



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 to US Hwy 441

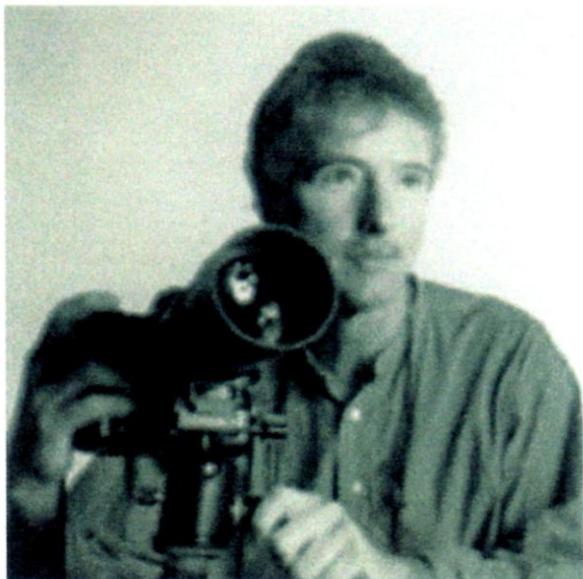


Voncile Smith, President

Volume 2008, No 1, January, 2008

Voncile Smith, Editor

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN MORAN “A PHOTOGRAPHER’S SEARCH FOR THE SOUL OF FLORIDA” JANUARY 14, 2008 MEETING A ROADS SCHOLAR PROGRAM from THE FLORIDA HUMANITIES COUNCIL



John Moran, Florida Nature Photographer

The Boynton Beach Historical Society has been fortunate to schedule another speaker from the Florida Humanities Council.

John Moran has traveled throughout Florida with his cameras for more than 20 years attempting to capture scenes as they might have appeared to Ponce de Leon and other

early strangers as they explored a new paradise. He narrates a slide show of his own remarkable collection of landscapes and wildlife photography. His photos have been published in *National Geographic*, *Time*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Smithsonian*, and other major magazines.

WHAT: Slide show presentation by John Moran, Photographer

DATE: Monday, January 14, 2008

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Boynton Woman's Club
1010 S. Federal Hwy

Free and Open to the Public

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2007-08**

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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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

No Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for January. The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 12 at the Boynton Woman's Club at 5:30 p.m. The agenda will be forthcoming, and in addition to being mailed to the Board members and any member of the Boynton Beach Historical Society who requests it, will be posted on the website. Any member is welcome to attend any Board meeting. Although the member cannot vote on Board motions, he or she is welcome to participate in the discussion.

DUES FOR 2008 NOW DUE!

Many of you have already mailed in your dues for 2008. Thank you for helping us to save postage and the time required to mail out separate notices!

If in the holiday rush you forgot whether or not you mailed your dues, please look at the right immediately above your address on this copy of the Historian and it will indicate when your dues expire. If you have paid as of the date of this

mailing, it should read "Dues expire 12/31/08." If you have paid in one of the three previous years, it will show the last date your dues were covered. If you have not otherwise done so, we hope you will renew soon after you receive this newsletter. The membership year is from January 1 to December 31. For those of you who need an additional reminder, we will mail you a notice by the end of January. Thank you for your support of the Boynton Beach Historical Society.

UPDATE ON 1927 HIGH SCHOOL

The future status of the 1927 historic high school building is still uncertain. The City Commission sitting as the Board of Directors for the CRA has it scheduled for discussion at their meeting on January 8, 2008.

Reliable reports indicate that they are expecting to hear presentations from two private developers on that evening. Who they are and what they will propose is unknown by the editor.

What we do know is that recommendations from the EDAW Downtown Master Plan report have come back. This study was authorized and paid for by the CRA. A number of the members of the Historical Society and of the coalition we participate with (BOSS—Boynton Old School Space) attended the information gathering sessions for this study.

The report includes the following:

1. The old Boynton High is listed as "An Existing Asset" belonging to the City and the Citizens of Boynton.
2. The EDAW recommends Boynton's Downtown consist of a Town Square, with old Boynton High as an important anchor to this concept.
The concept is to use the old school as an art and cultural center for community benefit. The Town Square would be located within the two blocks between the old school and the library and could also include a band shell and a fountain.
3. The EDAW recommends moving and expanding the activities of the Art Center and the Civic Center into the old school, and there would also be space for retail rental.

