



# 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, in addition to supporting the preservation of the history of Palm Beach County and the State of Florida as a whole.

2012 Number 5

May 2012

## SHIPWRECKS, UNDERSEA PHOTOS, and DINNER at the WOMAN'S CLUB

The May meeting is our last program meeting until September. We do not meet during the months of June, July and August. We traditionally schedule a covered-dish dinner on a Sunday late afternoon at the Woman's Club with dinner followed by a program. Since May has two holidays--Mother's Day and Memorial Day--we try to schedule a date that will not conflict with either of those weekends. This year, we are a bit earlier than usual, **Sunday, May 6, 5:00 pm** is the date we have selected.

As we have in the past, we are asking those of you who attend to bring either a salad, a vegetable dish, or a dessert to serve eight. Our special host this year is Jim Guilbeault, owner of Culinary Solutions, who is a well-known caterer and businessman in the South Florida area. Jim will provide the main meat dishes, the beverages and the place settings (plates, cups, glasses, flatware and napkins). We owe a special thanks to members Sheila Rousseau Taylor and Bob Taylor for underwriting a portion of the costs.

If you do not wish to prepare a dish, please come anyway. You may make a contribution of \$7.00 per person at the door to partly cover the cost of your meal.

A special program will be presented by Board member Steven Anton on Shipwrecks Off Florida accompanied by some of Steve's marvelous underwater photography. Steve is a Florida native, born in Miami. When age 15, he moved to Tallahassee. He has worked for *National Geographic*, CNN, MTV, ABC, CBS, and Florida Public TV on nature and scientific video. He has taught underwater photography and video in the Sea Program to marine biologists and archeologists. Those who wish to hear Steve's program, but do not wish to participate in the dinner, may come only for the program at 5:45.

Come join the fun! Have a good dinner, enjoy a wonderful program and reminisce with new and old friends about Boynton's past.



**WHAT:** Annual Covered-Dish Dinner, Talk on Shipwrecks of Florida Accompanied by Underwater Photography by Steven Anton

**WHEN:** Sunday, May 6, 5:00 p.m.

**WHERE** Boynton Woman's Club  
1010 S. Federal Highway

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS--2012-13

### OFFICERS [Elected Annually]

President	Voncile Smith
1st Vice President, Programs	Janet DeVries
2nd Vice President, Membership	Ginger Pedersen
Recording Secretary	Diana Dennis
Corresponding Secretary	Anne Watts
Treasurer	Frances Tuite McKeral

Editor, *The Historian*  
Archivist and Webmaster

Voncile Smith  
Janet DeVries

### DIRECTORS [3-Year Staggered Terms]

2013	Tim Bednarz
3013	Gloria Partin Turner
2014	Steven Anton
2014	Barbara Ready
2015	Sheila Rousseau Taylor
2015	Linda Stabile

### TRUSTEES [3-Year Staggered Terms]

2013	Brian Edwards
2013	Virginia Farace
2014	Randall Gill
2014	Wendy Franklin
2015	Christian Oyer Macoviak
2915	Audrey Gerger

Our website is [www.boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org). The e-mail address is [boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com](mailto:boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com). Please mail inquiries or information to our local address P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425. Voncile can be reached at 561-734-5653.

You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter:

[www.facebook.com/historicboyntonbeach](http://www.facebook.com/historicboyntonbeach)

[www.twitter.com/@boyntonhistory](http://www.twitter.com/@boyntonhistory)

*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.

## THANK YOU, NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The current roster of officers, directors and trustees owe their offices to the diligence of this year's Nominating Committee. The Committee reported at the Annual Meeting in April when the Bylaws direct that we hold our election.

Virginia Farace served as Chair. Other members were Diana Dennis, Christian Oyer Macoviak, Lillian Ostiguy, and Sue Kruse. Thank you all for your time and effort.

## NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

All the officers from the previous term were re-elected--Voncile Smith, President; Janet DeVries, 1st Vice President; Ginger Pedersen, 2nd Vice President; Diana Dennis, Recording Secretary; Anne Watts, Corresponding Secretary; and Frances Tuite McKeral, Treasurer.

New Directors to serve until 2015 are Sheila Rousseau Taylor and Linda Stabile. Trustees elected to serve until 2015 are Christian Oyer Macoviak and Audrey Gerger.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The Board of Directors will meet on May 21 at 6:30 p.m. at a location to be designated. Watch our webpage for location. This is primarily an orientation meeting for the new Board, but several items of business need to be addressed. An agenda will be forthcoming. All members of the Society in good standing are welcome to attend any Board meeting, and may contribute to the discussion, but only Board members may vote on an issue.

## PLEASE ATTEND THE CITY COMMISSION MEETING FOR THE 1927 HIGH SCHOOL

On Tuesday, May 1st the City Commission will consider the two plans submitted for restoring the old school. At the last meeting the members postponed consideration until May 1st because they wished to allow time for public comment on the plans. The April 24 meeting had run too late, so the Commissioners decided to postpone consideration until their next meeting.

Both proposals call for the use of tax credits for funding and request that the City donate the building and certain lands to implement either plan. After that the plans diverge substantially.

The plan proposed by the Fort Lauderdale based Lansing Melbourne Group has a cost of \$9.1 million and would double the size of the building to convert it to a market, museum and teaching areas with space for retail use and scheduled events. The open space west of the building would become a private garden for weddings and other special events.

The other plan proposed by Delray Beach based New Urban Communities and the Palm Beach Museum of Natural History plans to make the museum the only tenant for the school which would operate seven days a week and have some limited space for meetings and events. The plan calls for a series of two-story buildings on Ocean Avenue and some intersecting streets which would be designed like town-homes to house 75 affordable rental residential units. The plan indicates other buildings in the area would house artists or businesses. These would be built on land the CRA now owns.

According to Commissioner Steven Holzman, further delay may result in either plan losing the potential tax credits, support either plan needs to make the proposal workable.

The City took possession of the building in 1992. After 20 years, it is time for the Commission to act expeditiously and accept one of these proposals. Come support action on May 1st. 6:30 is when the meeting begins.

## BERTHA CHADWELL and EARLY BOYNTON

**[Editor's Note:** The following is taken from an article published on May 23, 1964 in the *Boynton Beach Star*. The author, Mrs. Mark White, had interviewed Mrs. Chadwell about why she came to Boynton and what her life had been like.]

In 1907 Bertha Chadwell, then Mrs. J.J. Williams, and her husband came down to Boynton from the Deland area to visit her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Jess Daughtery. J.J. Williams worked in the turpentine industry outside Deland.

The Williams hoped to own their own turpentine business and had paid a deposit on one which appeared on the market following the death of its owner. However, a claim against his estate delayed the transaction, so they decided to visit Uncle Jess and Aunt Ida who had lived in Boynton since 1902.



House at 405 East Ocean Avenue was built in 1905 by Ida and Jesse Daughtery.  
[Photo from 2007 courtesy of Steve Anton]

At that time Jess Daughtery had a flourishing business in Boynton growing tomatoes. Jess suggested that Mr. Williams try his hand with a crop since their visit occurred at the right growing time. After their tomato harvest proved successful, the Williams returned to Deland. But the lawsuit pertaining to the business they were attempting to buy was unresolved, so the Williams returned to Boynton to again grow tomatoes. By the next year it became apparent that the business in Deland which was in turpentine had lost value simply from being idle for an extended time. By this time, Boynton had begun to seem like home, so the Williams came back to stay and to raise tomatoes.

There were about 30 families living in Boynton then, and all were neighbors who knew each other. Boynton was a quiet country town, and Bertha found it quite a change from the college town of Deland. She had her horse and carriage brought down, and the mobility they provided gave her great pleasure.

