

THE HISTORIAN

The Newsletter of
THE BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Serving Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulfstream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, the Village of Golf and all areas of West Boynton to US Hwy 441

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Voncile Smith, President

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Voncile Smith, Editor

VETERANS DAY:

BOYNTON'S TIES TO VETERANS OF ALL AMERICAN WARS

The November program, Monday, November 10, 7:00 p.m., Boynton Woman's Club will present the significant relationships between the war-related experiences of people from Boynton's past and some present-day reminders of their presence in the city. Participants will include former Mayors **James Warnke, Stanley Weaver, and Harvey Oyer**; Gold Star Mother **Hilda Girtman Pitts, Tommy Joe Woolbright, and Raymond Weeks**. Harvey Oyer will moderate. Come and share this look at history from a Boynton perspective!

ADMISSION IS FREE, AND THE PUBLIC IS INVITED.

BOYNTON SCHOOL YEAR BEGAN EARLY IN 1916

A recent announcement by the School Board indicates that Palm Beach County Schools will begin earlier than ever in 2004, the second week in August. Your Editor, who has been volunteering a few hours a month in the archival section at the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, recently found an article in *The Tropical Sun* for Friday, August 25, 1916, page 9, which reads:

"Boynton, August 25—The second week of school closes today, it being customary to open school early in this district on account of closing in the spring in time for the children to help in the work of picking vegetables.

"There will be a least one hundred pupils this year. Eighty are from the town of Boynton and the balance from the flatwoods west of Boynton. The children from the country have been delayed three days on account of the truck not being ready for the transportation work.

"Arrangements have been made for the introduction of Spanish this year and Boynton students as well as those in the other towns in the county may study this language. It is especially recommended for those who contemplate a business career."

This article reveals that school in Boynton began about August 13 in 1916. Other sections of

the county began school later—most well into September.

Earlier articles in June and July issues of *The Tropical Sun* named the following teachers for Boynton for 1916-17. Their appointments and salaries were set by the School Board:

Miss **Marie Aylesworth**, \$75.00 a month

C.W. Carnes, no salary indicated

Miss **Blanche DeVault**, \$65.00 a month

Miss **Agnes Helseth**, \$65.00 a month

Miss **Ethel M. Wilson**, \$65.00 a month

Principal to be supplied, \$100.00 a month

Mary Simmons Holmes, colored teacher at Boynton, no salary indicated.

According to information in *Like a Mighty Banyan*, 1982, a public school for Negro children was established in Boynton, September 7, 1896. The number of teachers assigned to each school, the "white" and the "colored," was not mentioned in the articles reviewed.

The articles did show, however, that the salaries of both the principal and the teachers at "the high school" [the only one in the county was in West Palm Beach] were higher.

[Editor's note: In its day *The Tropical Sun* rivaled the *Palm Beach Post* as a major newspaper for the area. Whether the enrollment mentioned in the article includes both white and black children is unknown. More likely it refers only to the white school, especially since coursework available in the black schools usually did not include instruction in a foreign language.

Like a Mighty Banyan: Contributions of Black People to the History of Palm Beach County, Editor, Vivian Reissland Rouson-Gossett; Associate Editor, C. Spencer Pompey, published by Palm Beach Junior College, Palm Beach County, Florida, September, 1982.]

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“THE HOUSE OF LACEY”

[James Irvin Lacey graciously loaned a copy of his family history which was so titled by the British cousin who wrote it. Edited excerpts from that history, supplemented by additional information from James Irvin Lacey, are incorporated into this article.]

Boynton Beach in 2003 is a rich mixture of people representing a variety of cultures and heritages, but we sometimes forget that immigration into all regions of the United States has been a continuing process since early colonial days even before we were actually an independent country. Economic factors have often been a prime mover in bringing people to our shores at any of these times.

“The name Lacey figures well in history though often spelled without the letter e and with the prefix De.” In “the town of Bury St. Edmunds” is a weathered column in the ruins of the once famous abbey in which are recorded the names of the men who forced King John to sign the Magna Carta. Among them is the name of Baron De Lacy who was one of the signatories. A De Lacey was squire to the Black Knight who fought at the battle of Crecy in France in 1346.”

