

# 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.

2010 Number 8

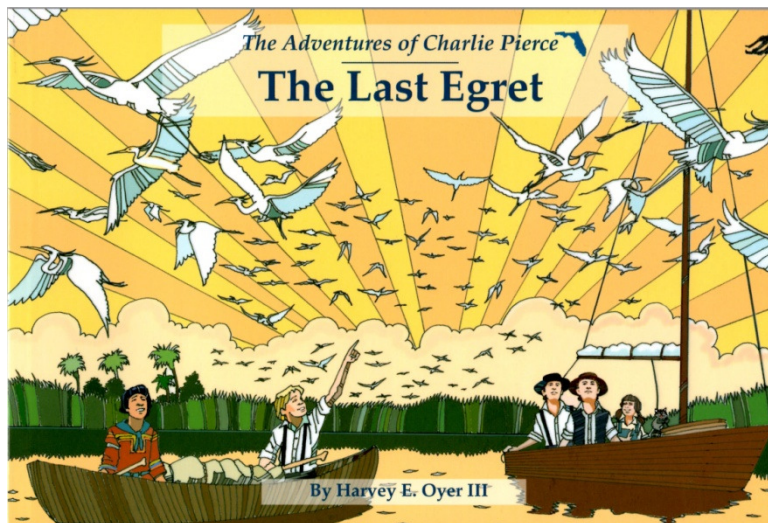
November 2010

# THE LAST EGRET

is the title of the second book written by Harvey E. Oyer III about the adventures of his great-grand uncle Charles Pierce as a pioneer boy growing up in the South Florida area. Like his first book, *The American Jungle*, Harvey's intent in this new work is to appeal to elementary school aged children to help them identify with what life was like in the early years of what was to become Palm Beach County.

For our November meeting, Harvey will discuss this new book which is one of the best selling children's books in Florida this year. It was selected by the Palm Beach County School District for its first ever Read Together program where all 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the County will read the same book simultaneously. Beginning in November, over 15,000 children from 109 public school and 21 private schools will read *The Last Egret*.

Harvey's first book, *The American Jungle*, was awarded two gold medals by the Florida Publishers Association in the categories of Children's Fiction Book and Florida Children's Book, sweeping the awards for children's books in Florida in 2010.



Harvey E. Oyer III and his sister Christian Oyer Macoviak

Harvey Oyer III is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation native of Palm Beach County and served for seven years as Chairman of the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. He has received numerous awards and currently serves as a Director or Trustee for a variety of organizations.

**ALL PROGRAMS ARE OPEN FREE TO THE PUBLIC**

**WHAT:** Discussion by Harvey Oyer III about *The Last Egret*

**WHEN:** Monday, Nov. 8th, 6:30 p.m.

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

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2010-11**

**OFFICERS [Elected Annually]**

President	Voncile Smith
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President, Programs	Janet DeVries
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Membership	Bev Cormany
Recording Secretary	Anne Watts
Corresponding Secretary	Diana Dennis

**NON ELECTED**

Editor <i>The Historian</i>	Voncile Smith
Archivist and Webmaster	Janet DeVries

**DIRECTORS [3 year staggered terms]**

2011	Steve Anton
2011	Sally Dye
2012	Sheila Rousseau Taylor
2012	Delma Swilley
2013	Tim Bednarz
2013	Gloria Partin Turner

**TRUSTEES [3 year staggered terms]**

2011	Randall Gill
2011	Harvey Oyer, Jr
2012	Victor Norfus
2012	Dan Rousseau
2013	Brian Edwards
2013	Virginia Farace

The Boynton Beach Historical Society's website is [boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org](http://boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org) You can contact us at our e-mail address [boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com](mailto:boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com) or mail inquiries or information to our mailbox at P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012. Voncile can be reached at 561-734-5653.

*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.

