

# THE HISTORIAN

## The Newsletter of THE BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Serving Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, the Village of Golf, Briny Breezes and all areas of West Boynton to US Hwy 441

Post Office Box 12 Boynton Beach FL 33425-0012

Voncile Smith, President

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Voncile Smith, Editor

## CLARA BARTON IS TOPIC FOR FEBRUARY 14

The Boynton Beach Historical Society will meet **Monday, February 14, 2005, at 7:00 p.m.** at the **Boynton Woman's Club**, 1010 South Federal Highway, to hear **Donna Fuller Smith's** program on American Red Cross Founder Clara Barton. Donna, a member of the Historical Society, is a history enthusiast and is proud to be a Mayflower descendant. She frequently speaks about Clara Barton to other groups throughout south Florida as a member of the Civil War Roundtable.



Clara Barton ca. 1865 by Mathew Brady, Washington, D.C.. Most famous and widely circulated photograph of Clara Barton

One of the great women of American history, Clara Barton died in 1912 at the age of 91; but she did make several trips into Florida, the most notable was To assist victims of the yellow fever epidemic in Jacksonville in 1888.

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, when she was 76 years old, she visited medical camps in Florida and Cuba to recruit nurses to aid in the war effort.

All programs of the Boynton Beach Historical Society are open **FREE** to the general public.

### PROGRAMS SCHEDULED FOR SPRING

We are pleased to announce that for April 11, 2005 We have scheduled another of the very popular programs sponsored by The Florida Humanities Council. Author Bill Belleville will speak on "Rivers of Florida." This program will be presented at the Boynton Beach City Library cooperatively with the Friends of the Library. Members who have attended programs through the Council in the past have expressed great enthusiasm for both the topics and the speakers. We feared we would be unable to offer any this year because of funding cuts by the Florida Legislature.

The program for March 14 is scheduled only tentatively, so expect to receive details in the March issue of *The Historian* when planning is complete. In March we will include a brief business meeting during which we elect officers, directors and trustees for the 2005-2006 year. The names of the nominees will be announced in the March *Historian*. If you are interested in serving in any of these offices, please contact Harvey Oyer at 732-9305 for more information.

Installation of these new officers takes place in May when we traditionally have a covered dish dinner at the Woman's Club in association with The Mizner Foundation. We will have a speaker on that date, TBA announced later, who will present information appropriate to both groups.

BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2004-05

**OFFICERS**

President	Voncile Smith
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President, Programs	Harvey Oyer, Jr.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Membership	Claire Weems
Recording Secretary	Betty Thomas
Corresponding Secretary	Gloria Gregory
Treasurer	Sue Beaman

**DIRECTORS**

2005	Lucile Dickinson
2005	Fain Weems
2006	Helen Meisenheimer
2006	Nain Weaver
2007	Gloria Turner
2007	Curtis Weaver

**TRUSTEES**

2005	Harvey Oyer, Jr.
2005	Stanley Weaver
2006	Virginia Farace
2006	Jay Rowley
2007	Janet DeVries
2007	Marion Weems

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**MEMBERS WHO HAVE RENEWED OR  
JOINED FOR 2005**

[This information is about members whose dues were received between January 1 and January 31, 2005. Members who paid dues prior to January were reported in the January issue of *The Historian*.]

**PATRON:**

James E., Jr. and Patricia M. Jones  
Harvey E. Oyer, Jr.  
N. M. and Cecile Weems

**FAMILY:**

Beverley and Margaret Shepard Brown  
Bob W. and Jeanne Gayler  
John M. and Evelyn Howell  
Ernest G. and Norma B. Simon  
Leland and Donna Fuller Smith  
John and Kathleen T. Suiter  
Delma W. and Billie J. Swilley

**INDIVIDUAL:**

Marilyn Brook  
Elsie H. Coyne  
Margaret Guyder  
Fred W. Love  
Marjorie W. Nelson  
Mary Lou Muster Ryder  
Katherine Foy Thompson  
Beverley Warnke  
Raymond E. Weeks

Thanks to all of you who have paid from the dues notification in the newsletter.

Because of a serious illness of our membership chair, individual dues notices have not been mailed to you. If you have not paid, you should receive a notice sometime this month. You would help save the Society postage if you would mail your dues now with the form on the outside of the newsletter.

