



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

PRESIDENTS' DAY – BLACK HISTORY MONTH – VALENTINE'S DAY



Voncile Smith, President

Volume 2008, No 1, January, 2008

Voncile Smith, Editor

FEBRUARY TOPIC is WAITE BIRD FARM ONCE A BOYNTON ATTRACTION ON U.S. 1

The speaker for the February meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society is Howard G. “Bud” Waite whose parents established a showplace for exotic birds on north U.S. Highway 1 in Boynton Beach. The Bird Farm existed until U.S. 1 was widened and took a large section of the property. Exotic birds were the main feature—parrots, cockatoos, flamingos, and peacocks, to name some of the showier ones.

Bud Waite’s early exposure to the animals and birds led him to veterinary school at Alabama Polytechnic University (now Auburn University). He along with Charlie Camus and George Samra founded a society in the 1960s which led to the establishment of Dreher Park Zoo now known as the Palm Beach Zoo at Dreher Park. Dr. Waite served as the Zoo’s veterinarian until 1982.



“Minnie, the Baboon” a postcard from Waite Bird Farm

WHAT: A talk about Waite Bird Farm, his parents’ attraction on U.S. Hwy 1, presented by Howard G. “Bud” Waite

DATE: Monday, February 11, 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

The next meeting of the Board of Directors 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.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for officers, directors, and trustees to be elected at the Society's Annual Meeting in April. Whoever is elected will begin their terms at the conclusion of the April meeting. All officers are elected for a one-year term. Directors and Trustees are elected for 3-year staggered terms, so two Directors and two Trustees are scheduled to be elected this year. Officers, Directors, and Trustees comprise the Board of Directors which usually meets five or six times a year.

The only criteria for nomination are that the candidate be a member in good standing and willing to serve. If you are willing to be nominated, please contact Bev Cormany, chair of the Nominating Committee, at 732-0464 or phens50@aol.com

If you would like to have a copy of the Bylaws which describe the duties of each office, please call Voncile at 734-5653.

1927 HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

The CRA Board (made up of the Mayor and the four City Commissioners) postponed any action at the January meeting relative to the fate of the 1927 Boynton High School. The consultants the CRA had commissioned to recommend what to do with the Ocean Avenue corridor apparently have completed their recommendations. Like several other groups over the years, this group too has recommended preservation of historic structures. What the City Commission will decide is yet to be determined.

There were two groups of developers who attended the January meeting. They had not yet prepared formal proposals, but both had included restoration of the old school in their limited comments provided that they have the opportunity to handle the other development of the surrounding area. One of these two groups is affiliated with Rick Gonzalez, the restoration architect the Historical Society hired in 2001 to make recommendations for the old building. We have no indication as to which group might be selected or that restoration and construction will go forward.

We continue to be optimistic, however, and to hope that the many people who have joined with us will prevail and that restoration will ultimately occur.

CORRECTION

In the January 2008 *Historian* we reported that one of the old stories among long-time Boynton residents was that some of the steel rails from the Celestial Railroad were used for reinforcement in the construction of the old Boynton Hotel on Ocean Avenue in the 1920s. Harvey E. Oyer, Jr., points out that the date was 1913 when the hotel was constructed, not the 1920s as we reported.

THE YEAR 1957

[From time to time we include little bits of trivia gleaned from the internet. The following represent what someone might have said in the year 1957. They seem particularly appropriate with our current state of high prices, unemployment, and a potential, if not already existing, recession.]

“Did you hear where some baseball player just signed a contract for \$75,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn’t surprise me if someday they’ll be making more than the President.”

“There is no sense going to Miami or Tampa anymore for a weekend. It costs nearly \$15 a night to stay in a hotel.”

“It’s too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet.”

“If they think I’ll pay 50 cents for a hair cut, forget it.”

“It won’t be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work.”

“I never thought I’d see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric. They are even making electric typewriters now.”

“Kids today are impossible. Those duck-tail hair cuts make it impossible to stay groomed. Next thing you know, boys will be wearing their hair as long as the girls.”

“When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 29 cents a gallon. Guess we’d be better off leaving the car in the garage.”

“If they raise the minimum wage to \$1, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store.”

SHARING CALLIE ROUSSEAU BROWN

[Editor’s Note: Callie Rousseau was born in the early part of the 20th century in recently created Palm Beach County. Last fall she published a book of her recollections titled *Sun in My Hair, Sand in My Shoes: A Life Lived in Old Boynton, Florida, and Beyond*, Hawthorne Publishing, 2007. She gave me permission to reprint portions of her book in *The Historian*. An excerpt follows.]