**HELP US ON NOVEMBER 16!**

For years Boynton Beach has been the only city of its size in Palm Beach County that had no real ordinances for designating, and possibly protecting, properties that have historical significance. While serving as a City Commissioner before becoming Mayor, Jose Rodriguez persuaded the Commission to appoint a Historic Preservation Ad Hoc Committee which is continuing to work under the newly constituted City Commission. Boynton Beach Historical Society members who serve on this committee are Barbara Ready and Janet DeVries.

One of the committee's major objectives has been to work with the City staff to develop a Historic Preservation ordinance. This ordinance is now complete and its first reading before the Boynton Beach City Commission is scheduled to take place on November 16, 2010. Please mark your calendars and try to attend.

**ANOTHER BOYNTON LANDMARK GONE**

The two story house that had stood for over a century on the north side of Ocean Avenue just east of the Schoolhouse Children's Museum was demolished in early October. Built by James and Estella Harper McKay in 1908, the framed vernacular residence of Dade County pine, had wide open screened porches that were enclosed with jalousie windows by a later owner. The McKays had named it Casa Blanca.



"Casa Blanca" after remodeling in the early 1950s  
was renamed "The Gables"

[Postcard Photo courtesy of Janet DeVries]

Some records suggest the house was built as late as 1919, but Harvey Oyer said it was built earlier. He questions any "official" records prior to 1920 when Boynton was incorporated and said even Palm Beach County had scant records for some portions of the County. Kathleen Mayberry Castagnoli, a niece to Estella McKay, says that the house was built in 1908. The Harpers moved to the Boynton area in 1901.



After demolition, there remained only a pile of rubble,  
which has since been hauled away.

After World War II the McKays were still living in the house, and their nephew David Mayberry

[Continued on page 3]

[Continued from page 2]

lived there with them briefly after he was discharged from the Army and before he left to attend the University of Florida.

By the early 1950s the house had been sold, and the new owners covered the white wooden siding with stucco, changed the roof line, added contemporary shutters, and converted the interior into a winter tourist apartment house which they renamed "The Gables."

**Some notes about the McKay/Harper families—**Estella McKay's brother was Charles Harper who was the Florida East Coast station agent in Boynton in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Later he was transferred to Homestead where he served as Mayor. His wife, Cora Stickney Harper, was the first president of the Boynton Woman's Club.

Another sister to Estella McKay was Elizabeth Harper. Elizabeth married Zoll Oliver Mayberry whose father was a Federal Revenue Agent, William Green Mayberry, sent in to protect the tax interests of the Federal government when moonshining and rum-running were common occurrences. [Information for this story was provided by Kathleen Mayberry Castagnoli, Harvey E. Oyer, Jr. and Janet DeVries.]

---

### **NO PROGRAM MEETING OR HISTORIAN IN DECEMBER**

The next program meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society is scheduled for January when we are again privileged to have "Miss Gillian" Davis present our program. Many of you attended the meeting in January, 2010 when she shared her development as a performer and teacher and recalled her experiences with her dance students at "Miss Gillian's" school. As an additional service to our community, she was also instrumental in helping to establish WHRS and WXEL. Her presentation for 2011 will cover the founding of these two broadcast facilities.

We do not issue a December *Historian*. Issues are mailed in January, February, March, April, May, September, October and November, so you should receive your next copy in early January.

Remember we welcome pictures, letters, clippings, stories and other information about your family in Boynton. Contact us and let us and others share your family's historic presence in this community.

## **DUES FOR 2011 ALMOST DUE**

Our membership year begins January 1, 2011. Last year many of you responded to the notice about renewal in *The Historian* so that we were able to save labor and postage by not having to mail out dues notices.

Thanks to those of you have already sent your 2011 dues to us:

### **Patron Membership**

Bob W. and Jeanne Gayler  
Ralph E. and Isabel Myers  
Voncile Marshall Smith  
Marion and Cecile Weems

### **Family Membership**

Robert L. and Virginia Foot  
Helen Mann and Dorothy Mann McNiece

### **Individual Membership**

Donna Harmening  
Nadine Hartling  
Madelene A. Hawkins  
Denise McCulloch  
Lyn Elise Orletsky  
James Marshall Smith  
John C. Watts

Special welcome to new members Helen Mann and Dorothy McNiece and to John C. Watts.



