16 and in her later years in the photographs accompanying the article submitted by Gladys Knuth in the May 2009 *Historian*.

[Photos and other materials courtesy Gillian Wimbourne Davis]

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES GRANT TO HELP ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION

The History and Archives Division of the Boynton Beach City Library has been awarded its first grant, "A Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions." Janet DeVries, who is the City Archivist and also serves as the Archivist and First Vice President of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, is the project director. The Society's archives and those of the Schoolhouse Children's Museum are housed in the Boynton Beach City Library.

The project title is "Weathering the Storm: Preserving the Stories of Fisherman, Farmers, and Pioneers in Historic Boynton Beach, Florida." The project description reads: "Funding supports a preservation needs assessment of the Boynton Beach City Library Archives Collection of local history materials and the purchase of archival housing supplies as recommended by the consultant."

Both Janet and Assistant Library Director Anne Watts worked together to apply for the grant. Both are members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society.

DELRAY BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES

Whereas the Boynton Beach Historical Society houses its archives in the City Library, the Delray Beach Society makes private provision. Hunt House, built before 1908, was rescued by the Delray group in 2007 and moved to its current location in the Old School Square and Historic Arts District of Delray Beach.



A solid concrete and steel archival storage annex was attached to Hunt House to provide hurricane protection for the Society's historical records. [Courtesy Delray Beach Historical Society]

**SPECIAL PROGRAM Sponsored by the CITY LIBRARY
FEBRUARY 3 at 12:00 p.m.**

"A Weekend in Havana: Tourism between Florida and Cuba"

Havana was one of the popular tourist destinations in the 1950s, and Florida was the gateway for most of this profitable tourist trade. On **Wednesday,**

February 3 at 12:00 p.m. you can relive this tourist trade through a presentation that includes many original, home-made images of Florida and Havana in the 1950s, including all the nightclubs, casinos, restaurants, and beaches that attracted tourists by the thousands. Set against a backdrop of an increasingly popular and powerful insurrection, the presentation will re-examine U.S.-Cuba relations in the years prior to Fidel Castro's assumption of power.

This Florida Humanities Council Road Scholar program will be presented by Paul Dosal, Professor of History at the University of South Florida. As a third generation descendant of Cuban immigrants who settled in Ybor City in 1889, he specializes in the history of the modern Caribbean, with particular interests in the history of Cuba and Guatemala.

Open Free to the Public.

CORRECTIONS TO FALL 1948 TEAMS



The November issue of *The Historian* included the picture above. [Our caption read as follows: 1st Row—Betty Bell, Gladys Weeks, Ann Weems, Marilyn Baskin, Dorothy Shook, Ovedia Weeks. 2nd Row—Hansford Calloway, Dudley Kirton, Paul Muster, Charles Knowles, Wayne Hancock, Marvin Baker, George Nicoli, Lester Ward, Harry Spinks, Tommy Murray. 3rd Row—Geston White, Jay Carr, Del Swilley, J.C. Swilley, Coach Culpepper, Pat Murphy, Bob Shook, Pete Weeks, James Rhoden, Harold Law, Bridger Kirton, and First Name Unknown Sloan.] Barbara Spinks Traylor recommends the following corrections: 1st Row—Dorothy Shook was Dorothy Melear before her marriage. At the right end of the row is George Nicoli (kneeling). 2nd Row—Toward the middle, the boy identified as George Nicoli is George Gant and the boy identified as Harry Spinks is Barbara's brother Kenneth Spinks. 3rd Row—2nd from the right end is Bridger Kirton and the boy at the end is Jack Sloan. At the beginning of the line is Geston White.

We are grateful to Barbara for taking the time to e-mail us this information. Please, if any of you can give us new information on anything we write or print, send it to help us to set the record straight.

THE FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN WHAT IS NOW THE UNITED STATES

By Voncile Smith

As a child I heard, perhaps in rebuttal to some claims by Virginia and New England, that St. Augustine right here in Florida was the oldest city in the United States. The following is not intended to discredit Jamestown or Plymouth Colony, but to lend a better perspective on Florida's role in America's history.

People in St. Augustine relish the claim of living in the oldest city, much to the annoyance of the people in the western part of the Florida Panhandle. Pensacola rightfully claims that it was the first town, first established in 1558—several years before the failed French efforts of 1561 at the St. Augustine site and the later Spanish colonization there in 1565. But, since Pensacola has been established several times, the residents of St. Augustine can rightfully claim that they live in the oldest continually existing city in the United States.

The Pensacola area was first sighted by Spanish explorer Panfilo de Narvaez in 1528. In 1539 another Spanish explorer, Cristobal Maldonado, failed in his attempt to convince the king to establish a settlement there. But in 1559, Tristan de Luna did establish a large colony on the site with 1500 residents. Things went badly very soon afterward.

Those of us who watch the movement of storms during the hurricane season know that the Panhandle is probably the section of Florida where the most hurricanes make landfall.