The most active social spot in the area was across the canal on the coastal ridge. It was the Boynton Hotel built by Major Nathan S. Boynton for whom the town was named. In the Hotel's earliest days guests came by train and were met by the Hotel's mule drawn surrey. In time these were replaced by the automobile. Unfortunately train schedules varied considerably and stories abounded about trains that were hours late.

Hotels were of special interest to Bertha Williams. Her uncle had built the first hotel in Daytona Beach.

Shortly after the Williams arrived in Boynton, they and the Daughterys walked over to see the Hotel. There they found a group of men guests at target practice. One of them offered a friendly challenge to Jess Daughtery who suggested Bertha take his place. As the person who had been responsible for taking the payroll out to the turpentine distillery from town, she needed to know how to shoot and had become an excellent marksman. This skill in shooting earned her immediate membership in the Gun Club. This led to a lifelong friendship with members of the Boynton family, namely the Boynton daughters, Annie Boynton Parker and Frances Boynton Carpenter.

A large ferry transported the carriages over the canal to the Hotel, but a smaller one operated for foot passengers. Bertha recalled an early tragedy connected to this smaller ferry. Two girls, the Austin twins, aged about 12, started for the beach with their collie dog. Because they were unfamiliar with the ferry, they caused it to tip, throwing them into the water. The dog saved one child, but the other drowned. The survivor, who became Mrs. Clyde Miller, was a life-long resident of Boynton. Her nephews, Bernal and Howard Austin became local business men.

Tomato growing continued to be a thriving business. On one day 21 carloads were shipped out. Pickers, packers and buyers found ready employment. Once when there were no hotel accommodations, Bertha and Norman Campbell pooled their own homes for living quarters and Bertha managed a dining room. M.A. Weaver recalled that he had his first meal in Boynton there.

In time, crops became more diversified, and beans and okra were planted in addition to tomatoes. Pineapples were grown from Fort Lauderdale to Fort Pierce. In Boynton, farms extended from the canal and took in a large area west of what is now Seacrest Boulevard. The Woolbright family were among the early pineapple growers. Bertha said that this industry was destroyed by the draining of the land during the early boom years. The later knowledge farmers acquired about the practice of irrigation was neither known nor understood then.

In those early years, sickness might become a serious problem. Women customarily assisted at such times by sharing nursing duties. Most babies were delivered with the aid of a friendly neighbor. If home remedies were ineffective, Dr. Cason in Delray was sent for, but he could not arrive hurriedly since his means of travel was his bicycle. The Cason Methodist Church in Delray is a memorial to the Cason family.



Bertha Chadwell ca 1964

## MORE ABOUT OLD BOYNTON

In 1909 Palm Beach County was created from a portion of Dade [now Miami-Dade] County. That same year Robert Henry Rousseau of Boynton became the first County Commissioner.



Robert Henry Rousseau ca. 1909

Currently two direct descendants of Robert Henry Rousseau are members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society. They are Dr. Daniel R. Suiter of Griffen GA and William P. Suiter of Melbourne FL who are great-grandsons of Robert Henry Rousseau. Robert Henry's daughter, Verna Rousseau Suiter was their grandmother. Verna's son, John Suiter was their father and was a well-known property surveyor in Palm Beach County.



Four friends from the late 1920s

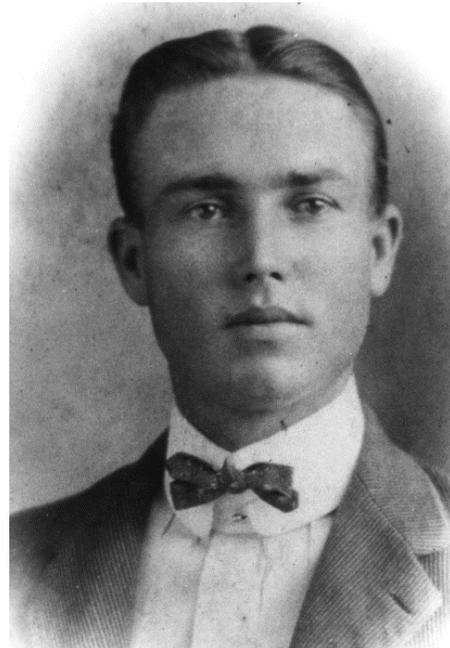
L to R: Ruth Lacey [mother of BBHS member Sandra McGregor], Verna Rousseau [grandmother of Daniel and William Suiter mentioned above], Rose Murray [mother of BBHS member Mary Lou Muster Ryder], and Alice Rousseau, Verna's sister.



