



The Historian

The Newsletter of The Boynton Beach Historical Society

Voncile Smith, President

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Voncile Smith, Editor

“BERNARD THOMAS: A NATIONAL TREASURE”

is the topic for the November meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society. Bernard Thomas' wife Betty and his two children, Lloyd Thomas and Sarah Thomas Bollenbacher, will show a DVD honoring his life, and present discussion and answer questions about his achievements as a leading American muralist. The presentation will include the showing of several paintings from their personal collection, as well as discussion about other paintings in the area.

In honor of Veterans Day, Betty will discuss his service during World War II when his acquaintanceship with General Patton while he was serving in the European sector lead to his study of art.

His paintings in the region that are accessible to the public include the mural in the Boynton Woman's Club depicting the history of Boynton Beach; "After the Last Supper" which is housed in the First United Methodist Church of Boynton Beach; and a massive mural in the Scottish Rite Temple in Lake Worth of the building of King Solomon's Temple.

**WHAT: Meeting, Monday
November 13, 2006**

**WHERE: Boynton Beach City
Library
208 S. Seacrest Blvd**

**TIME: 6:30 P.M.
All meetings of the Boynton Beach Historical
Are OPEN FREE to the Public**

Boynton and the roles your friends and families have played by providing us with clippings, journals, pictures, letters, postcards and other materials. If you want your originals returned, give us time to scan or photocopy them to increase our archival holdings.

Take a look at what we have done so far. Go to www.boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org

NEW WEBSITE IS DEVELOPING

Thanks in large measure to the efforts of Board Member Janet DeVries who serves as Archivist for both the City of Boynton Beach and the Boynton Beach Historical Society, the number of web pages we have up is gradually increasing. We hope to make additions regularly until we have a volume of material available to those who sign on.

We will need to add new links to be able to include material we have promised to post. We want also to change some of the features on a regular basis to provide a site of continuing interest. All of this takes time, and those who currently perform these tasks are all volunteers. Please help us to preserve more of what has happened in



Paul Muster and Patsy Woolbright were named "Shyest Seniors" by the Boynton High School senior class of 1949, the last class to attend high school in the historic 1927 school building.

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The Boynton Beach Historical Society's website is boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org. You can contact us at our e-mail address boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com or mail inquiries or information to our mailbox at P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

NEW BOOK ON BOYNTON HISTORY

The Boynton Beach Historical Society is pleased to announce the publication of *Postcard History Series: Around Boynton Beach*. This brand new history book by Society member and Library Archivist Janet DeVries includes over 220 postcards of Boynton Beach and the surrounding towns. A portion of the author's proceeds will benefit the Schoolhouse Children's Museum. Books are available for purchase at the Boynton Beach City Library, the Schoolhouse Children's Museum and at local bookstores. Release date is November 27, 2006.



Janet DeVries

YOUR EDITOR REMEMBERS . . .

When I was a girl—recollections from the 1930s and 1940s:

Grocery Shopping—

In Boynton, there were few grocery stores—mostly little privately owned shops similar to today's convenience stores (but with fresh meats, vegetables and fruits, eggs and dairy, but no gasoline and nothing prepackaged). We drove into Lake Worth for most of our grocery shopping at chain stores such as Lovett's (now Winn-Dixie), A&P, and Piggly-Wiggly. We had never heard of Publix, Walmart, or Target.

One little store in Boynton, **Steven's Market**, extended credit, and my grandfather regularly wrote "grocery orders" for his sawmill workers to enable them to have food between paydays. If he had given them cash, many would have spent it on alcohol, and their families would have gone hungry. Steven's Market was far more expensive than the chain supermarkets, so the unfortunate poverty of those workers was furthered by this arrangement. My grandfather deducted the amount of the "orders" from their salaries.

I first became aware that there was a butter substitute called oleomargarine in 1942 (the year my sister was born). We were in a grocery store in Lake Worth, and a vendor was giving away hot biscuits slathered with margarine. I thought the biscuits were made with "oleo," but my mother informed me (with some disgust of the product) that the spread was a butter substitute. Of course, during WWII, we all learned to eat oleo because butter was often unavailable; and since a pound was shaped as one solid white chunk, it looked like lard. We used the little package of yellow food coloring which came in the margarine package to mix into it to make it look like butter. Legislation prevented the sale of precolored margarine until some years later.

School Life—

In early 1943 we had a big scrap drive (junked metal) at school for the war effort. The school sponsored a slogan contest with the winner, **Janie Croft**, receiving a prize (some "Defense Stamps") for "Scrape for Scrap." In classes we made posters from construction paper promoting the drive. A huge pile of scrap grew on the southeast lawn of the 1913 schoolhouse, and students who located and had donated the most scrap (in pounds) won prizes (also "Defense Stamps") We all felt very patriotic.

