



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.

2017 Number 2

February 2017

AUTHOR and PALM BEACH POST REPORTER ELIOT KLEINBERG will speak on FLORIDA'S AMAZING HISTORY and WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

at the next meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society on February 20, 2017 at the Boynton Woman's Club. Eliot, who has presented several programs to the Society in the past, has always been a popular speaker. He will give us a whirlwind tour of 500 years of Florida history including a strong argument that Florida's greatest challenge is encouraging its transplants, who have become permanent year-round residents, to put aside "back home" obsessions and become Floridians who work to solve the state's problems.

Eliot Kleinberg, a native South Floridian, has spent nearly four decades as a reporter, including more than a quarter century at *The Palm Beach Post* in West Palm Beach. In addition to covering local news, he writes extensively about Florida and Florida history. His ten books, all focusing on Florida include *Black Cloud* on the great 1928 hurricane; two books on *Weird Florida*, and *Palm Beach Past* and *Wicket Palm Beach* both collections of items from "Post Time," his weekly local history column for the Post. His tenth book, *Peace River*, is an historical novel based at the end of the Civil War.



Eliot Kleinberg

WHAT: Florida's Amazing History, and Why You Should Care—by Eliot Kleinberg

**WHERE: Boynton Woman's Club
1010 South Federal Highway**

**WHEN: Monday, February 20,
6:30 pm – Meet & Greet
7:00 pm -- Program Presentation**

**ALL PROGRAMS OF THE BOYNTON BEACH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS--2016-17

OFFICERS [Elected Annually]

President	Randall Gill
1 st Vice President, Programs	Anne Rimler
2 nd Vice President, Membership	Voncile Marshall Smith
Recording Secretary	Ginger Pedersen
Corresponding Secretary	Anne Watts
Treasurer	Frances Tuite McKeral
[Non-Elected]	
Editor, <i>The Historian</i>	Voncile Marshall Smith
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DIRECTORS [3-Year Staggered Terms]

2017	Steven Anton
2017	Barbara Ready
2018	Sheila Rousseau Taylor
2018	Vacant
2019	Tim Bednarz
2019	Judith Merkel Howard

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2017	Ginger Pedersen
2017	Sarah Thomas Bollenbacher
2018	Diana Dennis
2018	Vacant
2019	Susan Merkel Shaffer
2019	Virginia Farace

Our website is www.boyntonhistory.org. The e-mail address is 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

[www.twitter.com/@boyntonhistory](https://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

Lenore Benson Raborn Boonstra
Randall and Ann B. Gill
Robert and Christian Oyer Macoviak
Melear Bros., Inc. - Cliff and Rick Melear
Scott and Camilla Smith Richardson
Alexander "Sandy" Simon
Ernest G. Simon
Voncile Marshall Smith
Dorian Beck Trauger
Charlotte Tatum Weaver
Curtis and Nain Weems Weaver

CORPORATE MEMBERS – 2017

Boynton Woman's Club
Delray Awning, Inc., Don and Regina Day
Easy Pay Tire Stores, Inc., Doug Besecker (2017)
George and Christine Weaver Ternenyi
Scobee-Combs-Bowden Funeral Home & Crematory
Delma and Billie Jo Swilley

2017 MEMBERSHIP

The names listed below represent those memberships that have been paid between January 1 and February 1. People who paid earlier were listed in the November and January Historians. For those of you who joined the Boynton Beach Historical Society for 2016, we are enclosing a membership notice in the February Historian. We thank all of you who have become members for 2017 and hope you former members will continue your membership.

CORPORATE:

Delray Awning, Inc. Don and Regina Day
Scobee-Combs-Bowden Funeral Home & Crematory
Delma and Billie Jo Swilley

PATRON:

Kathleen Mayberry Castagnoli and Richard B. Castagnoli
Ron and Sarah Thomas Bollenbacher

FAMILY:

Gayle C. Kranz and George Greider
Charles and Elizabeth Miner LaBella
Diane C. and J. H. McCracken
William H. and Laura K. Orlove
Isabella and Ronald Pause
James B. and Georgie P. Raulerson

INDIVIDUAL:

Sophie Amichai
Steven Anton
Richard H. Curtiss
Lois Oyer Dooley
Barbara DuBois
Ester Effel
Virginia Farace
Barbara Gellner
Mary Miner Haggard
Frances Tuite McKeral
Jeffrey Morgan
Rosalie A. Morrissey
Gerald Murray
Marjorie W. Nelson
Marcia Voss Norman
Lillian Ostiguy
Richard E. Philpott
Barbara Ready
Fred Senior
Joanne Miner Shoemaker
Melinda Wheeler
Marion Weaver Clark Wester

STUDENT:

Peter Aispuro

BOYNTON'S BLACK HERITAGE

By Janet DeVries

Over the years, Boynton Beach has named various sites, roads and facilities within the City in commemoration of the many contributions of our early black residents. The following is a partial list of those places named for Boynton's Black trailblazers.

