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 8 November 2010

THE LAST EGRET

is the title of the second book written by Harvey E. Oyer III about the adventures of his great-grand uncle Charles Pierce as a pioneer boy growing up in the South Florida area. Like his first book, The American Jungle, Harvey’s intent in this new work is to appeal to elementary school aged children to help them identify with what life was like in the early years of what was to become Palm Beach County.

For our November meeting, Harvey will discuss this new book which is one of the best selling children’s books in Florida this year. It was selected by the Palm Beach County School District for its first ever Read Together program where all 4th graders in the County will read the same book simultaneously. Beginning in November, over 15,000 children from 109 public school and 21 private schools will read The Last Egret.

Harvey’s first book, The American Jungle, was awarded two gold medals by the Florida Publishers Association in the categories of Children’s Fiction Book and Florida Children’s Book, sweeping the awards for children’s books in Florida in 2010.

Harvey Oyer III is a 5th generation native of Palm Beach County and served for seven years as Chairman of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. He has received numerous awards and currently serves as a Director or Trustee for a variety of organizations.

ALL PROGRAMS ARE OPEN FREE TO THE PUBLIC

WHAT: Discussion by Harvey Oyer III about The Last Egret

WHEN: Monday, Nov. 8th, 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Boynton Beach City Library
208 S. Seacrest Blvd.
ANOTHER BOYNTON LANDMARK GONE

The two story house that had stood for over a century on the north side of Ocean Avenue just east of the Schoolhouse Children’s Museum was demolished in early October. Built by James and Estella Harper McKay in 1908, the framed vernacular residence of Dade County pine, had wide open screened porches that were enclosed with jalousie windows by a later owner. The McKays had named it Casa Blanca.

“Casa Blanca” after remodeling in the early 1950s was renamed “The Gables”

Some records suggest the house was built as late as 1919, but Harvey Oyer said it was built earlier. He questions any “official” records prior to 1920 when Boynton was incorporated and said even Palm Beach County had scant records for some portions of the County. Kathleen Mayberry Castagnoli, a niece to Estella McKay, says that the house was built in 1908. The Harpers moved to the Boynton area in 1901.

After demolition, there remained only a pile of rubble, which has since been hauled away.

After World War II the McKays were still living in the house, and their nephew David Mayberry

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lived there with them briefly after he was discharged from the Army and before he left to attend the University of Florida.

By the early 1950s the house had been sold, and the new owners covered the white wooden siding with stucco, changed the roof line, added contemporary shutters, and converted the interior into a winter tourist apartment house which they renamed “The Gables.”

Some notes about the McKay/Harper families--
Estella McKay’s brother was Charles Harper who was the Florida East Coast station agent in Boynton in the early 20th century. Later he was transferred to Homestead where he served as Mayor. His wife, Cora Stickney Harper, was the first president of the Boynton Woman’s Club.

Another sister to Estella McKay was Elizabeth Harper. Elizabeth married Zoll Oliver Mayberry whose father was a Federal Revenue Agent, William Green Mayberry, sent in to protect the tax interests of the Federal government when moonshining and rum-running were common occurrences. [Information for this story was provided by Kathleen Mayberry Castagnoli, Harvey E. Oyer, Jr. and Janet DeVries.]

NO PROGRAM MEETING OR HISTORIAN IN DECEMBER

The next program meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society is scheduled for January when we are again privileged to have “Miss Gillian” Davis present our program. Many of you attended the meeting in January, 2010 when she shared her development as a performer and teacher and recalled her experiences with her dance students at “Miss Gillian’s” school. As an additional service to our community, she was also instrumental in helping to establish WHRS and WXEL. Her presentation for 2011 will cover the founding of these two broadcast facilities.

We do not issue a December Historian. Issues are mailed in January, February, March, April, May, September, October and November, so you should receive your next copy in early January.

Remember we welcome pictures, letters, clippings, stories and other information about your family in Boynton. Contact us and let us and others share your family’s historic presence in this community.

DUES FOR 2011 ALMOST DUE

Our membership year begins January 1, 2011. Last year many of you responded to the notice about renewal in The Historian so that we were able to save labor and postage by not having to mail out dues notices.

Thanks to those of you have already sent your 2011 dues to us:

Patron Membership
Bob W. and Jeanne Gayler
Ralph E. and Isabel Myers
Voncile Marshall Smith
Marion and Cecile Weems

Family Membership
Robert L. and Virginia Foot
Helen Mann and Dorothy Mann McNiece

Individual Membership
Donna Harmening
Nadine Hartling
Madeline A. Hawkins
Denise McCulloch
Lyn Elise Orletsky
James Marshall Smith
John C. Watts

Special welcome to new members Helen Mann and Dorothy McNiece and to John C. Watts.

SOME FACES FROM THE PAST

Taken at the Boynton Woman's Club November, 1984 Diamond Jubilee--back row, L to R, Donald Keyes, Kenneth Fountain, Dow Ross, Wilma Unknown, Rosalie Alvaroe Morrissey, and Mary Lou Muster Ryder. [Photo courtesy Rosalie Morrissey]
In the May Historian we printed In Memoriam to the sad death of the son of one of our members, Rosalie Morrissey. Rosalie’s son, Dr. Joseph Morrissey, was murdered in April, apparently by unstable tenants who first broke into his house in Plantation, took him and his wife captive, drove them to an ATM where the assailants forced him to withdraw money, and then stabbed Dr. Morrissey to death. Rosalie has shared with us this Tribute to him issued by The Florida House of Representatives.
THE SIMPLE LIFE
WITH LITTLE TECHNOLOGY
By Voncile Smith

When my family first moved into the vicinity of Boynton in the late 1930s, we lived what was then far out in the country on Military Trail. We had more luxuries than most of our neighbors, but we were poor by today's standards.