Escaping to "Melton and Mary's": **Melton and Mary Partin** leased space to operate their sundry store and soda fountain on East Ocean Avenue where "Hurricane Alley" is located today. The school bus, which some of us had to ride, made its first run to Briny Breezes. Thus, those of us who lived west toward Military Trail had time after school to do some things we were not supposed to do, such as leaving the school grounds without permission. We walked (or ran) to "Melton and Mary's" for a coke or ice cream before going home. Later, when I was in high school, we often went there for lunch, usually a sandwich and a soda, which we much preferred over whatever the school cafeteria offered. [Melton was a brother of **Mott Partin**, Boynton's long time Chief of Police.]

A BICENTENNIAL FILM AND WHAT SOME PIONEERS RECALLED

[Recently **Isabel and Ralph Myers** sent the Society an article from *The Palm Beach Post* written c. 1976 during the Bicentennial celebration of the United States. It describes activity in Boynton Beach to celebrate the Bicentennial and includes comments by some early settlers. The material below is based on that article with comments from some of Boynton's old time citizens.]

To plan for America's Bicentennial in 1976, the city established a Bicentennial Committee. The committee sponsored a film that showed, like early America, Boynton had pioneers, although they arrived much later in American history. Even in 1976, a few homes built near the turn of the 20th Century could still be found.

The 29 minute film is narrated by **Lowell Thomas** and cost \$16,232 to produce. Boynton Beach's City Council contributed \$7,276 of the total, while another \$3,000 was contributed privately. Roving Photographers, the company who produced the film, absorbed the remainder of the expense after expected state and federal support failed to materialize.

In the film, an aerial view shows modern day 1976 urban Boynton whose population was then 37,460. Thomas stresses the theme that "small villages are the backbone of our nation." Images of wildlife flash on the screen and the story moves from the pre-Columbian Indians to the Spanish Conquistadores to the Seminole Indian Wars. The film also includes the story of the Barefoot Mailmen, the extension of the Florida East Coast Railway to Miami, and how the railroad engineers blew their train whistles to alert tomato and pineapple farmers that a freeze was expected.

Of course, **Major Nathan S. Boynton** is included as he buys up land at \$1.25 per acre and builds his 60 room Boynton Beach Hotel beside the ocean.

Near the end of the film with a music background of strains of "This is My Country," Thomas concludes that today's residents owe much to the pioneer families who lived with no radios, telephones, newspapers, or highways. As he reads the names of the early families, views of golf courses, marinas, shuffleboard and tennis courts are flashed on the screen.

One image shown on the film is of **Bertha Williams Chadwell** as one of several young women riding the pedestrian cable ferry over to Major Boynton's hotel.

The reporter **Monte Basgall**, who wrote the article, interviewed Mrs. Chadwell. Age 87 at the time she was living in a 70-year-old house that she and her first husband had bought 66 years earlier soon after their arrival from the Daytona area. They

began growing tomatoes. She recalled that at times 24 freight carloads of tomatoes were shipped from the settlement in one day.

She recalled also that the Seminole Indians paddled across old Lake Boynton (where Leisureville is now) to bring fresh venison and wild turkeys to cook in the long ago demolished hotel.

She said she remembered when the "millionaires" over on the beach agreed to take on half the city's bonded indebtedness during the depression in exchange for the right to form a separate community which was first named Boynton Beach (as separate from the Town of Boynton) and later renamed itself Ocean Ridge.

To reflect the fact that pineapples were once a major crop, the city's Bicentennial motto was "From Pineapples to Progress." But pineapples lost out to Cuban labor and the high local land prices during the boom years in the 1920s.

Another long-time resident who was mentioned was **Walter Lacey**. In 1976, Lacey was a local barber whose father had come to Florida in 1912 from Canadian cobalt and silver mines. Lacey commented that Boynton Beach's population grew substantially after World War II from only a few thousand to many times that. He added that if the depression had not halted things back in the 1920s, the city would have become back then what it was in 1976.

In the quieter days said Mrs. Chadwell, "Everybody knew everybody."

The reporter wondered if those who arrived early were happy about what happened to the old Boynton. **W.T. "Sam" Woolbright**, a former Mayor, who remembered when Federal Highway was a quiet nine-foot-wide graveled country lane, remarked, "I don't know. You can't live in the past. You have to live in the future. I took it as it came."



Bertha Williams Chadwell, c. 1976



Cheryl Muster (Granddaughter of Boynton's first Mayor, H. B. Murray) **and George Buller pose for a Photo Club picture on the beach in 1944**

[Photo courtesy of Cheryl Muster]



For Cheryl Muster it was Spring Break from FSU in 1947. Left to right—Bruce (Unknown), brother Paul Muster and Cheryl sculpting a sand woman.

[Photo courtesy of Cheryl Muster]