The **Hester Recreation Center and Park** is located on the west side of Seacrest Boulevard near Northwest 17th Avenue. Many residents utilize the playground and recreational facilities there, but do not know the background of the man for whom it is named, **Ezell Hester, Jr.**, a community leader who served as Boynton's first black Vice Mayor and the City's second black councilman (1985 – 1989) and Acting Mayor [Samuel "Sam" Lamar Wright was the first elected black City Commissioner, 1981 – 1985.]

Hester, a Palm Beach County math teacher and civil rights leader headed the Palm Beach County Negro Civic League beginning in 1955 and volunteered with the City of Boynton Beach for over three decades. He served on the City Service Appeals Board, the Community Relations Board, the Board of Adjustment and the Planning and Zoning Board. He first ran for a Boynton City Council seat in 1966 at a time when local politics was dominated by white men. He faithfully applied for a Council seat while actively volunteering on City boards and helping the community. Hester was eventually appointed to the Commission in 1985, when Commissioner Bob Ferrell gave up his seat due to redistricting. Hester was elected twice to serve on the City Commission.



Ezell Hester, Jr.

After Ezell Hester died suddenly in 1989 from a heart attack, Boynton Beach officials ordered flags flown at half-staff and closed all City offices for two hours on October 24, 1989 so employees could attend his funeral. Soon after his death, City Commissioner Dee Zibelli urged the city to name the 17th Avenue recreation facility construction project in his honor.

The **Lena Rahming Head Start Childcare Center**, 909 Northeast 3rd Street is named for **Lena Rahming**, a

community leader from one of Boynton's founding Bahamian families. She served as City of Boynton Beach recreation director for over forty Years and founded the Boynton Head Start Center. After her death in 2011, the City named the Head Start Childcare Center in her honor.

Wilson Park was named after **Brother Theodore Wilson**, a church deacon who rallied for a swimming pool for black residents in the 1950s. At that time blacks were not permitted to use the municipal beach and generally had no place for swimming recreation.

John Denson Pool at Wilson Park was the Boynton community pool originally designated Wilson Pool, but was renamed the John Denson Pool in honor of longtime pool supervisor and swimming instructor **John Denson**.

Caroline Sims Center at Wilson Park honors **Caroline Sims** who served the City of Boynton Beach as Recreation Manager for over forty years. She served as volunteer co-chair for the "Let's Build a Playground" project in 1996. She died in 2002 and the City named the Center at Wilson Park after her.

Barton Memorial Park Cemetery is named for **Mary Barton** whose son **Alton** died while a child and is buried in the cemetery. Mary helped clean up the cemetery that was unattended and overgrown.

Sara Sims Memorial Gardens Cemetery named for community activist **Sister Sara Sims** is a small burial ground for some of the early black pioneers and their families located at 209 NW 9th Court..

Heritage Park at 1000 N. Seacrest Boulevard has a marble plaque honoring some of Boynton's black leaders. The names, as of 2013, are the **Reverend Lance Chaney, Elizabeth Jenkins, Caroline Sims, Gertrude Sullivan, Sarah Williams, Lena Rahming, Lillian Artis, William H. Miller. Blanch Hearst Girtman, Juanita Suttles Meeks, Samuel Lamar Wright, the Reverend Randolph Lee, Clyde Harris, Deacon Leroy Harris, Sr., and James Willis Butler.**

There is a commemorative plaque at the Boynton City Library in honor of **Wilfred Hawkins**, Boynton Beach's first black City Manager.

Wells Avenue, now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, was named for **Robert Wells**, one of the early black pioneers who came to the Boynton area in the 1890s from the Bahamas. He platted the Wells Subdivision and rallied for a black school. 2-17 3

GRADUATES OF BOYNTON HIGH SCHOOL

The historic Boynton High School which opened in 1927 graduated students for 21 years from the class of 1928 to the class of 1949. *The Historian* has included photographs of some of these classes in past editions, but each time showing only one class. Here is a sampling of several classes over the years.



This was the first class in 1928 and had but two graduates, Mary Frances Hodges and Leon Williamson. Since this is the only picture of them that we know of, we do not know whether they wore caps and gowns. The picture is posed in front of the schoolhouse.



The Class of 1936 undoubtedly wore caps and gowns, but we have only this picture. L to R: J. Richard Newton, Frank Roush, Dorothy James, Ruth Shepard, Mason Jones and Howell Brown.



The Class of 1944. Harvey E. Oyer, Jr., joined the United States Army immediately after graduation. All the other boys in the class had signed up to report for some branch of military service before the end of their senior year. In this picture we see men and women wearing different colored gowns. These students have not moved their tassels to the left to signify that they had graduated. This picture was probably taken in a photographer's studio rather than at the school, L to R rear: Julia Holden, Harvey Oyer, Frances McBride. L to R lower: Betty Lewis, Janie Croft.



