

# THE HISTORIAN

## The Newsletter of THE BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Voncile Smith, President

Volume 2002, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2002

Voncile Smith, Editor

### NEW PRESIDENT'S LETTER

What should an historical society offer a community?

The bylaws of the Boynton Beach Historical Society are specific in setting forth the purposes of the society: to act as a living repository for Boynton Beach's traditions and history; to maintain property entrusted to it and collect, preserve, and interpret items of historical and antiquarian significance, to encourage research and involvement in those efforts by its members and the community at large, and to promote a better understanding of history as an important factor in the every day affairs of the City and its residents.

The "community at large" inclusion merits special mention. Boynton has had a direct relationship with and played an important role in the lives of people from Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Hypoluxo, Lantana, Gulfstream, Briney Breezes, and all the areas west to what is now U.S 441. We have affected and been affected by much that has occurred in Palm Beach County.

We have a responsibility and an obligation to serve and to work with this broader community. One of my goals is for the Society to work toward better integration of these constituencies.

We also have many people who live in the immediate vicinity who have been under-represented in our efforts. Boynton has a number of African-American families who have lived in and made notable contributions to the community for decades. More recent history has seen many new residents enriching the community with novel ideas and practices arising from their culturally diverse backgrounds. The Society needs to tap the wealth of Boynton's entire population and encourage contribution and preservation from these new sources.

One of the difficulties we have faced in trying to preserve and maintain items of historical significance has been a lack of adequate archival

storage space, and space to mount exhibits. We hope eventually that the preservation and conversion of the Historic Old Boynton High School on Ocean Avenue will provide such facilities. The Old School could also provide storage space for the 1913 Schoolhouse Children's Museum.

But aside from these rather obvious objectives, an historical society is something else. It pertains to the values of a community as a whole. The quality of life in a community is tied to aesthetic as well as economic considerations, and, interestingly enough, the two are not separable. Institutions such as libraries, museums, art galleries, and theaters represent a community's investment in itself, and an historical society complements all of these through commitment and support. The community prospers economically from others' desire to invest time and effort where they feel citizens have begun to organize a more attractive environment. If you doubt the efficacy of this, I encourage you to take another look at Delray Beach and Lake Worth.

As the new President of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, I need your help. There is much the Society can do to make Boynton Beach a better city for us all. We need direct involvement of the membership. Remember no time or effort you can offer is too small. We have a good set of officers and board members, but we cannot begin to do all that needs to be done. I will contact many of you directly, but if you have a special interest or ability give me a call and say so.

We need people willing to help with Public Relations, Program Planning, Refreshments, Newsletter, Mailouts, Office Staff and many other activities. If you can give us some time and would be willing to volunteer, call me at 561-734-5653.

I look forward to serving you.

## NEW OFFICERS INSTALLED

New officers, directors, and trustees of the Boynton Beach Historical Society were installed at a meeting at the Boynton Woman's Club on May 19, 2002. The officers for 2002-2003 are

Voncile Smith	President
TBA	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice-President for Programs
Claire Weems	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice-President for Membership
Betty Thomas	Recording Secretary
Gloria Gregory	Corresponding Secretary
Sue Beaman	Treasurer.

Directors serving 3-year staggered terms:

Lucile Dickinson	2002-2005
Fain Weems	2002-2005
Barbara Harrison	2002-2004
Peter Moritz	2002-2003
Linda Moritz	2002-2003
Gloria Turner	2002-2004 (holdover)

Trustees serving 3-year staggered terms

Harvey Oyer	2002-2005
Stanley Weaver	2002-2005
Marion Weems	2002-2004
Lee Buffan	2002-2003
Virginia Farace	2002-2003 (holdover)
Janet DeVries	2002-2004 (holdover)

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## SAVE THE HISTORIC OLD HIGH SCHOOL

A Special Committee composed of Harvey Oyer, Stanley Weaver, and Marion Weems, who each represent one of three early Boynton Beach families, is continuing in its efforts to save the old Boynton High School from the wrecker's ball. A new Preservation Foundation sponsored by the Society is under consideration. This group will seek grants and contributions for the purpose of renovating the old structure. The Society hopes to house its records and collections under the supervision of a part-time Executive Director housed in the building after it undergoes some minor rehabilitation, provided the city grants permission. The old building could also provide some badly needed storage space for materials and exhibits of the 1913 Schoolhouse Children's Museum.

