



# 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.

2014 Number 7

October 2014

## PIONEERS of JEWELL [HISTORY of EARLY LAKE WORTH]

At the October 20, 2014 meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, writer Ted Brownstein will present a documentary history of Jewell, Florida, a lost community of Everglades pioneers. Samuel and Fannie James, an African-American couple, founded Jewell in 1885 and are believed to be former slaves. Jewell eventually grew into the City of Lake Worth, its earliest history largely forgotten.

In 2013 the City of Lake Worth celebrated its centennial. One of the choices of the planning committee was to commission the writing of a comprehensive history of the City. Ted Brownstein was selected for the task. He is a highly regarded researcher and writer with a broad background in diverse fields. He holds a Master of Arts from the University of Wisconsin in Biblical Studies. He has published several other works including *Sunshine Republic*, a futuristic novel set in Lake Worth (2010).



Ted Brownstein

He is active in his community, serving on the Lake Worth Martin Luther King Committee and the Lake Worth Centennial Committee, is co-founder of the Lake Worth Interfaith Network, and organizer of the Peace Jam for Earth Day. Born in New York City, he has been a resident of Lake Worth since 1987.

**WHAT?** A documentary presentation on Jewell, the forerunner of the City of Lake Worth by writer Ted Brownstein

**WHEN?** Monday, October 20, 6:30 p.m.

**WHERE?** Boynton Beach City Library  
208 South Seacrest Boulevard  
Program Room

**All programs of the Boynton Beach Historical Society are open free to the public!**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS--2014-15

### OFFICERS [Elected Annually]

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

|                                  |                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Editor, <i>The Historian</i>     | Voncile Smith   |
| Archivist/Facebook/Webmaster     | Janet DeVries   |
| Facebook Administrator/Webmaster | Ginger Pedersen |

### DIRECTORS [3-Year Staggered Terms]

|      |                        |
|------|------------------------|
| 2015 | Sheila Rousseau Taylor |
| 2015 | Linda Stabile          |
| 2016 | Tim Bednarz            |
| 2016 | Judith Merkel Howard   |
| 2017 | Steven Anton           |
| 2017 | Barbara Ready          |

### TRUSTEES [3-Year Staggered Terms]

|      |                         |
|------|-------------------------|
| 2015 | Christian Oyer Macoviak |
| 2015 | Audrey Gerger           |
| 2016 | Virginia Farace         |
| 2016 | Susan Merkel Shaffer    |
| 2017 | Randall Gill            |
| 2017 | Wendy Franklin          |

Our website is [www.boyntonhistory.org](http://www.boyntonhistory.org). The e-mail address is [boyntonhistory@gmail.com](mailto:boyntonhistory@gmail.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. Boynton Beach Historical Society number is 561-327-4690.

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. Copies from past years are posted on the website.

### LIFE MEMBERS

Randall Gill  
Alexander "Sandy" Simon  
Curtis and Nain Weaver

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## IN MEMORIAM

**KEATTS, JUDY GRAYBEAL**—Judy passed away October 5, 2014. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Boynton Beach Historical Society and said she always looked forward to receiving *The Historian*. She and her husband, Benny, have been members for several years. We send our thoughts of appreciation and best wishes to Benny and the other family members.

**MANN, HELEN LOUISE**—Helen has been a member of the Boynton Beach Historical Society for a number of years. She lived in Briny Breezes in the winter months with her parents and sister, Dorothy Mann McNiece in 1938-1942 until World War II began and the family returned to

Michigan. She attended Boynton High School in the 1927 schoolhouse from 8<sup>th</sup> grade through 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

In later years Helen returned to Briny Breezes each winter and enjoyed attending the historical programs and meeting friends she had known in school.

She lived in Houston, Texas where her son David and family, grandchildren and great-grandchildren live. Helen passed on May 14, 2014. She was 88. [Information sent to us by her sister, Dorothy McNiece, who is also an active member of the Historical Society.]



Helen Louise Mann

**ZOBEL, BETTY MAGNASON**—Betty Zobel, 87, of Wellborn, Florida, passed away on September 12, 2014 in Lake City, Florida. After she retired as Treasurer from the City of Boynton Beach, she and her husband Herb moved to North Florida and built a log home in the country near Wellborn.

She is survived by Herb, her husband of 38 years, daughters, Jean Renee Smith, Temple, GA; Bonnie Lee Hare, St. Petersburg FL; sons, Mike Renolds Law, Columbus, MS; Mark Gregory Law, Ocklawaha, FL; Richard William Zobel, Rutledge, TN; and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The old Magnason home still stands on East Ocean Avenue, now owned by the CRA.