The CRA has actively been seeking private developers because they believe that is the only way to pay for the saving and maintenance of the old school.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE . . .

Although it is a daunting task, the Boynton Beach Historical Society can raise the funds to save the school, if it becomes necessary. Our first concern is that the building be preserved. Our preference is for the building to be used for cultural and/or educational purposes.

We begin a pledge drive . . .

At the suggestion of a representative from the State Office for Historic Preservation, the Boynton Beach Historical Society began a pledge drive during the holidays. The purpose was to show that we have initiative and are making an effort to secure support from more than a handful of people.

Thank all of you who received my letter and pledge form and responded so promptly. We will hold the pledges on file to see what actions the City Commission takes in the next few days. If some of you have not returned your pledges, please do so because we are interested in having more people involved.

Considering tax credits, grants, and loans

Thanks to representatives from the State of Florida Office for Historical Preservation, we now understand the benefit and the availability for Federal Income Tax credits that can be used by developers involved in historic preservation. We are also becoming increasingly knowledgeable about government and foundation grants available for historic preservation. Some of these are based on matching funds or in-kind contributions.

Economic Impact of Historic Restoration . . .

The data are compelling. Recently published information prepared by The University of Florida's Center for Governmental Responsibility and the Levin College of Law, the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University and the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation shows that in Florida over **\$4 billion** return annually is directly attributable to investment of public funding for restoration work.

Examination by Architect and Construction Company . . .

As many of you know, we asked Rick Gonzalez, a historical restoration architect, to examine the building and make a proposal. Rick's most visible project has been the restoration of the old downtown Methodist Church in West Palm Beach as the Harriet Himmel Theatre in City Place. We also asked Hedrick Brothers Construction Firm to look at the old school and make recommendations and estimates. Both have reported, even in the past year, that the building is basically sound, but greatly in need of repair and maintenance. (Previous City

Governments have generally let it sit idle and with little or no maintenance for the past 15 years.)



1927 Boynton High School [Photo early 1930s]

The City's studies . . .

Three years ago the CRA asked Bender and Associates (another team of restoration architects) to look at the building. Their report essentially paralleled that of Gonzalez on the suitability of the building for historic restoration and use.

The CRA commissioned another study a year later, this one to sample citizen desires and interests for the old downtown area. People of Boynton and the surrounding area expressed their desire for a cultural center and the preservation of the old school.

On page two we report on the recommendations of the EDAW Downtown Master Plan report, another study funded by the CRA which supports the restoration concept.

What we want . . .

The building should be restored and preserved. We would prefer for it to be used for cultural purposes. We would wish for space to attend plays or hear concerts—the Boynton Symphony, Three Dog Night, or whatever. We would wish for space for classes for a variety of subjects, perhaps art, dance, computer graphics, languages, literature, and music. We would wish for expansion and storage space for the Children's Museum, and we would like to see the old cafeteria restored to provide luncheon and meeting space for civic groups. Any and all of these would serve the people in a setting that places them on a continuum of Boynton life.



Last Year as a High School 1949

WHEN WE WERE STILL DADE COUNTY

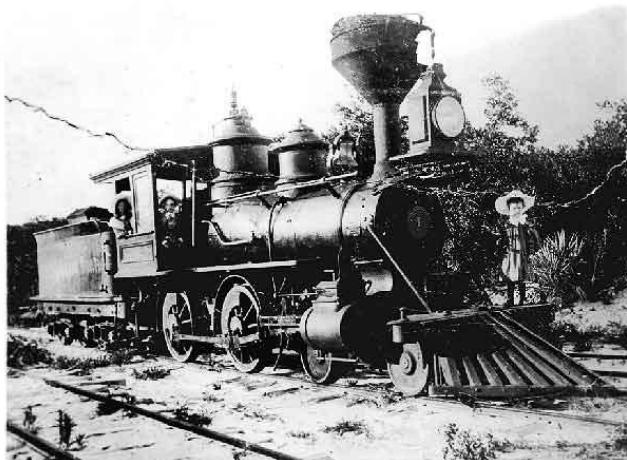
The Celestial Railroad

During the Seminole wars soldiers had followed an old Indian route for traveling between Jupiter Inlet and Lake Worth. Jupiter Inlet is located on the southern most point of the Indian River. Indian River is not actually a river but a 150 mile long salt water lagoon with three natural inlets to the ocean. Lake Worth was originally a fresh water lagoon but later with the opening of the inlets became brackish.