### **SOME FACES FROM THE PAST**

Taken at the Boynton Woman's Club November, 1984 Diamond Jubilee—back row, L to R, Donald Keyes, Kenneth Fountain, Dow Ross, Wilma Unknown, Rosalie Alvaroe Morrissey, and Mary Lou Muster Ryder. [Photo courtesy Rosalie Morrissey]

# Florida House of Representatives Tribute



*A Tribute to Dr. Joseph J. Morrissey*

*WHEREAS, Nova Southeastern University professor Dr. Joseph J. Morrissey, whose life was cut short, dedicated his life to improving the quality of the lives of others through his scientific research, and*

*WHEREAS, Dr. Morrissey, a molecular biologist, joined the College of Pharmacy at Nova Southeastern University in May 2009, where his research efforts included cutting-edge cancer research and his classroom teaching focused on biology and immunopharmacology courses, and*

*WHEREAS, Dr. Morrissey traveled the world in his efforts to share and collaborate with other leaders in the field of cancer research, and*

*WHEREAS, Dr. Morrissey was a loving husband, father, brother, son, and friend whose quiet yet obvious passion for life, family, and research made him an unforgettable presence in the lives of all who knew him in the State of Florida and in the global research community, and*

*WHEREAS, Dr. Morrissey's profound effect also extends to those who may one day benefit from the treatments and cures that evolve from his cancer research, and*

*WHEREAS, the memory of Dr. Morrissey is that of a man at peace with his family, his friends, his colleagues, and his place in the world,  
NOW, THEREFORE,*

*BE IT RESPECTFULLY PROCLAIMED that the life and memory of Dr. Joseph J. Morrissey are hereby honored, that Dr. Joseph J. Morrissey is recognized and commended for his valuable contributions in the field of science and medicine, and that sincere condolences are offered to his family at his passing.*



In the May *Historian* we printed In Memoriam to the sad death of the son of one of our members, Rosalie Morrissey. Rosalie's son, Dr. Joseph Morrissey, was murdered in April, apparently by unstable tenants who first broke into his house in Plantation, took him and his wife captive, drove them to an ATM where the assailants forced him to withdraw money, and then stabbed Dr. Morrissey to death. Rosalie has shared with us this Tribute to him issued by The Florida House of Representatives.

## THE SIMPLE LIFE WITH LITTLE TECHNOLOGY

By Voncile Smith

When my family first moved into the vicinity of Boynton in the late 1930s, we lived what was then far out in the country on Military Trail. We had more luxuries than most of our neighbors, but we were poor by today's standards.

We had no telephone, no television, no central heating or air-conditioning, no computers or internet, no freezer, no dishwasher, no microwave, no hot water, no washer or dryer [Mother paid a "washerwoman" to do our laundry], and no garbage or trash pickup. Unlike many of our neighbors, we did have electricity in our house and a fully functioning bathroom [except when we had heavy rains and the septic tank backed up].

We did not have a refrigerator or even an old-fashioned "ice box" for several months after my mother, father and I moved into the house described below.

In previous *Historians* I have written about the building of my grandparents' house and the operation of my grandfather's lumber mill on Military Trail in the late 1930s. Their house was about three miles north of what is now the C. Stanley Weaver Canal just slightly northwest of the entrance to Knollwood Groves. About 1938 a husband and wife with the last name of Jones bought three and one-half acres immediately north of my grandfather's house and built a little house of their own. The wife was named Mae and she operated "Mae's Frabrics" on Clematis Street in West Palm Beach from shortly after they sold us their house until the 1960s. All I remember about the husband is that everyone called him "Jonesie," including Mae.