We offer our sincere sympathy to Herb and the other family members. [Information from an obituary notice in the Lake City newspaper sent to us by family members.]

**HALEY, VALJEAN "Val" MATTHEWS**—Val passed away the last week of September, 2014. Although he was not currently a member of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, he has been such a major figure in law enforcement with the Sheriff's department of Palm Beach County and in the administration of the DuBois farms, that his contributions to Boynton history should be noted. He also had a distinguished record in the military.

We send our condolences to his widow, Joyce DuBois Haley, to his children and other family members.

## NEW TRUSTEE APPOINTED to BOARD of DIRECTORS

With the approval of the current Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors, President Janet DeVries has appointed Susan Merkel Shaffer to complete the term of Nancy Hood McNamee which runs until April 2016. A member of the Jones, Partin and Merkel families, Susan has spent her entire life in the area. We look forward to her service.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS AND HISTORY CONNECTIONS

President Janet DeVries has announced the following calendar of scheduled history related events.

**Horace B. Murray, Sr. Day—October 21, 2014**, Mayor's Proclamation City Commission meeting. One of Boynton's first Mayors, Horace B. Murray, Sr. arrived in the area in 1895 from Michigan at the behest of Major Boynton.

**Cocktails in Paradise—October 22, 2014, 5:30-7:30 p.m.** A cooperative fundraiser among various historical societies to benefit the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. (See announcement on page 5.)

**Murray Family Reunion—October 25, 2014, All Day.**

**History of Boynton Beach—November 13, 2014.**

Ocean Ridge Town Hall

**Cora S. Harper Presentation—February 26, 2014.** Boynton Woman's Club. Cora Harper was a founder and first president of the Boynton Woman's Club. Janet DeVries and Ginger Pedersen have been actively researching her life and her many accomplishments.

**Lyman Boomer Art Show—TBA**

**Stan Sheets Photo Exhibition—TBA**

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## WEEKEND HISTORY STROLLS SCHEDULED

The History Strolls are an extension of the Society's monthly educational program meetings and take participants to places of historic and cultural interest. The **free** History Strolls include a 90 minute guided tour and are open to the public. Participants are encouraged to register in advance as space is limited. Call 561-643-1393 to make a reservation or sign up on line at <http://www.eventbrite.com/o/boynton-beach-historical-society-6429855113?s=28402957>

- **Boynton Beach Memorial Park/Old Section Saturday, October 25, 2014, 10:00 a.m.** 1611 South Seacrest Blvd., Boynton Beach 33435 (SW corner of Seacrest Blvd and Woolbright Rd.) Hear stories of Boynton's pioneer citizens and some of the founding families. Learn the history of the cemetery, the grave markers and the triumphs and tragedies of some of Boynton's earliest citizens. For this outdoor tour, please wear close-toed shoes, bring sunscreen and a hat and bring water.

[Guides: Janet DeVries & Ginger Pedersen. 90 minutes.]

- **Historical Society of Palm Beach County, Saturday, November 8, 2014, 10:00 a.m.** 300 N. Dixie Hwy, Downtown West Palm Beach, 33401 (Across from the Palm Beach County Courthouse.) The Richard and Pat Johnson Palm Beach County History Museum. Tour will consist of introduction and visit to the museums two permanent galleries, the special exhibit gallery, and a visit to the historic courtroom on the third floor. The special exhibit (open 9-9-14 to 6-27-15). **Courage Under Fire: 120 Years of Fire Rescue**, examines the exceptional history of the West Palm Beach Fire Department, the only Fire Department in Palm Beach County for decades. [Guide: Richard "Tony" Marconi. 90 minutes]
- **Seacrest Scrub Natural Area, Sunday, December 7, 2014, 10:00 s.m.** 3400 S. Seacrest Blvd., Boynton Beach 33435 (Entrance is on east side of Seacrest Blvd, approximately two miles south of Woolbright Rd.) The natural scrub area has two native Florida ecosystems: scrub and scrubby flatwoods, which support a large population of gopher tortoises. The natural area was once part of a large ridge of scrub habitat in eastern Palm Beach County, but now is an isolated remnant surrounded by residential communities. For this outdoor walking tour, please wear close-toed shoes, long pants, and bring sunscreen, a hat, and water. [Guides: Janet DeVries & Ginger Pedersen. 90 minutes]
- **Boynton Beach Avenue of the Arts, Saturday, January 10, 2015**
- **Palm Beach Lake Trail TBA**
- **Mangrove Park TBA**
- **Downtown Boynton Beach TBA**
- **Delray Beach Historical Society TBA**
- **Green Cay Wetlands TBA**

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## DUES REMINDER

The membership year for the Boynton Beach Historical Society is from January 1 to December 31 of each year. Several members have already renewed for 2015. If you send in your dues right away, you will be paid through December 31, 2015 and you will avoid the hectic holidays that come at the end of the year. If you send in your dues without further solicitation, you help the Society too. We can avoid the extra volunteer work and duplication and postage costs of sending you a special notice. Won't you mail in your renewal now?