## AN UPDATE ON JANUARY FISH TALE

Mary Lou Muster Ryder, a granddaughter of early Boynton Mayor **Horace B. Murray**, writes that the **Captain Charles Thompson** mentioned in the story about the giant fish was probably her uncle who was married to her aunt **Florence Murray**. "They lived in Miami and he was a boat captain in that area." Florence was H.B. Murray's oldest daughter. **Rose Edith Murray Muster**, Mary Lou's mother, was H.B.'s youngest child.

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## FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In past years we have had programs honoring the accomplishments of Floridians who happened to be of African descent. Among them were **James Weldon Johnson** and our own Florida "Highwaymen." This year we had hoped to have a program on **Zora Neale Hurston**, anthropologist, writer, and folk story teller; but we were unable to schedule it.

The Boynton Beach Historical Society is fortunate, however, to have several members of African American descent, who should be commended for their interest in history, particularly of the Boynton area, and who have been helpful in attempting to preserve information about our African American citizens. Especially supportive are

**Lillian Artis**  
**Blanche Girtman**  
**Odessa W. Holt.**  
**Margaret S. Newton**  
**James Pitts.**

Through their efforts, we should be able to do more to preserve this important portion of Boynton Beach's heritage.

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## IN MEMORIAM

We are sad to report the death in early February of one of our members, **John Howell**. Mr. Howell had been active in the community in a variety of ways. He served as a president of SunBank, president of the Rotary Club, and president of the Chamber of Commerce. We send our condolences to **Mrs. Evelyn Howell**, also one of our members.

A historic note: Two other residents who had formerly served important roles in the governance of Boynton Beach were two former Mayors, **John Archie** and **Carl Zimmerman**. Both died in January, 2005. We are grateful for their years of service and wish their families well.

## A FEW NOTES ON FOODS

Who grows Guavas today? Someone must because, if one is lucky, one can find guava jelly in some supermarkets. Trees are probably available through some nurseries or the Florida Extension Division, and other guava products are possibly imported. Guavas were a very common fruit, grown in abundance in people's yards in South Florida several decades ago. I remember seeing and smelling their pungent odor in supermarkets like Lovett's (a forerunner to today's Winn-Dixie) when I was a child.

The following are somewhat strange terms to many people who have moved into Florida in more recent times:

Guava  
Horse banana  
Mulberries  
Alligator pear  
Cowpeas  
Hoppin' John  
Swamp cabbage

And even the Key lime is often misunderstood and confused with the larger, more common green limes one finds in stores. My research indicates that Key lime pie was probably served in the Florida Keys as early as the 1840s after Key limes were introduced to Florida by Henry Perrine, physician and botanist.

Canned milk was available at that time and it contained sugar to prevent spoilage (similar to what we would now call "condensed milk"). Few cows lived in the Keys, so fresh milk was rare. Eggs, too, were precious; and using them without refrigeration risked spoilage. Here is a recipe for Key lime pie which may have been typical of what was prepared. A traditional pie crust was mixed from flour, lard, salt and water. One third to one half cup of lime juice was stirred into about two cups of canned milk in a bowl. The acid in the lime juice will thicken the milk immediately. Finely grated peel of one lime was added. After tasting the filling, the cook decided if more juice was needed. The filling was poured into the baked pie shell, covered and allowed to sit in a cool place for about eight hours.

I began looking for information on all the foods listed above and have included some of what I found below:

**Margaret Garnett Harris** comments on her memories of food while she was growing up. "A good cow meant we had plenty of milk, buttermilk, cream and cottage cheese. The chickens furnished eggs and chicken dinners. Our pantry was well stocked with canned roast beef, corned beef and red salmon. . . Dad ordered from a wholesale grocer in Jacksonville some staple foods such as a barrel of flour, a large sack of sugar, and cases of prunes and canned peas."

"We had hot buttermilk biscuits for breakfast, hot buttermilk cornbread for noontime dinners . . . and 'light bread' for other meals. Mother made yeast bread twice a week. She also made dumplings, which were more or less original with her. She rolled the bread dough as thin as she could. In this she enveloped whatever fruit was on hand . . . homegrown pineapples, **guavas**, or **mulberries** or bought peaches . . . There was always honey from our bees and homemade guava jelly, guava marmalade and orange marmalade. We had plenty of coconuts, which we grated for ambrosia and coconut cake. . . There were five kinds of bananas which grew near our house. The Cavendish had a flavor similar to imported bananas. It was eaten out of hand or with cereal. The Hart's Choice was a short, fat, thin-skinned banana which was good in salads . . . Our Favorite was the Cuban cooking banana called **horse banana**. It was short but thick and four-sided, and we liked them much better than plantains. When completely ripe, we fried them slowly and sprinkled them with sugar . . .