The primary focus of renovation plans, however, will be to establish the building as a **Cultural Center for Boynton Beach** for theatre, music, art, and service groups to hold presentations, exhibits, lectures, and meetings. There is potentially no comparable space

available in the city. Theatre groups, for example, have long complained that no facility currently in use offers sufficient space to store scenery or provide dressing rooms, a real handicap for staging most dramas.

Some service organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, and the Lions Club have expressed a wish for a central location to hold meetings and store their paraphernalia.

With City governmental buildings, the library, and the Children's Museum nearby, this facility as a Cultural Center could enhance the image of the City as one interested both in furthering culture and preserving its historic roots.

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## SCHOOL HAS UNIQUE ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

The Society has had the historic school building examined by Rick Gonzalez, a restoration architect who renovated the historic Methodist Church into a theatre in City Place in West Palm Beach. He reports that the building has a number of unique architectural features, most notably its Mediterranean Revival style which is accompanied by Art Deco features. Palm Beach County has little, if any, Art Deco architecture since this style was essentially limited to Miami Beach. These features make it truly unique among buildings in Palm Beach County.

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## SOCIETY'S TRUSTEES RESPONSIBLE FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Board of Trustees is responsible for holding in trust for the sole benefit of the Boynton Beach Historical Society any and all donations, bequests and devises of any kind, real or personal, that may be given, bequeathed, or conveyed to the Society. The Trustees have the power to invest, reinvest, buy, sell, transfer and convey any and all funds and properties which the Society may hold in trust. They develop procedures relative to the maintenance, insurance and loan of these properties.

An ongoing concern has been to find adequate storage for some of the artifacts, pictures and memorabilia donated to the Society. Currently the only storage place is a small room in the City Library which is very limited in the area available

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## REMEMBERING MOTT PARTIN

Occasional programs of the Society center on individuals who have played important roles historically in the development of Boynton Beach. The following is a summary of a program presentation made to the Society on March 11, 2002 by Gloria Partin Turner and James Daniel "Dan" Partin about their father.

Mott Partin came to Boynton in 1924 at age 32. Prior to that he had lived on his father's cotton farm in Georgia. His father was a man of means who owned about 2,000 acres. Mott had gone away to school in Valparaiso, Indiana to study medicine to become a doctor like three of his uncles, but before he could complete his studies, the boll weevil devastated the farm leaving the family essentially destitute. Mott returned home before graduating to help his father. Soon afterward, he suffered a serious accident while operating the cotton gin, and for the remainder of his life he bore the loss of knuckles on his left hand and visible scars on his arm which he hid under long sleeved shirts.

Boynton was quite a change from the farm life he had left, and he liked what he saw in this new setting. A few months after his arrival he sent for his wife, Lois Irene Jones, and his two children (they had lost a son in early childhood)—Rebecca and Jackie.

In those early years he was willing to take any work he could find. He had no car, and for one job he walked to Delray to the ice house, delivered ice, and then walked home again.

The Partins had four more children—Bud (Mott, Jr.), Thelma, Dan, and Gloria. Usually their house was filled with visitors—Jones and Partin relatives who had followed them to Florida. Two relatives lived with them at least six months a year. Mrs. Partin arose at 4:30 a.m. to milk the cow, feed the chickens, and gather the eggs. (Many people kept milk cows and chickens for eggs and eating within the town limits at that time.)

Their first house was on the opposite corner from where the parking lot next to the 1913 schoolhouse is now located. Before Gloria was born, the Partins moved into a house that was on what was then Australian Avenue (now NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street). Sam and Virginia Woolbright lived just north of them. The house had no refrigerator, but, like a large number of homes at that time, had an ice box. The single bathroom was shared by four adults and six children.

In the early 1930s Mott was appointed Chief of Police for Boynton. He got a car, but it had to be started with a hand crank on the front of the engine. At the same time he was responsible for all the prisoners in the town jail

and was the meter reader for the water department. To help pay the family's medical bills to Dr. Weems, Mrs. Partin made quilts to give to the Weemses. In the 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, many down-and-out people called hoboes wandered into town, and Mrs. Partin routinely fed from 3 to 10 hoboes a week. Her children remember that she always seemed to have abundant food for the table.

Family members were visible in businesses in downtown Boynton. Mott's brother Melton and his wife Mary owned a sundry store and soda fountain on Ocean Avenue where Hurricane Alley is now located. Across the street, in what is now called the 500 Building, was the Jones Hotel and Restaurant operated by Mrs. Partin's mother. And Claude Ross' who was married to Eleen Jones, Mrs. Partin's sister, owned a filling station nearby on U.S. 1.