7-14

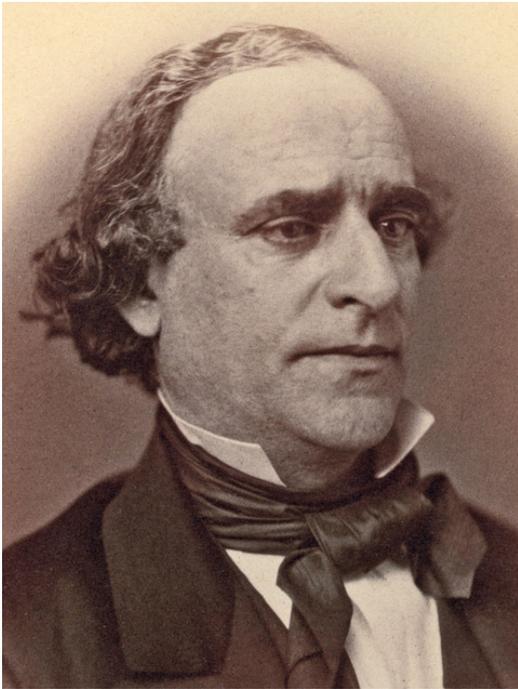
# DAVID LEVY YULEE: FLORIDA'S FIRST UNITED STATES SENATOR

By Voncile Smith

When I entered the University of Florida as a freshman in 1949, only the second year that State institution was co-educational, I was assigned to Yulee Hall, one of the new women's dormitories, all three of which were named after prominent figures in Florida history [all men, of course]. I became curious about who this Yulee was. Much to my surprise, he had been known by two surnames—Yulee and Levy. But he did much to aid the development of the State, especially through his expansion of railroads in the wilderness. Those of us in Palm Beach County hear much of Flagler and occasionally of Henry Plant on the west coast, but Yulee was designated the "Father of Florida Railroads" decades before either Flagler or Plant arrived in the State.

Florida became a state in 1845 after slightly more than a quarter of a century as a territory acquired from Spain in 1819. Statehood required that the new state have representation in both the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives.

What follows is a discussion of the State of Florida's first United States Senator, David Levy Yulee. He was a rather unique individual for a number of reasons, two of which were that he was the first Jewish member of the United States Senate and the second that he is the only individual from Florida who has both a City and a County named for him—Levy County, located on the north central Gulf coast almost due west of Gainesville; and the City of Yulee, located in Nassau County near Fernandina Beach north of Jacksonville.



David Levy Yulee ca. 1859

The man who was to acquire a number of nicknames including "Florida Fire Eater" for his inflammatory rhetoric and, as I mentioned above, "Father of Florida's Railroads" for his ownership of and expansion of railroads within Florida, was born in Charlotte Amalie on the Island of St. Thomas during the British occupation of what was then the Danish West Indies (now the United States Virgin Islands).

When Florida changed hands from Spain to the United States between 1819 and 1821, a huge land boom occurred. Spain had granted huge tracts of land in Florida to Spanish citizens, and the Spanish landholders decided to sell rather than risk losing their grants under American law.

The Arredondo grant near Gainesville attracted, Moses Levy, David's father, while he was still living on St. Thomas. Moses was a lumber merchant and businessman whose ancestors were expelled from Spain in 1492 along with other Jews. They fled to Morocco where the family name became Yulee. The family then moved to Gibraltar where the name was transformed to Levy (pronounced LEE vee). They moved to St. Thomas in 1800 where Moses entered into business with a man who was to have major political ties in the United States. In 1821, Moses Levy moved his family to Florida where he purchased 50,000 acres south of Gainesville. He dreamed of establishing a "New Jerusalem" for Jewish settlers which he named "New Pilgrimage." The settlement was a failure, however.

Moses Levy and his wife sent their son David to a boy's academy and college in Norfolk, Va. David later returned to Florida to study and practice law in St. Augustine. In 1841 he was elected a Florida Territorial delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives and served four years working to gain statehood for the territory and to protect the expansion of slavery in new states.

In 1845, when Florida was admitted as a State, the Florida legislature elected David Levy to the United States Senate. After serving one term, he was defeated for re-election in 1850.