After the last Seminole war ended in 1859, pioneers began to use the old Indian route for coastal travel. Charles Pierce described his family's travel to Lake Worth by small boat via this route in 1873. Pierce and his family were among the earliest permanent settlers on the shores of Lake Worth.

By the late 1870s the inland boat route had become well-used and marked. To carry tomatoes and pineapples to boats for shipment to northern markets, a tram with iron rails was constructed over the haulover. In 1885 a north-south road running for 7.5 miles was constructed. The purpose of this road was to serve people and goods being carried by small boats to enable them to avoid making what was sometimes very rough ocean passage between the Jupiter and Lake Worth Inlets. Hack coaches served passengers, and freight was hauled by wagons known as "bull trains" pulled by oxen.

In 1888 the Indian River Steamship Company, part of Henry Plant's system, began construction on the Jupiter and Lake Worth Railway over the top of the county roadbed. The steamboat company was owned by the Jacksonville Tampa and Key West Railway and connected with the steamboats at Titusville at the northern end of the Indian River.



Jupiter and Lake Worth number one. The three little girls are from the Doster family who had a store on the dock. Photographed at Jupiter, the original photo is in the Library of Congress

The Railway, a 3-foot-wide narrow gage railroad, had a wharf, freight and station house, run around track and a storage track at Jupiter. The railroad and steamship offices were located in Jupiter along with a floating hotel, an old retired steamboat. The railroad ran from Jupiter to Juno and supposedly had stops (sometimes dubbed as only fictional) at Venus and Mars which apparently had only loading platforms on a siding. The town of Venus was platted in 1893, but none of the lots sold and the population was said to be one man and two cats.

The railroad opened on the fourth of July, 1889 (or by some accounts the summer of 1890) and only later was called the "Celestial Railroad" because of the connecting points along the route. The name first appeared in an article published in the March 1893 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. The railroad connected with the Lake Worth Transportation Company whose steamboats served the small towns to the south (on what we now call the Intracoastal Waterway).

At that time the area was part of Dade County which covered all of southeastern Florida. In 1889 the county seat of Dade County was moved to Juno, presumably because of the railroad terminal, but accounts suggest the move was a political power play by the citizens of the Lake area. Dade County had its first two-story courthouse in Juno Beach.

The train consisted of an engine and tender, and a one or two single combination passenger/freight car. (Some records suggest two combination passenger/freight cars, and one claims two passenger cars and three freight cars.) The trains could not turn around. The train traveled south from Jupiter to Juno going forward, and on the return trip the cars seemed to be pulling the locomotive. Two trips were scheduled daily, but like our modern American trains, usually ran late. Pioneer accounts indicate passengers shot game animals from the railroad cars and that trees along the tracks may have been cut to fuel the wood-burning engine. The train would stop for anyone waving from the bushes and passengers sometimes complained that the crew visited often with friends along the route. The fare was high for the time, 10 cents a mile, or 75 cents for the whole trip. Passengers paid only for the distance traveled.

The train ceased operation in 1895 as a result of Henry Flagler's Jacksonville St. Augustine and Indian River Railroad only 1.5 miles west of its site. Flagler, an oil magnate and railroad developer, paid the little railroad exorbitant fees to haul lumber and supplies for his Royal Poinciana Hotel. Flagler offered to buy [Continued on page 5]

[The Celestial Railroad - Continued from page 4]

the Celestial Railroad from its owners who set such a high price they infuriated Flagler. His new railroad, now known as the Florida East Coast bypassed Jupiter and Juno.