“Downtown Boynton

“Even in my first memories of Boynton there was an area we called ‘downtown.’ It stretched along both sides of Ocean Avenue from U.S. 1 to the railroad tracks. By far, the most necessary place of business was the post office. Indeed, the post office meant downtown to many of us. In the little shop next door we could buy a penny’s worth of candy or a five-cent ice cream cone. Across the street Mr. Newlan’s pharmacy

was a godsend to the town that didn’t have a doctor. A dry goods store, a barber shop, and a small inn with a restaurant added their note of stability to ‘downtown.’ Mr. and Mrs. Andrews’ general store on the corner of Ocean Avenue and Palmetto Street sold penny pencils and candy for the children and food and clothing for everyone. A small cement block building with a steeple was the home of Boynton’s first church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The town’s first bank, the Bank of Boynton, opened in 1912. Although the bank building was located across the highway on the corner of Ocean Avenue and U.S. 1, it was a part of downtown.

“The busiest business in the town centered around the Florida East Coast Railway Station, located just north of Ocean Avenue. Both freight and passenger trains made scheduled stops at the station. Here the farmers brought their winter produce to be shipped to the northern markets. The passenger trains provided the way to travel long distances or for just a shopping trip to West Palm Beach or Miami.



U.S. Post Office on Ocean Avenue

[Photo from files of Boynton Beach Historical Society].

“Because Boynton had no mail service for home delivery, everyone had to call at the post office to get his or her mail, either from a rented box or by calling at the general delivery window. If you called for mail, either Mr. Charles Pierce or Mrs. Pierce shuffled through the stack of unboxed mail to find your name.

“Generations of Americans have grown up hearing stories about the ingenious ways our forefathers followed to deliver the country’s mail. Although his route was only two blocks long, Mr. Seth Futrell’s method was equally as [continued on page 4, Sharing Callie]

[Sharing Callie, continued from page 3]

clever. He transported the mailbags to and from the post office in his wheelbarrow. When he reached the tracks near the south side of Ocean Avenue, he hoisted the mailbags to a hook at the top of a tall pole. Later, as the train passed by, the mail-car carrier reached out with a long pole and quickly plucked off the mailbags. Mr. Futrell picked up the mailbags that had been tossed from the train and wheeled them to the post office. . .

“Once upon a time Boynton had a basketball team. I don’t remember the dates, but I remember the excitement. The local young men played against teams as far away as Havana, Cuba. Basket goal posts were set up on Ocean Avenue between U.S. 1 and Palmetto Street and game lines were painted on the street. No tickets were sold for these games. The loyal hometown supporters stood on the sidewalk, cheering or jeering. Names and dates may have been lost, but those unpretentious games gave an exciting interlude for Boynton youth.”

[pp. 16-18]

THE FLORIDA AUTO LICENSE PLATE

Once upon a time the numbers on all automobile license plates in Palm Beach County began with 6. The State of Florida began in 1938 to assign a number for each county based on the population in the county at that time. A plate number combined the county number prefix, vehicle classification (automobiles, trucks, trailers, rentals, etc) and sequence number.

Dade County was the largest, so if a license plate began with 1, you knew that it came from Dade County. All the numbers will not be presented here, but just for comparison a few are listed:

- 1 Dade
- 2 Duval (Jacksonville)
- 3 Hillsborough (Tampa)
- 4 Pinellas (St. Petersburg)
- 5 Polk (Lakeland)
- 6 Palm Beach
- 7 Orange (Orlando)
- 8 Volusia (Daytona Beach)
- 9 Escambia
- 10 Broward
- 11 Alachua (Gainesville)
- 12 Lake

- 13 Leon (Tallahassee)
- 14 Marion (Ocala)
-
- 19 Brevard

Registration of motor vehicles began in Florida in 1905 and cost a \$2.00 fee for which the Secretary of State issued a paper certificate whose number was prominently displayed on the rear of the vehicle. Owners had to supply their own license plates until about 1910. Cities had the local option until about 1917 of imposing registration and licensing requirements. In some areas vehicles were required to display state, county and city license plates. From 1905 until 1917 the state issued permanent license plate numbers.



From 1918 until the present the state has issued a uniform statewide license plate. Florida was the last of the old 48 states to issue motor vehicle license plates. In 1917 a legislative Act provide for an annual issuance of a paper certificate of registration and a pair of numbered plates per car. Matched pairs were issued through 1921 and the issuance of single plates begun in 1922 has continued to the present.