In 1846 David Levy officially changed his name to David Levy Yulee thereby adding his father's Sephardic surname. That year he married Nannie C. Wickliffe, daughter of Charles a Wickliffe, the former governor of Kentucky and Postmaster General under President John Tyler. His wife was Christian and they raised their children in her faith.

The following year, David Yulee founded a 5,000 acre sugar cane plantation along the Homosassa River. The remains of the plantation destroyed during the Civil War, can still be found at the Yulee Sugar Mill Ruins State Historic Site.

David Yulee had wanted to build a railroad across northern Florida, and while living in Fernandina he became the first Southerner to use state grants under the Florida Internal Improvement Act of 1855, passed to encourage the development of infrastructure. Issuing public stock, Yulee chartered the Florida Railroad in 1853 planning its eastern and western terminals in deep-water ports—Port of Fernandina on Amelia Island on the Atlantic to Cedar Key on the Gulf coast. The first train arrived in Cedar Key on March 1, 1861 and Yulee abandoned his plans as the Civil War began.

Yulee was elected to the Senate again in 1855 and served until January 21, 1861 when he resigned from the Senate after Florida seceded. He joined the Congress of the Confederacy. In 1865 after the war had ended, he was imprisoned for nine months at Fort Pulaski because of his participation in the Confederate government.

Following his release, he rebuilt the Yulee Railroad which had been destroyed by the war. He was president of the Florida Railroad Company from 1853 to 1866, and also president of the Peninsular Railroad Company, Tropical Florida Railway Company and Fernandina and Jacksonville Railroad Company. His development of the railroads is considered by historians to be his most important achievement and contribution to the State of Florida. His leadership assisted increased economic development in the State which included late nineteenth-century tourist trade.

After selling the Florida Railroad, Yulee and his wife retired to Washington D.C. in 1880. He died six years later and is buried in Washington. In 2000, the Florida Department of State designated him as a Great Floridian in the *Great Floridians 2000 program*.

[Sources: Clark, James C., *Quick Looks at Florida History*. Pineapple Press, 2000.; <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=Y000061>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Levy\\_Yulee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Levy_Yulee); Discussions with Harvey E. Oyer, Jr. 1987 to 2010.]

The Young friends of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County present

# Cocktails in Paradise!

Social events featuring historic venues while celebrating our shared legacy.



50 Ocean | October 22, 2014 | 5:30-7:30pm  
50 S. Ocean Blvd, Delray Beach | 21 and over

\$25 per person | Purchase tickets by visiting  
[historicalsocietypbc.org](http://historicalsocietypbc.org) or by calling 561.832.4164



50 OCEAN



PALM BEACH ILLUSTRATED



Notice the Boynton Beach Historical Society Logo on the right down about 2/3 of distance from top. Notice also that this is a cooperative effort among several organizations. Please consider attending.

## HOW FAR HAVE WE ADVANCED IN JUST 40 YEARS????

By Jim Warnke

[Reprinted from *The Historian*, January, February, March, 1997]

In 1956 Boynton Beach was extremely racist. Anyone of "color" found downtown after dark was escorted out of the area. The FEC depot had colored and white waiting rooms as did doctor's offices and other businesses. The Kwik-Chek (Winn-Dixie now) had colored and white drinking fountains. No person "of color" was allowed on the public beach and were told to go to their "own" beach further south. Whites didn't address blacks by saying Mr. or Mrs. It was always Mary or John. Hotels, Clubs and golf courses included "restricted" in their ads meaning no Jews allowed. In only 40 years we have come so far in understanding the meaning of brotherhood. We have finally come to realize that we are all human beings and are on this spaceship called earth together. We have not achieved perfection yet, far from it, but there is finally a light of all colors at the end of the racist tunnel of darkness. Let us all go into 1997 with tolerance and understanding of our brothers and sisters.

## DR. MARTHA MEEKS-LIGHT'S NEW BOOK

A former member of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, Dr. Martha Meeks-Light, has published a book, *Sweet Pineapples: A Touching Memoir about a Strong Black Family*. President Janet DeVries has read the book and reports that not only does the book add to the historical record, but it is "inspiring, interesting, and well-written" and "is one of the first written personal accounts of a native Boynton female with roots sprouted from slavery heritage."

We hope that Dr. Light will enable us to feature a review in a future edition of *The Historian* and/or perhaps enable us to devote one of our program meetings to Dr. Light and her work.

We join Janet in congratulating Dr. Light on its publication. The Black community has played a major role in the development of Boynton Beach, and there is great need for better documentation of its history and the people who have contributed to it.

7-14