Three Rousseau Siblings  
Ebb [A.A.], Annie Rousseau Crowley, and Robert

Ebb [Abel Augustus] Rousseau was the grandfather of two current BBHS members, Sheila Rousseau Taylor and Frances Tuite McKeral. Sheila's father was Ebb's son John, and Frances' mother was Mabel Rousseau Tuite. Mabel was one of Ebb's three daughters.

[The three pictures above were all sent to the BBHS by John Suiter.]



Abel Augustus [Ebb] Rousseau as a young man

[Photo courtesy of Callie Rousseau Brown.]

Ebb was also the father of Callie Mae Rousseau Brown who had been a long time supporter of the BBHS. Callie had presented several programs for the Society and published a book, *Sun on My Hair, Sand in My Shoes*, about her life in Boynton a few years before her death in 2011.

## A TRIP TO THE BEACH

At present a new bridge leading to the beach is under construction in Lantana. In the coming months, drivers and pedestrians who want to cross the intracoastal canal in that town will have to drive north to Lake Worth or south to Boynton Beach to do so.

For about the first 16 years after Major Nathan Boynton founded the town in 1895, the people in Boynton experienced difficulty similar to that now occurring in Lantana to get to the beach. But in the early 1900s there were few if any cars and finding a bridge in another town to use was out of the question even if accessible bridges might exist. Crossing the East Coast Canal, which became the Intracoastal Waterway, was a problem. In the early years, in lieu of a bridge, people used a hand-operated barge called a "lighter" to cross. Upon arriving at the canal, one hauled in the lighter on a chain, then pulled oneself across on the lighter which was then permitted to drift back for the next user. The lighter shown below is a pedestrian lighter. To carry a mule and cart, a driver used a larger lighter.



Robert H. Rousseau and his daughter Verna Eunice late 1920s



Crossing the Canal on a Lighter at Ocean Avenue

In 1911 the first bridge over the East Coast Canal in Boynton was built at Ocean Avenue—a toll bridge. It was a wooden swing bridge which was operated by means of a crank in the center section. The bridgetender pushed this crank while walking around in a circle until the whole section swung open. When a boat blew a blast from its horn for the bridge to open, the bridgetender would begin cranking, then lower a chain across the canal and collect the toll.



The 1911 Wooden Toll Bridge



Ivan Rousseau, one of Robert H. Rousseau's sons, at age 16 with his bicycle. Could he be thinking about a trip to the beach?



Robert's daughters, Verna and Alice Rousseau. A family outing, maybe beach bound? [Rousseau photos courtesy John Suiter.]

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Member's  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd Member's  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:**

INDIVIDUAL (\$25.00) \_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY (\$35.00) \_\_\_\_\_

PATRON (\$50.00) \_\_\_\_\_ CORPORATE (\$100 or more) \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this form and mail it with a check for the appropriate amount to Boynton Beach Historical Society, P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

**THE HISTORIAN**

P.O. Box 12  
Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012

We are proud to serve Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, Briny Breezes and all areas West of Boynton Beach to U.S. Hwy 441, and on occasion, greater Palm Beach County.

**CAN YOU HELP US IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE AND THE EVENT?**



This photograph was taken about 1960. It is obviously a groundbreaking, but for what structure? We can identify some of the participants--Paul Mercer is at center right, and Stanley Weaver is beside Paul's right shoulder. Harvey Oyer is standing at the far right, but who are the others? We will greatly appreciate your help.