"Guavas were another favorite fruit . . . Our favorites were large fruit with red insides; the seed pulp was soft, and they were acid in flavor. We peeled them, scooped out the pulp which we mashed through a colander to remove seeds, added the outside part or shells, then sweetened and chilled them. There was also ice cream made from the pulp, sugar, and cream. . .

(From *Pioneer Daughter*, Margaret Harris, Star Publishing Co., 1990, pp. 61-63.)

**Ursula Moore** writes, "The **guava** is the most common and useful; it is like the peach, since it can be used in so many ways; and is found on our tables every day in the year. When just ripe, if sliced and eaten with sugar, it is relished by almost every one . . .

"The avocado, or **alligator pear** as it is commonly called, is a native of the West Indies . . .

"The **mulberry** is a fine fruit, growing on trees as large as apple trees and bearing two crops each year; the fruit takes the place of blackberries in pies and puddings. . ."

(From "Our Fruits," Ursula Moore, in *The Lake Worth Historian: A Souvenir Journal* published in 1896, republished by the Historical Society of Palm Beach County.)

The Junior League of the Palm Beaches in their cookbook of 1996 write that "Most limes grown in Florida are either the small **Key** or Mexican or the larger Persian or Tahiti variety. The **Key lime** is a small, greenish-yellow, round lime approximately 1 ½ inches in diameter. It is very popular in South Florida in drinks and the famous Key Lime Pie. (From *A Slice of Paradise*, the Junior League of the Palm Beaches, 1996, p.271.)

Southern peas, sometimes collectively called **cowpeas** include the black-eyed pea, the purple-hull pea, crowder peas (no defined 'eye'), field peas, cream peas, and White-Acre peas. All vary somewhat in size, color, and flavor. (From *Around the Southern Table*, Sarah Belk. New York: Galahad Books, 1991' p. 270.)

**Swamp cabbage**, more delicately called hearts of palm or cabbage of the palm, comes from the sabal palmetto that grows almost everywhere in Florida. The leaf bud at the top of the tree may be eaten either raw, cooked, or pickled. It has a pleasant nutty flavor. Unfortunately, removing this bud kills the tree thus making harvesting in Florida a destructive practice. Most hearts of palm consumed in the State are now imported. (From *Trail from St. Augustine: A Cracker Western*. Lee Gramling. Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press, 1993, p.260.)

**Hoppin' John**, a combination of black-eyed peas and rice, is served throughout the year as a robust, economical main dish; but it is considered to be a good luck symbol on New Year's Day, and many Floridians insist that it be the first bite of the year. The peas signify jingling money for the year, and the greens (usually collards) served with the peas and rice bring folding cash, according to superstition. Smoked, cured, or fresh hog jowl is the traditional seasoning for Hoppin' John. (From *The Florida Cookbook*, Jeanne Voltz and Caroline Stuart. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 343.)

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## 1927 HIGH SCHOOL - UPDATE

The Boynton Beach City Commission continues to delay action on the historical high school. A recently completed consultants' plan makes two proposals: one would retain the old building and assign it to the Cultural Center and the CRA for grant writing, fund raising and remodeling; the other calls for demolition with a new civic center erected on the site. The Board of Directors of the Historical Society strongly favors remodeling. Boynton Beach has tended to ignore the fact that it does have a history and that the old high school is one of the few buildings yet standing which reflects changes over the decades. If you favor saving the building, please write the Historical Society to tell us so and provide your support. (Our address is at top of page 1.)

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**  
**CALENDAR YEAR 2005**

Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP: INDIVIDUAL (\$25.00) \_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY (\$35.00) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Yes \_\_\_\_\_, I will be willing to serve on the following committees (Circle choices):

Archives/Preservation      Program/Planning      Mailings      Telephone Hospitality

Membership      Public Relations      Minority History      Seeking Sponsors

Fundraising      Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of the Society is to act as a living repository for Boynton Beach's traditions and history, 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, Gulfstream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, Briney Breezes, and all area west of Boynton Beach to U.S. Hwy 441, and, on occasion, greater Palm Beach County.

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