Mott later became a Palm Beach County Deputy Sheriff under John Kirk. He served on the Boynton City Council and was Mayor.

On the ocean front the City of Boynton Beach owned a lovely 1920s Casino building which Mott truly loved with its beautiful pecky cypress interiors facing on the beach front. The City tore the building down several years ago, but there is a memorial marker dedicated to him at the Casino site.

His children and many others remember him as a disciplined, hard-working man, a gentle but stern disciplinarian, with a big heart.

He always cared for people and was known throughout the county as a man of his word—his word was his bond. He served the community for over 35 years.

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## ONCE UPON A TIME IN SCHOOL

Halloween Mischief: In the 1930s and 1940s on Halloween night, as soon as night fell, students lined up in front of the historic old high school in their costumes and paraded east on Ocean Avenue to the middle of town (now the east 500 block) for a Halloween Carnival with apple-bobbing, prizes for best costumes, games, and junk food (only who knew then that that was what it would someday be called). No one appeared to have heard of Trick or Treat, but some teen agers knew how to get into mischief. One such act was entering the 1913 school house late at night in order to ring the old bell which was then housed in the bell tower and used each day at the start of school. (The east double doors on the first floor could be jiggled open.) **-continued on page 5**

## **PAID MEMBERS FOR THE 2002 MEMBERSHIP YEAR**

**AS OF JUNE 1, 2002.**

### **CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP:**

Mr. and Mrs. Don Besecker  
Sir Electric, Inc.

### **PATRON MEMBERSHIP:**

Mrs. Lucile L. Dickinson  
Mr. James Miriana  
Ms. Charlotte Oyer  
Mr. Harvey E. Oyer, Jr.  
Dr. Voncile M. Smith  
Mrs. Betty M. Thomas  
Mr. and Mrs. Philip B. Traylor  
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard E. Turner  
Mr. and Mrs. C. Stanley Weaver  
Dr. and Mrs. N.M. Weems  
Ms. Debra K. Wilson

### **FAMILY MEMBERSHIP:**

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Armstrong  
Ms. Lillian R. Artis  
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Bollenbacher  
Mr. and Mrs. Beverley Brown  
Dr. Leone A. Buffan  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Clarke  
Mr. and Mrs. Don Combs  
Dr. and Mrs. William Earnhart  
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Edwards  
Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Feeney  
Dr. and Mrs. Bob W. Gayler  
Mrs. Edythe Hood  
Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Howell  
Ms. Ruth J. Jones  
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony LaFerrera  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Macoviak  
Mr. and Mrs. William Marcacci  
Ms. Nancy Hood McNamee  
Ms. Anne Weems Michael  
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Moritz  
Ms. Stephanie Moritz  
Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Netzler  
Mr. Charles Senior  
Mr. Fred Senior  
Ms. Helen Senior  
Mr. and Mrs. Buddy Stuart  
Mr. and Mrs. John Suiter  
Mr. and Mrs. George Tarasco  
Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Weaver  
Mr. Raleigh Weeks  
Mr. Robert B. Weeks  
Mr. and Mrs. Fain Weems  
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Wheatley  
Ms. Betty M. Zobel

### **INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP:**

Mr. John V. Alvaroe  
Ms. Sue Murphy Beaman  
Mr. Marvin T. Benson  
Mr. Arthur Blood  
Mrs. Callie Rousseau Brown  
Ms. Anne Camille Centi  
Ms. Janet DeVries  
Ms. May Foy Dillon  
Ms. Lois Oyer Dooley  
Ms. Betty Perry Duffey  
Ms. Judy Duxbury  
Ms. Virginia K. Farace  
Ms. Wendy Franklin  
Ms. Audrey D. Gerger  
Ms. Gloria Gregory  
Mr. Roscoe Grummons  
Ms. Frances Haenny  
Mrs. Barbara Harrison  
Ms. Judith Howard  
Ms. Gladys Knuth  
Mr. James I. Lacey  
Mrs. Nancy Murray Lacy  
Ms. Wilise Langford  
Ms. Mary Law  
Mr. Joseph L. Lee  
Dr. Fred W. Love  
Mr. Kenneth A. Lyman  
Ms. Sandra McGregor  
Mrs. Helen A. Meisenheimer  
Mrs. Rebecca Merkel  
Mr. Bob Miller  
Ms. Rosalie Morrissey  
Ms. Cheryl D. Muster  
Mr. Ralph E. Myers  
Ms. Cindy McClain Nye  
Ms. Alice Otis  
Ms. Tereesa Padgett