We had no telephone, no television, no central heating or air-conditioning, no computers or internet, no freezer, no dishwasher, no microwave, no hot water, no washer or dryer [Mother paid a "washerwoman" to do our laundry], and no garbage or trash pickup. Unlike many of our neighbors, we did have electricity in our house and a fully functioning bathroom [except when we had heavy rains and the septic tank backed up].

We did not have a refrigerator or even an old-fashioned "ice box" for several months after my mother, father and I moved into the house described below.

In previous Historians I have written about the building of my grandparents' house and the operation of my grandfather's lumber mill on Military Trail in the late 1930s. Their house was about three miles north of what is now the C. Stanley Weaver Canal just slightly northwest of the entrance to Knollwood Groves. About 1938 a husband and wife with the last name of Jones bought three and one-half acres immediately north of my grandfather's house and built a little house of their own. The wife was named Mae and she operated "Mae's Frabrics" on Clematis Street in West Palm Beach from shortly after they sold us their house until the 1960s. All I remember about the husband is that everyone called him "Jonesie," including Mae.

The Jones house was very small. The living room on the southeast corner was about 10 feet x 10 feet, and the one bedroom was so small a standard double bed became almost a wall-to-wall bed. The room was about 8 x7, so small in fact that the bed had to be pushed against the wall and then there was no space between the wall and the head and foot boards. The house had a small bath with a flush toilet, an old-fashioned footed tub, and a lavatory with a mirrored medicine cabinet above it. The kitchen, behind the living room, had a sink and a few cabinets, one water faucet, and a pressure kerosene stove which the Jones left behind. The house had a total of five small sash-weight screened windows--two in the living room, and one each in the bedroom, bath and kitchen.

In late 1938 or early 1939, Mother and Daddy told me they had decided to buy the Jones house and the 3 1/2 acres for $600. As an eight year old, I did not realize what a financial stretch this was for them.

Almost immediately they took out a bank loan to enlarge the house. Jones's bedroom, which was to become my room, was extended east by four feet. The old living room became our dining room, and its entire east wall was opened into the new 14 x 16 living room. The new master bedroom was about 10 x12 with a closet on the northwest side 4 x 5 which was tied in with the four-foot extension to the old bedroom. All the windows installed in the addition were wooden-framed French windows, screens inside, and opened outward by means of a crank. The south wall of the new living room contained a red brick-front fireplace with a single French window on each side. [Jones' house had no means of heating and all we ever had was this one woodburning fireplace.] There were two double French windows on the front of the house, one for the living room and one for the master bedroom. Jones' house had seven foot ceilings, but our new living room and bedroom had 8 1/2 foot ceilings.

We bought the lumber from my grandfather Fletcher. The exterior was pine siding [painted white], the framework was pine 2 x 4s and 2 x 6s and the interior walls and ceilings were covered by planed 1 x 8 pine boards which my mother wallpapered after we moved in. The entire roof consisted of cedar shake shingles. We had a shallow well, about 16 feet deep, operated by an electric pump. We drank the water directly from the pump, never boiling it. My father did all the electric wiring himself. Later he built a pump house which protected the pump, housed our kerosene tank, and provided storage for tools. He also built a screened porch on the northwest corner off the kitchen. He installed a kerosene water heater on the porch with hot water lines leading to the bathtub and lavatory, but because of the cost of kerosene, mother lighted it only once a week when we took hot baths. He built the porch entirely alone, but hired someone with carpentry skills to help with the pump house.

My parents sold the house in 1949. It burned down about 1966. Today the land is part of the schoolyard for Hidden Oaks Elementary School.
Boynton Beach City Library presents

Photo Preservation Workshop

Tips from the Library Archivist on Preserving, Displaying & Storing your Family Photographs

Wednesday, November 17th 10:00 am

Sign Up for the Free Workshop by Calling 742-6397

Boynton Beach City Library 206 S. Seacrest Blvd., Boynton Beach 561.742.6390 www.boyntonlibrary.org

Children under the age of 13 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or chaperone at all times while in the Library.

Boynton Beach Historical Society
Post Office Box 12, 33436-0012

Application Form, Calendar Year 2011

Member's Name ___________________________ 2nd Member's Name ___________________________

Type of Membership: Individual $25.00 Family $50.00 Corporate $100.00 or more

E-mail ___________________________ Street ___________________________ City ___________________________ State ________ Zip ___________

Do you wish to waive the dues for the year? ___________

If yes, please state reason: ___________

Boynton Beach, Florida 33436-0012

Membership is effective until December 31, 2011.

Archives/Preservation ___________

Program/Planning ___________

Public Relations ___________

Membership ___________

Media liaison ___________

Volunteer ___________

Novelty ___________

Thank you for your support of the Boynton Beach Historical Society.