William Lacey, Irvin’s grandfather, was born in 1859 in the village of Bradenham, in Buckinghamshire, England. His mother Ann died at his birth. “William probably received his schooling at a Church School and was taught the Three R’s. He admitted himself it was not much of an education, but he became proficient in all three and later read a great deal, adding to his knowledge.” “William “left school at an early age. Like many others he took up a trade” for a skilled craftsman in those days stood a much better chance of getting a good job. Because the area where he lived was noted for its furniture, “William went into the furniture trade.”

“Pay in the country towns was poor, however, and” somewhere around 1880 “William decided to leave home for the better wages of the city. He caught a train to London and began work in a factory which made wood toys and tennis bats.”

Alice Mary Maude Whitlock, who was to marry William, was born in 1867 in a house in Neat Street in Camberwell, a district in South East London. The house had a dairy attached to it and her father was a qualified cooper.” Her schooling “benefited from the takeover of the schools by the State and though, compared to today, was minimal, she did at least learn to read and write and was proficient in arithmetic.

William met Alice in Camberwell about 1883. They were married in 1884 and settled in Camberwell to raise a family. Their first child, a son **Henry William**, was born at the end of 1884. He was the oldest of eleven children. In 1901 when Alice had given birth to her eighth child, the family decided

to move to a larger house in London. This became the House of Lacey for 59 years. It was a typical terrace house built in the late nineteenth century. It contained six small rooms and at the back there was a lean-to addition, known as the outhouse, which served as a room for mangles, etc., and also had the extra advantage of providing a roof over the entrance to the toilet. The downstairs rooms, known in those days as the front room, living room, and scullery, were very small as were the three bedrooms upstairs. There was one tap over a brown stone sink and also in the scullery was a kitchen range for cooking and a large copper in the corner under which a fire could be lit to boil the weekly wash. Washing oneself was not easy, not much privacy, and bathing was done in a galvanized bath. When children were small the bathing would be done in winter in the living room in front of the fire.

In 1904 and 1906 Alice gave birth to two more children. The house bought in 1901 was becoming very crowded. Work was difficult to find and pay was still very low. In 1907, Henry, who was to become Irvin’s father, and his next two brothers emigrated to Canada to work in the Cobalt/Silver mines. This did not turn out too well, and they split up. Henry married **Ada Emily Ridout** in Canada in 1910. She, too, was from England. Their oldest child, **Ruth Ina Alice Lacey**, was born in Canada. Ruth was to grow up to marry **Albert McGregor** in Boynton Beach and become the mother of **Sandra McGregor** and **Margie Ann McGregor Miller**. Unfortunately Ruth died of cancer in 1945 when her children were still very young.

In 1912 Ada went back to England where her second child **John Henry William Lacey (Jack)** was born. Meanwhile, her husband Henry left Canada and moved to Lake Worth. By 1914 Henry had moved to Boynton and Ada had returned from England to be with him.

Henry and Ada had seven children, five of whom were born in Florida. In addition to Ruth and Jack, they had **Harold Walter (Skeet)**; **Hazel Majorie** who married **Winston McGregor**, the brother of her sister Ruth’s husband Albert McGregor; **James Irvin**; **Walter Ridout**; and **Ada Leona**.

While Henry was a jeweler by trade, he worked for years for the Lake Worth Drainage District and surveyed for the Palm Beach Canal. Later he worked with Lightbound, a building contractor. Still later he was with Jessup, a cabinet shop in West Palm Beach.

Irvin was born when the family lived at the corner of Northeast First Street and First Avenue in Boynton Beach.

The Boynton Laceys did different kinds of work over the years. Skeet and Irvin joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1935. Irvin returned from the Army after World War II and was employed by Florida Power and Light Company. Walter served in the Navy, later worked as a carpenter, then operated a barber shop on Ocean Avenue. Skeet operated a filling station on the southwest corner of Ocean Avenue and Federal Highway. Jack who was a mechanic and carpenter worked in Alaska on the construction of the Alcan Highway. Hazel taught school in Boynton for many years.

They were a rather musical family. Henry loved to play the organ and practiced by the hour on the one at the First United Methodist Church, but over the years his fingers had lost their flexibility because of the hard physical labor he had done. Walter played the harmonica and the accordion, Skeet played the harmonica, Ruth sang and played the piano, and Hazel sang in the choir.

Today the grandchildren of Henry and Ada living in the area are Ruth’s daughters, Sandra McGregor and Margie Ann Miller; Walter’s daughters, **Valerie Lacey Edwards** and **Phyllis Lacey**; and Jack’s son, **Joel** who lives at the Acreage.

