

# 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

Volume 2005, No.5, May, 2005

Voncile Smith, Editor

## ALACHUA SENATOR WITH BOYNTON TIES TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING MAY 15

Florida Senator Rod Smith will be the featured speaker at the **Annual Meeting** of the Boynton Beach Historical Society held in conjunction with **The Mizner Foundation**, which is also holding its Annual Meeting. The date, time and place is **Sunday, May 15, 5:00 p.m.** at the **Boynton Woman's Club, 1010 South Federal Highway**. The meeting will be a **covered-dish dinner**. Please bring a dish large enough to serve eight of salad, vegetable, or dessert. The two organizations will furnish meat and beverages.

During his youth, Senator Smith who now represents the 14<sup>th</sup> Senate District, worked in agriculture with his family in the Boynton area. He graduated from Seacrest (now Atlantic) High School and Palm Beach Community College, and later in 1974 the University of Florida College of Law. He is a cousin of several of the **DuBois** families who still farm in the area. Other family ties include the **Parks**, the **Lambs**, and the **Coopers**. Senator Smith chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee and is also a member of the Environmental Preservation Committee. He will discuss both these areas and how they are currently impacted by state funding.

Other business for the meeting will include installation of new officers, board members and trustees of the Historical Society, and the election and installation of new board members for the Mizner Foundation.

Please join us.



Rod Smith  
Florida Senate  
District 14

## ONCE UPON A TIME, THE TOWN OF BOYNTON . . . NOW A LOOK AT THE TOWN OF MANALAPAN

The original Town of Boynton was named for **Major Nathan S. Boynton** and is now the only city of any size in the state that retains the name of its founder. Other towns and cities have been named after people, but these honored individuals were not the founders of their namesake cities.

The original Town included portions of ocean front property that has become separately incorporated communities. **Manalapan, Ocean Ridge, Briny Breezes, and Boynton Beach** were once a part of the Town of Boynton. In future issues, *The Historian* will discuss all these communities, but in this issue, we will give our attention to Manalapan.

According to the homepage of the Town of Manalapan, **George H.K. Carter** was granted a homestead on the yet unnamed land in 1889 by **President Benjamin Harrison**. But **C.W. Pierce** reports that the name was **George Charter**, and Pierce was with him when he filed his homestead claim in Gainesville in 1886.

Today Manalapan is a small, quiet community dedicated

(Continued on page 2)

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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2008	Stanley Weaver

(Manalapan, continued from page 1)

to controlled development. The configuration of the community is unusual because it consists of two separate areas, contiguous only by water. One part runs along the coast (A-1-A) south of the Lantana public beach to the Boynton Inlet (South Lake Worth Inlet); the other shares Hypoluxo Island with the Town of Lantana where it occupies approximately the southern one third of the island.

**Hannibal Pierce** moved his family from Jupiter to **Hypoluxo Island** in 1872. Within a year they had a few new neighbors: **Charlie Moore**, **H. F. Hammon** and **Will Lanehart**, and **Mr. and Mrs. W.M. Butler** and their daughter **Mary**.

Life was difficult. Their major source of lumber and other supplies came from shipwrecks. The nearest location for buying staples was **Titusville** which required

a trip by boat that took several weeks. In the early years venison and bear could still be found east of the island. The settlers competed with the bears in the summer months for the sea turtle eggs which were a major food item for both.

Their hardships and shortages contrast markedly with the luxury Manalapan now represents. By the 1930s the Vanderbilts had two large estates there. **Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan**, once the **Duchess of Marborough**, bought a two story frame and stucco house and the land surrounding it on the southern part of Hypoluxo Island that had once belonged to the **Dimicks**. The Dimicks had been given title to the land by the Pierces to satisfy a mortgage Dimick held.

Consuelo enlarged the house, demolishing portions of it. In 1959, it and 100 acres around it, were acquired by the current **Mayor of Manalapan, Bill Benjamin**. Mr. Benjamin still retains the house and about six and one-half acres. He has dredged, filled and bulkheaded waterfront portions. Neither Benjamin nor **Harvey Oyer** know exactly where the Pierce house stood, but it was in the general vicinity of the Consuelo Vanderbilt mansion.

During World War II, when the southern portion was still largely uncleared, the U.S. Military used the dense jungle area for survival training maneuvers.