In 1560, after it had existed for only a little over a month, a hurricane nearly destroyed the colony at Pensacola. Hundreds died, and, although 1,000 survivors decided to relocate and resupply the settlement, famine and attacks led them to abandon the area in 1561.

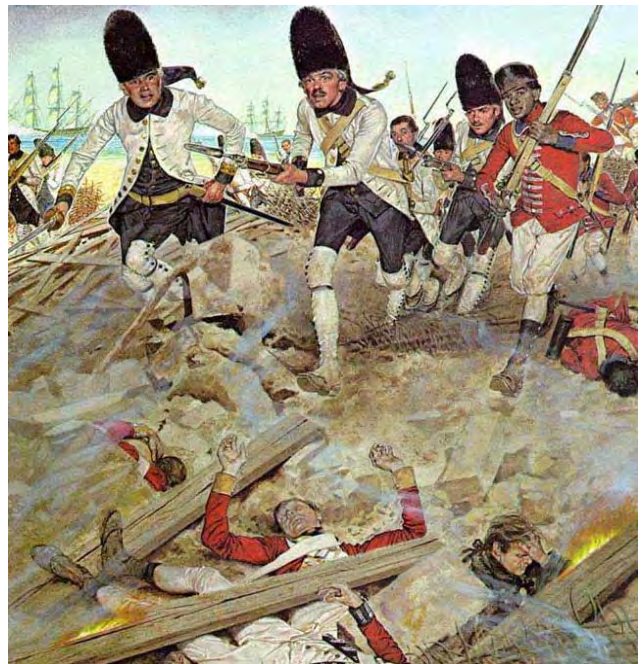
Little happened for more than a century. By 1682 the French claimed Pensacola as part of the land area they named Louisiana. French explorer Rene de La Salle made an attempt to settle Pensacola, but his effort failed.

The Spanish fearing French conquest, showed renewed interest in Pensacola. In 1694 the Spanish king ordered Pensacola occupied, but it was four years in 1698 before the Spanish actually returned as a military expedition with 357 men. Soon afterward, the French attacked them and fired cannon from their ships, but

eventually withdrew to establish a fort close by at Mobile. The French, however, persisted, and in 1719 reoccupied the town. In 1722 a hurricane again devastated the settlement at Pensacola, and the French evacuated. The Spanish returned.

In 1763 the British entered the picture. As part of the Treaty of Paris after the French and Indian War, Pensacola became the capital of the 14th British colony, West Florida.

The Spanish were not through, however, and late in 1781 while the British were preoccupied with the American Revolution, the Spanish captured West Florida in the Battle of Pensacola.



Spanish Troops Conquer Pensacola in 1781

The Spanish retained West Florida including Pensacola, and England returned the remainder of the peninsula which included East Florida and St. Augustine to the Spanish as the American Revolution drew to a close.

In the Transcontinental Treaty of 1819, Spain renounced claims to West Florida and ceded it and East Florida to the United States. In 1821, while Andrew Jackson was the provisional governor, Pensacola and the remainder of Florida became part of the United States. Although both St. Augustine (East Florida) and Pensacola (West Florida) had been colonial capitals under the British, neither was destined to serve as the capital of the new American territory. The 2nd Florida Territorial Legislature named Tallahassee the capital in 1824.

Boynton Beach Historical Society
 Post Office Box 12
 Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012

BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM, CALENDAR YEAR 2010

Member's Name _____
 2nd Member's Name _____
 Street _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Telephone _____ E-mail _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:
 INDIVIDUAL (\$25.00) _____
 FAMILY (\$35.00) _____
 PATRON (\$50.00) _____
 CORPORATE (\$100 or more) _____

Yes, I would like to serve on the following committee(s) [Circle choices]
 Archives/Preservation _____
 Program/Planning _____
 Membership _____
 Minority History _____
 Mailings _____
 Seeking Sponsors _____
 Fundraising _____
 Telephone _____
 Website _____
 Other (Specify) _____
 Public Relations _____
 Hospitality _____

Join now for the calendar year 2010. Complete the form below or copy the information and return it or the copy with your check for the type of membership you desire payable to The Boynton Beach Historical Society, P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, Florida 33425-0012. New memberships will be effective from now until December 31, 2010. Current members may renew now with 2010 dues effective until December 31, 2010.

ALONG SEACREST BOULEVARD



Originally owned by H. Brown, this house at 304 South Seacrest Boulevard is still standing. It and the surrounding property have been on and off the market for a number of years. The house is showing signs of serious deterioration as the uneven foundation and the peeling paint suggest. The Museum of Lifestyle and Fashion History at one time hoped to restore it and use it as a part of an extended museum complex, but currently there are no plans for restoring or using it.



A 1920s house built by Ray Wilcox and Harvey E. Oyer, Sr. was located in the 500 block of North Seacrest Boulevard. Built by the use of typical stucco on lathe construction of the period, it was occupied until about 2007 by rental tenants. After the owner at the time forced his tenants to move out, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) purchased it and scheduled it for demolition. It was torn down in late August, 2009. The lot is still vacant.