[Source for early Lacey history, “The House of Lacey,” unpublished manuscript by **Peter R. Lacey**, Newhaven, England, 1990.]

A NOTE ABOUT OUR ARCHIVES

For years the Boynton Beach City Library has permitted the Historical Society to store records and artifacts in a special room by the Reference section. This shared effort represents a long standing working relationship we have had since the Library was first established. You will note that **Virginia Farace**, the Library Director, and **Janet DeVries**, Library Associate, both hold elected positions on our Board of Trustees.

Janet, who wears many hats, works with the Library, and the Schoolhouse Children's Museum, and gives some time each week to archival cataloging and preservation of materials held by the Cultural Center (which oversees the Museum) and the Boynton Beach Historical Society. The time she can devote to archival work is limited, however.

The Historical Society has some materials which are in serious need of immediate attention. As a member and president of the Historical Society, I have begun some action to try to help this situation. **Debi Murray**, who heads the archives section of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County has offered to provide me some guidance, and I hope to begin meeting weekly with Janet DeVries so that we can take steps to preserve what we have.

Archival preservation requires some special equipment. Most of the paper, especially newspaper, used for the past 100 years is full of acid; and this acid causes the paper to disintegrate. But it also contaminates other papers or materials it comes in contact with. Wood products also emit a gaseous acid which causes discoloration and disintegration of archival holdings. Materials should only be handled when the examiner or preservationist is wearing cotton gloves.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society has appropriated a small sum to be used for acquisition of plastic sleeves for storing photographs and other papers, archival quality folders, archival quality storage boxes, cotton gloves, and other materials.

Janet and I will continue working to organize and prepare our historic papers, but after the archival quality materials arrive we could use some additional help from volunteers who would be willing to learn preservation procedures.

FLORIDA VOCABULARY

Lighter knot: The pitch-filled knot of a pine tree, brick hard and highly flammable, often used to start and maintain bright, hot fires.

Double-pen log cabin: A common type of dwelling in nineteenth century Florida—the original "Cracker house." Hand-hewn logs were laid out to make two separate structures some eight feet apart, with the floors raised well above the ground. Between and around each of these "pens" a broad covered porch or "dog trot" was built. The kitchen was detached to reduce the risk of fire and was built behind the house. There were no screens or window glass, so smudge pots and mosquito netting were the only defense against ever-present insects.

Piney woods roter: Cracker term for Florida's fierce native wild boar. They can weigh up to several hundred pounds and have a massive head and shoulders, four tusks that might reach six inches in length, and a perpetually foul disposition. Long considered dangerous for anyone to encounter, it reportedly kills and eats rattlesnakes regularly and has even been reported to fight alligators upon occasion.

Painter: Cracker term for the Florida panther.

Dinner: The major meal of the day was customarily eaten between noon and two o'clock in the South. The evening meal was "supper," a light repast often consisting of cold meat and leftovers, or perhaps nothing more substantial than buttermilk and cornbread, or hot cocoa and bread.

[Definitions adapted from those author Lee Gramling includes in his "Cracker Western" novels published by Pineapple Press.]

HISTORICAL MEMORABILIA

*** Copies of *Our Century*, a lovely, hardcover book filled with photographs of people and events of the past 100 years in Palm Beach County are available for a donation of \$15.00 or more to the Society. Originally priced at \$28.00, this book makes a lovely gift or memento for anyone interested in local history. Mail requests accepted for an additional \$6.00 shipping and handling, or pick up one in person from Harvey Oyer at 511 E. Ocean Avenue, Boynton Beach, FL 33435.

***Copies of *Boynton Beach: The First 100 Years, a 39-page pictorial history of Boynton @ \$10.00 plus \$1.75 S&H.*

***9 inch Centennial Commemorative Plates @ \$10.00 plus \$3.00 S&H.



Students at Boynton High School in 1949 during a lunch break (the last year the building was open as a high school).

Who are the students in the picture?
How many can you name?
[Photo from the Mary Shook Collection, courtesy of
The Cultural Center]

THE NEXT ISSUE OF *THE HISTORIAN* WILL BE IN JANUARY. WATCH FOR IT!

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Boynton Beach Historical Society memberships are for the calendar year, January 1 to December 31. If you are not now a member and would like to join, complete the form below and return it 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.

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