Consuelo's brother, **Commodore Harold Vanderbilt**, owned a mansion on the ocean side of Manalapan. He was instrumental in incorporating the settlement in 1931 when the state granted a charter to the Town of Manalapan. **Jerome D. Gedney** served as the first Mayor. Harold Vanderbilt was Mayor 1952-1966.

Another privilege that town residents have enjoyed is membership in **La Coquille Club** which was founded about 40 years ago with typical resort amenities—pool, spa, and beach facilities, club room, and tennis facilities. When plans for the recently developed **Ritz-Carlton Hotel** were approved, the Town Commission required the incorporation of "The La Coquille Club" as a modern version of the former club which once occupied the same grounds. Town residents and property owners pay no initiation fee or annual dues to the Club and upon registration have priority for membership.

The year-round residents currently number about 325 and seasonal visitors may swell the population to around 500. The Town has a modern municipal building and a Town Library. It has its own police and fire departments, and its own municipal water plant which also provides water to the residents of Hypoluxo.

[Information from *Pioneer Life in Southeast Florida* by Charles W. Pierce, University of Miami Press, 1970. *Florida's Past: People and Events that shaped the State*, V. 1, by Gene M. Burnett, Pineapple Press, 1986; Interviews with Harvey E. Oyer, Jr. and William Benjamin; website [www.manalapan.org](http://www.manalapan.org)]



**Don Besecker** is draped in automobile seat belts in 1963. He is standing at **Don's Firestone**, directly behind where **Don's Goodyear** is now located as **Easy Pay Tire Store** at 629 North Federal Highway. In that year cars did not come equipped with seat belts, and the **Boynton Beach Jaycees** provided the belts and installation for \$6.00. It was a fundraiser for the Jaycees, and Don, as a Jaycee, donated his services for the installation. The camera is looking south, and today Beck's Towing is located where the vacant field occurs in the picture. The street on the right is Railroad Avenue.

The Jaycees are a nationwide organization whose purpose is to develop young citizens for leadership positions in the community. At that time members were to leave the organization at age 35., but many, termed "Exhausted Roosters," stayed on in leadership positions and new member leaders did not develop to continue the organization. When it was organized in 1959, the Boynton Beach Jaycees was a dynamic organization which led to strong lifetime friendships. The members from this period still meet for an annual dinner. [Photo courtesy Don Besecker, photographer was **Stan Sheets**.]

## MEMBERS WHO HAVE RENEWED OR JOINED FOR 2005

[Dues received between April 1 and April 30 only. Members who paid prior to April were reported in earlier issues of *The Historian*]

**Corporate Membership:** Scobee-Combs-Bowden Funeral Home

**Family Membership:** Warren R. and Mary R. Hartman  
Benny and Judy G. Keatts  
William and Theresa Marcacci  
Gay and Steve Voss  
Curtis E. and Myrtice E. Wright

**Individual Membership:** Marvin T. Benson  
Janet DeVries  
Madelene A. Hawkins  
Cheryl Muster  
William Raleigh Weeks

**THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE HISTORIAN WILL BE SEPTEMBER WHEN THOSE JOINING AFTER MAY 1 WILL BE REPORTED.**



**THE BOYNTON BEACH  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**&**

**THE MIZNER FOUNDATION  
OF BOYNTON BEACH, INC.**

Cordially Invite Members and Their Guests

*Spring Covered Dish Dinner*

Guest Speaker: Hon. Rod Smith, Florida Senate

Sunday, May 15, 2005  
Social Hour 5:00 p.m.      Dinner at 5:30

Boynton Woman's Club  
1010 South Federal Highway  
Boynton Beach, Florida

Please bring your favorite salad, vegetable, or dessert to share



For more information:  
Voncie Smith  
(561-734-5653)

Dorian Trauger  
(561-276-8076)

**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE  
BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Memberships are for the Calendar year. Check the appropriate line and return this form, or a facsimile, with your dues to The Boynton Beach Historical Society, Post Office Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

Individual Membership \_\_\$25.00    Family Membership \_\_\$35.00

Patron Membership    \_\_\$50.00

Corporate Membership \_\_\$100.00 or more

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

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

Street /P.O. Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

If you are willing to serve on a Committee, check all that apply.

Public Relations \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_ Membership \_\_\_\_\_  
 Minority History \_\_\_\_\_ Refreshments \_\_\_\_\_ Archives/Preservation \_\_\_\_\_  
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