The Legislature began requiring driver licenses in 1940.

In 1976 renewal decals or “stickers” appeared on the 1975 baseplate, following a nationwide method to economize on the annual production of license plates.

In 1978 increase vehicle population required changing to an alpha-numeric system.

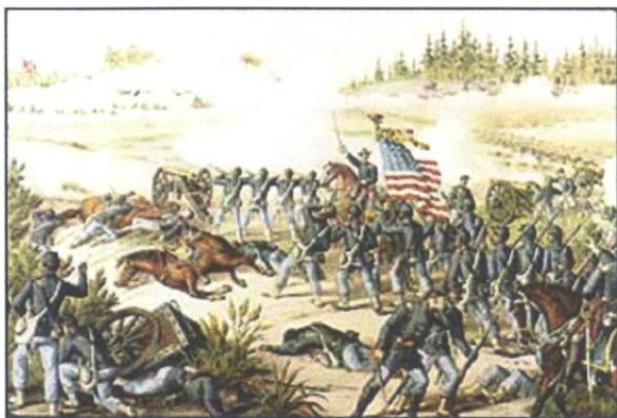


By 1949 the number of registered vehicles was leading to long numbers on the plates in populous counties like Duval.

TO HONOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH THE BATTLE OF OLUSTEE, February, 1864

The Battle of Olustee was the most important land battle fought in Florida during the Civil War. In February, 1864, Union troops headed west from Jacksonville following the tracks of the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Railroad and met a large Confederate force at Olustee Station in Baker County near Lake City. Their battle against each other is known as the Battle of Olustee (sometimes referred to as the Battle of Ocean Pond).

The two forces were roughly equal in size with about 5,000 soldiers each. The Union forces, however, differed from the Southern forces in that the Union Army contained several units made up of African Americans--the 8th U.S. Colored, the First North Carolina, and the 54th Massachusetts. One soldier in the 54th Massachusetts was Sergeant William H. Carney, who was the first African American to win the Medal of Honor. He was honored for his bravery in leading other soldiers in the Battle of Fort Wagner, South Carolina, even though he had been wounded twice.



Soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts fight in the Battle of Olustee. The African Americans who were fighting for the Union knew they were facing a very difficult situation. Should they be wounded and left behind on the battlefield, there was a good possibility the Confederate soldiers would kill or injure them or imprison them in terrible places such as Andersonville, Georgia.

The fighting was fierce. Many died or were wounded as the battle continued. The Confederate forces began to win, and the Union leaders ordered retreat. The Confederate troops won the six-hour battle and the Union troops retreated back toward Jacksonville.

The Union forces suffered a total of 1,861 casualties, including killed, wounded, and missing. The Confederate casualties totaled 946. Considerable evidence suggests that the high Union

casualties were the result of Confederate troops murdering wounded and captured African American Union soldiers.



“The country is covered with scattered pines. The ground between the trees is covered with a dense growth of coarse grass and palmetto shrubs. At intervals there are swamps, not deep, but broad and wet..” 1st Lt. Oliver Wilcox Norton of Company K in a letter to his father dated March 1, 1864.

After they had marched all night, the Union leader ordered the African Americans to go back toward the site of the battle to help wounded soldiers who were on a train on the railroad tracks that was unable to move. The African Americans readily obeyed in order to save the soldiers on the train. They pulled the train by ropes down the track for several miles. After they had helped the train to finally continue on its way, they marched back to Jacksonville.

An eyewitness later described the great courage of those troops: “Here they stood for two hours and a half, under one of the most terrible fires I ever witnessed; and here on the field of Olustee, was decided whether the colored man had the courage to stand without shelter, and risk the dangers of the battlefield; and when I tell you that they stood with a fire in front, on their flank, and in their rear, for two hours and a half, without flinching, and when I tell you the number of dead and wounded, I have no doubt as to the verdict of every man who had gratitude for the defenders of his country, white or black.”

[*African Americans in Florida*, M.D. Jones and K.M. McCarthy, Sarasota FL: Pineapple Press, 1993.

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/6731/files/rgs_olustee.html?30082 The Battle of Olusee (Ocean Pond).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Olustee]

IN MEMORIAM

The Boynton Beach Historical Society is saddened by the loss of one of our members **Kathleen T “Kay” Suiter** who died on January 17, 2008. We extend our sympathy to her husband, **Jack Suiter**, their two sons and other family members.

The Historian

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.