Dade County converted the railroad bed back to a public road in 1897, and the railroad ties were left to rot. Although reports suggest the steel rail were removed in the mid-1930s, Harvey Oyer, Jr. said rumors had indicated that some of the steel was used in the early 1920s for construction reinforcement in building the old Boynton Hotel on Ocean Avenue which was demolished in 2005.



Jupiter and Lake Worth number two. The railroad brought in engine number 3 at a later time.. The engineer with the oil can on the left is Blus Rice [Reis?] with his birddog "Blue" who to the delight of passengers would stop at choice hunting spots and stay with hunters until the return trip. Blus played "Dixie" on the whistle to greet passengers when he arrived at the dock. Captain Matheson, the conductor is on the combination car, and the fireman, Milton Messer, is on the pilot.

[Sources include <http://www.jupiter.fl.us/HistoryWeb/Jupiter-to-Juno-and-Venus-and-Mars.cfm>
<http://www.taplines.net/jalw/jalwry.htm>
<http://www.pbcgov.com/erm/stewardship/jduneshistory.asp>?
<http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMJ7K>
<http://www.jupiter.fl.us/HistoryWeb/Celestial-Railroad.cfm>]

DID FLORIDA HOLD FIRST THANKSGIVING?

Although it's a bit out of season to discuss, your editor found an article which suggests the Pilgrims of Massachusetts perhaps did not originate Thanksgiving after all.

Who did? I would have passed up the article, but when I was in Williamsburg in December, I discovered the Virginians (always in competition with Massachusetts for historical "firsts") claim that Jamestown had a thanksgiving celebration several years ahead of the pilgrims. After all Jamestown was founded in 1607, and the Mayflower did not arrive at Plymouth Rock until 1620.

An article in USA Today published in November reveals that Robyn Gioia, a teacher in St. Augustine

has written a children's book, *America's REAL First Thanksgiving*. She had read a book by Michael Gannon, a retired history professor from the University of Florida, *The Cross in the Sand*, which in one brief part tells the story of Pedro Menendez de Aviles who on September 8, 1565 celebrated a feast of thanksgiving with Timucua Indians. They dined on bean soup.

According to the article, some traditionalists, especially in New England, have called Gannon "The Grinch who stole Thanksgiving."

Perhaps the most sensible comment came from people in Massachusetts itself at Plimouth Plantation. "Plimouth Plantation prides itself in peeling back the layers on America's favorite holiday, but we never claim we held the *first* Thanksgiving," says Jennifer Monac, referring instead to the fact that "it's a national holiday decreed by Abraham Lincoln. . . What people celebrate as Thanksgiving is pretty much a myth. It's nothing like what the people in Plymouth or Jamestown or St. Augustine, for that matter, celebrated."

ROSLIE ALVAROE MORRISSEY RETIRES



Rosalie Alvaroe Morrissey who attended the old Boynton High School worked as a nurse in the area. She has recently retired after 56 years of nursing.

IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to learn that Leona Lacey McClain passed away June 30, 2007. She was the mother of Cindy McClain Nye, and a sister to James Irvin Lacey, both members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society. Two other children include Dan McClain and Karen McClain Jackson. Her nieces Valerie Lacey Edwards and Sandra McGregor are also members of the Society.

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

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE
BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2008

Memberships are for the Calendar year, January 1 to December 31. Check the appropriate line and return this form with the dues for that category to The Boynton Beach Historical Society, P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012. If you have questions, please call 561-742-6397 and leave a message, or email boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com or President Voncile Smith at smithvm@bellsouth.net

Individual Membership \$25.00 _____ Family Membership \$35.00 _____

Corporate Membership \$ 100.00 _____ Patron Membership \$50.00

Member's Name _____

2nd Members Name _____

Address/Telephone/E-mail _____

If you would be willing to serve on a Committee for the Society, please check all that apply:

Public Relations _____ Educational _____ Membership _____ Minority History _____
Refreshments _____ Archives/ Preservation _____ Fund Raising _____ Program _____

The purpose of the Society is to act as a living repository for the traditions and history of Boynton Beach, to interpret items of historical and antiquarian significance, and to promote a better understanding of history. We are proud to serve Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, the Village of Golf, Briny Breezes, and all areas west of Boynton Beach to U.S. Hwy 441, and, on occasion, greater Palm Beach County.