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### **MEMORIAL GIFTS:**

Cash Gift in memory of Peggy Meridith Stanley  
From James B. and Georgie P. Raulerson  
Cash Gifts in memory of  
Clyde Harris  
Ernestine Rhoden  
Kay Corcoran  
Otley Scott  
James Thurber  
Phyllis Lamb Roberts  
Peggy Meridith Stanley  
Collectively to be used for a watercolor  
rendition of Historic Boynton High School  
From an Anonymous Member of the  
Society

## **ONCE UPON A TIME IN SCHOOL**

(continued from page 3)

Limited Choices: School lunches in that same period were 25 cents. These included a hot plate (vegetables and a meat), milk, and a dessert. But some children who lived close enough walked home for lunch. In high school more adventurous ones, seeking to escape the routine of the cafeteria, walked downtown to eat at Melton and Mary's, at the Jones Restaurant, or at one time at Aunt Sally's Restaurant.

Dress: Until the 1950s girls wore dresses to school and most boys wore long pants. Jeans and shorts were not considered appropriate wear for school. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, a few children did not have shoes to wear, even in cold weather. They attended school barefooted. On really cold days, the school officials closed the schools, not because the school building could not be heated, but because many children had no sweaters or coats to wear.

Discipline: Although corporal punishment was allowed, most students suspected that if they received a spanking in school, and their parents learned of it, they would receive an additional spanking at home. Teachers of grade school students in the 1913 Schoolhouse usually ordered those who misbehaved to "sit on the steps" during recess and after lunch. There were steps on all sides of the building, but a specific set that the teacher could watch was where the student was expected to sit. This punishment might be for a day or even for a week.

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## **A TEMPORARY OFFICE FOR THE SOCIETY**

Harvey Oyer has set aside space in one of his storefronts on Ocean Avenue for a temporary office for the Boynton Beach Historical Society. When the floors are finished and we have located some office furniture and a computer and printer, we hope to be open several days each week. If you would be willing to donate a couple of hours or more a week to helping us keep the office open, we would be most grateful.

Special thanks to several kind friends who have contributed time and material to turning this space into a usable office:

Art House and sons Seneca and Mark of Boynton Beach for installing and painting drywall;

Robert Mulroy, electrical contractor, 1050 SW 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Boynton Beach, 33426 for lighting.

Randy Rau, Decorating Center, East Ocean Avenue, Boynton Beach, 33425, for paint;

3<sup>rd</sup> Street Signs, NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Boynton Beach, window signs;

Dennis Vlassis, Gulfstream Lumber, building materials.

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## **HELP THE SCHOOL FUND! WEAR A T-SHIRT!**

We still have a supply of white t-shirts urging the preservation of the Historic Old High School. These have a reproduction in color of the school on the back. They are available in M, L, and XL and sell for \$10.00. If you would like one, send a check for the correct amount made out to the Boynton Beach Historical Society, P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach 33435-0012 and we will send your order postage paid.

Or call Harvey Oyer, 561-732-9305, and arrange to drop by his office on Ocean Avenue to pick one up.

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## **SAVE OUR MEETING DATES!**

The Society meets at 7:30 on the second Monday of each month, at the Boynton Woman's Club, September through May, except for December when we do not meet. These are program meetings and business is held to a minimum. Dates to reserve are September 9, October 14, November 11, January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14, and May 12. You will receive special notices of other meetings, including field trips, as they are scheduled.

Callie Rousseau Brown who began teaching at the 1913 Schoolhouse in 1930 will be our featured speaker on September 9. She will discuss her book which she is just completing on Reminiscences on the Rousseaus.

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**Special thanks to Investment Representatives at EDWARD JONES, 901 N. Congress Avenue, Boynton Beach, FL 33426, for the mailing of our newsletter.**

Boynton Beach Historical Society  
Post Office Box 12  
Boynton Beach, Florida 33435-0012

You can still join the Boynton Beach Historical Society for 2002  
Complete the following form and send with your check for the appropriate amount to  
P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33435-0012.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:

Individual (\$25.00) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$35.00) \_\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$50.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate (\$100.00) \_\_\_\_\_

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