The Class of 1933: Rear—Harold Lacy, Ernest Near, William Butts, Joe Powell. Front—Esther Rousseau, Elizabeth Roush, Eunice Lewerenz, Mildred Woodruff. At this time, women were usually issued white collars to wear on the gown at the neckline to provide a more uniform appearance beside the men who were expected to wear white dress shirts. Apparently all students received the same style gowns, and the students do have the caps sitting straight with the point on the forehead and the tassels on the left suggesting they have already graduated.



From the Class of 1939, Helen Adams and from the Class of 1949 a sister/brother pair, Sue and Patrick Murphy. Both Helen and Sue wear the traditional woman's collar.

THE WILLIAM HENRY WEEKS FAMILY

Two members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society who are also members of the Weeks family have generously provided *The Historian* with an envelope filled with pictures about the family. Del and Billie Jo Swilley represent a family that came to Palm Beach County in 1934. Del's mother Versie was a daughter of William Henry Weeks, the family patriarch.

William H. Weeks had a houseful of children including the six sons shown with him in the following picture from the late 1940s.



L to R: Cogdel C. Weeks, son; Arthur D. Weeks, son; Raleigh Weeks, son; William H. Weeks, father; Robert B. Weeks, son; Brewster Weeks, son; Clarence C. Weeks, son.



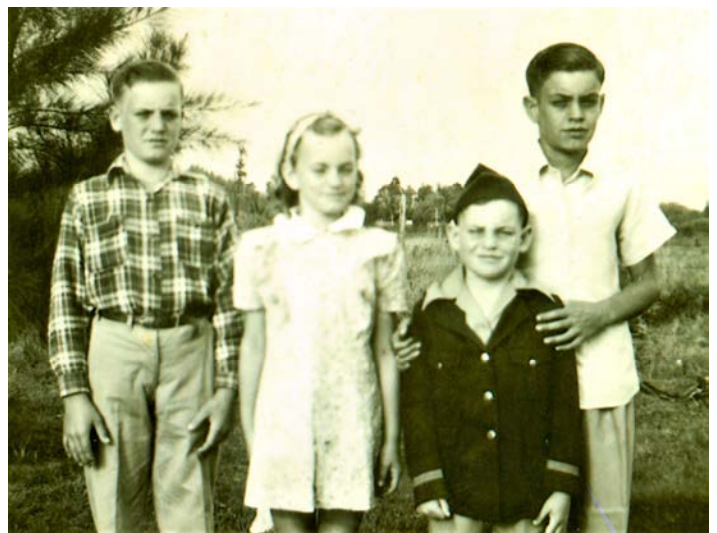
Del's mother Versie Weeks married Collice Swilley and they had four children. J.C., Del, Peggy and Bob. Shown above with their son Bob, are Versie and Collice in 1995. After World War II, Versie drove one of the school buses that served the Boynton schools, the one that traveled all the way out to the Range Line (now U.S. 441) and also picked up children along Boynton Road (now Boynton Beach Boulevard) and Military Trail. The Swilleys lived on Military Trail and their children rode the bus Versie drove.



Boynton High School cheerleaders, 1948. Sisters Gladys Weeks and Ovieda Weeks are daughters of Cogdel Weeks and first cousins to the Swilley children.



Family members L to R: Robert Weeks, Louis Weeks Revolinski, Versie Weeks Swilley, and Raleigh Weeks. All are buried in the Boynton Cemetery.



The Swilley children in the early 1940s. L to R: Delma, Peggy, Bobby and J.C. This was probably taken at their home on Military Trail. All are now deceased except Delma.

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

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Member's Name _____

2nd Member's Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

E-mail _____

THE SOCIETY IS A 501 © 3 Organization so dues are TAX DEDUCTIBLE!

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP: (Check one)	INDIVIDUAL	(\$25.00) _____
	FAMILY	(\$35.00) _____
	PATRON	(\$50.00) _____
	CORPORATE	(\$100.00) _____
	STUDENT	(\$10.00) _____
	LIFE	(\$500.00) One time Payment only.

The membership; year is from January 1 to December 31 of each year.
Dues are not pro rated.

Complete this form and mail it with a check for the appropriate amount to
Boynton Beach Historical Society, POB 12, Boynton Beach FL 33424-4012,
You may pay by PayPal at www.boyntonhistory.org



Boynton Beach City Hall in the early 1960s.

The City Council in 1963 was composed of

- | | |
|-------------------|------------|
| John L. Archie | Mayor |
| J. Allison Banks | Vice Mayor |
| Walter A. Madsen | Councilman |
| James J. Mahoney | Councilman |
| Thomas A. Summers | Councilman |