The Jones house was very small. The living room on the southeast corner was about 10 feet x 10 feet, and the one bedroom was so small a standard double bed became almost a wall-to-wall bed. The room was about 8 x 7, so small in fact that the bed had to be pushed against the wall and then there was no space between the wall and the head and foot boards. The house had a small bath with a flush toilet, an old-fashioned footed tub, and a lavatory with a mirrored medicine cabinet above it. The kitchen, behind the living room, had a sink and a few cabinets, one water faucet, and a pressure kerosene stove which the Jones left behind. The house had a total of five small sash-weight screened windows--two in the living room, and one each in the bedroom, bath and kitchen.

In late 1938 or early 1939, Mother and Daddy told me they had decided to buy the Jones house and the 3 1/2 acres for \$600. As an eight year old, I did not realize what a financial stretch this was for them.

Almost immediately they took out a bank loan to enlarge the house. Jones's bedroom, which was to become my room, was extended east by four feet. The old living room became our dining room, and its entire east wall was opened into the new 14 x 16 living room. The new master bedroom was about 10 x 12 with a closet on the northwest side 4 x 5 which

was tied in with the four-foot extension to the old bedroom. All the windows installed in the addition were wooden-framed French windows, screens inside, and opened outward by means of a crank. The south wall of the new living room contained a red brick-front fireplace with a single French window on each side. [Jones' house had no means of heating and all we ever had was this one woodburning fireplace.] There were two double French windows on the front of the house, one for the living room and one for the master bedroom. Jones' house had seven foot ceilings, but our new living room and bedroom had 8 1/2 foot ceilings.

We bought the lumber from my grandfather Fletcher. The exterior was pine siding [painted white], the framework was pine 2 x 4s and 2 x 6s and the interior walls and ceilings were covered by planed 1 x 8 pine boards which my mother wallpapered after we moved in. The entire roof consisted of cedar shake shingles. We had a shallow well, about 16 feet deep, operated by an electric pump. We drank the water directly from the pump, never boiling it. My father did all the electric wiring himself. Later he built a pump house which protected the pump, housed our kerosene tank, and provided storage for tools. He also built a screened porch on the northwest corner off the kitchen. He installed a kerosene water heater on the porch with hot water lines leading to the bathtub and lavatory, but because of the cost of kerosene, mother lighted it only once a week when we took hot baths. He built the porch entirely alone, but hired someone with carpentry skills to help with the pump house.

My parents sold the house in 1949. It burned down about 1966. Today the land is part of the schoolyard for Hidden Oaks Elementary School.



Voncile, age 8, with braids, doll and dog  
beside framework of house addition

# Boynton Beach City Library

presents . . .

## Photo Preservation Workshop

*Tips from the  
Library Archivist  
on Preserving, Displaying  
& Storing your  
Family Photographs*



**Wednesday,  
November  
17th  
10:00 am**

**Sign Up for the Free Workshop by Calling 742-6397**

Children under the age of 13 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or chaperone at all times while in the Library.



**Boynton Beach City Library**  
208 S. Seacrest Blvd., Boynton Beach  
**561.742.6390**  
[www.boyntonlibrary.org](http://www.boyntonlibrary.org)

Groups of five (5)  
or more must  
pre-register.

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

**Join now for the calendar Year 2011.** Complete the form below or copy the information and return it or the copy with your check for the type of membership you desire payable to The Boynton Beach Historical Society, P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, Florida 33425-0012. New memberships will be effective from now until December 31, 2011. Current members may renew now with 2011 dues effective until December 31, 2011.

### BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM, CALENDAR YEAR 2011

Member's

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:**

INDIVIDUAL \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY \_\_\_\_\_

PATRON \_\_\_\_\_

CORPORATE \_\_\_\_\_

(\$25.00) \_\_\_\_\_

(\$35.00) \_\_\_\_\_

(\$50.00) \_\_\_\_\_

(\$100 or more) \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to serve on the following committee(s) [Circle choices]  
Archives/Preservation \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Relations \_\_\_\_\_  
Program/Planning \_\_\_\_\_  
Membership \_\_\_\_\_  
Minority History \_\_\_\_\_  
Hospitality \_\_\_\_\_  
Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Website \_\_\_\_\_