



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 to US Hwy 441

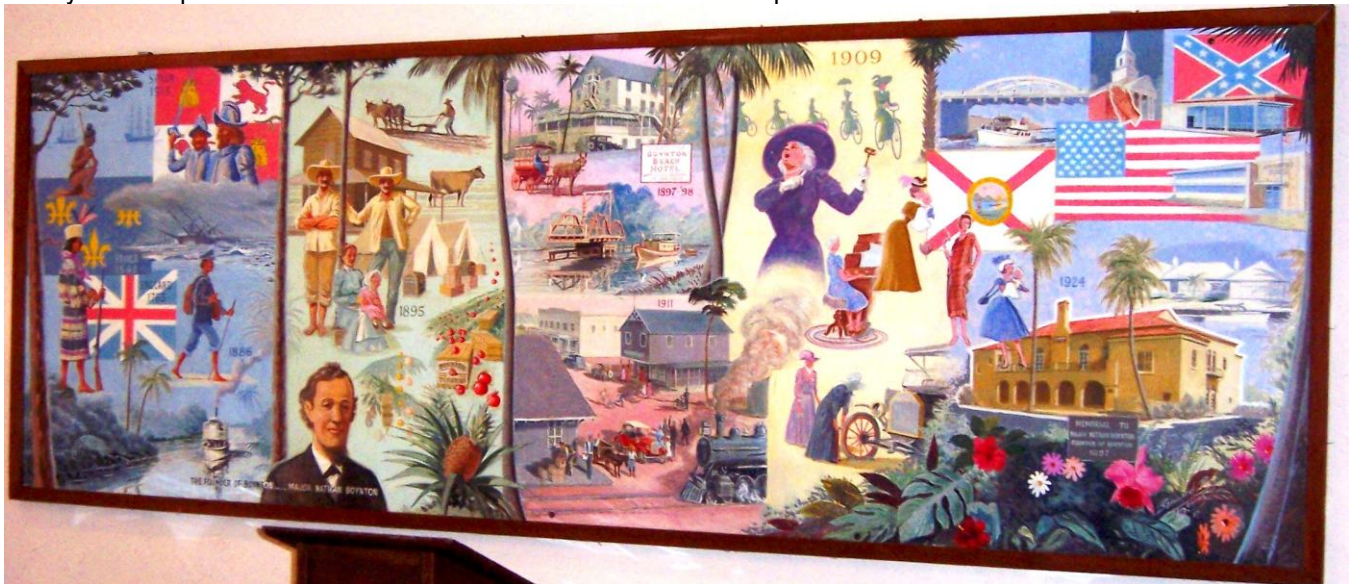
Voncile Smith, President

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Voncile Smith, Editor

BERNARD THOMAS MURAL, "KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE" at SCOTTISH RITE TEMPLE - A SPECIAL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH

The Boynton Beach Historical Society has long discussed a visit to the Scottish Rite Temple in Lake Worth to see the spectacular mural of King Solomon's Temple painted by Bernard Thomas. A Scottish Rite representative will discuss the painting and what it represents. We invite our members and others who may be interested to meet with us at the temple on **Saturday, March 15, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.** to hear this discussion and to view this magnificent work of art. Bernard Thomas was an internationally acclaimed muralist who lived in Boynton with his family in the later years of his life. Others of his murals in Boynton available for viewing include "After the Last Supper" which is housed in the First United Methodist Church of Boynton Beach, and "A History of Boynton" housed in the Boynton Woman's Club. Although a black and white copy of a photograph does not begin to do it justice, Thomas' "History of Boynton" is presented below to enable us to include herein a representation of his work..



A HISTORY OF BOYNTON – Bernard Thomas (housed in the Boynton Woman's Club)

WHAT:

A Visit to the Scottish Rite Temple in Lake Worth to View and Hear Discussion of Bernard Thomas ' Mural "King Solomon's Temple"

WHEN:

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 2008, 9:30 A.M.

WHERE:

SCOTTISH RITE TEMPLE, Lake Worth, FL – From Boynton, I-95 north to 10th Ave, N. Exit east [right] to "D" Street. Go north [left] on "D" to end. Scottish Rite Building is on your right. Park in Parking Lot.

This program is in lieu of our regular March meeting. We have no other program scheduled for March.

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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.

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. Back issues and an index prior to the current year are posted on our website.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

April: The Boynton Beach Historical Society will meet April 14 at the Boynton Woman's Club at 6:30. This will be our Annual Meeting, and we will elect new officers, directors, and trustees. The business portion of the meeting usually takes less than a half hour, and we will continue with a special program to be announced in the April *Historian*.

May: Traditionally we meet for a covered dish dinner at the Boynton Woman's Club on the third Sunday at 5:00 p.m. This date falls about half way between Mothers Day and Memorial Day. This year this meeting falls on May 18. We ask each person to bring a vegetable casserole, a salad, or a dessert to serve 8. The Society furnishes the meats and beverages. Please save the date now because it is a good opportunity to meet and chat with other members, many of whom are long time or lifetime residents of Boynton Beach and have much to share about the history of the town. We expect also to have a short program. More in the April and May newsletters.

SOME VANISHING BUILDINGS

Old homes in many towns which at one time were functional, stylish residences tend with age to become chopped up rental properties often under-maintained by income conscious landlords. Tenants may abuse the property, and seldom maintain the surrounding yards.

Community Redevelopment Agencies have been created in many communities to seek remedies for what is often called "urban blight." The Boynton Beach CRA has recently acquired the two homes pictured below and located on North Seacrest Blvd. The first, a two story house designed, constructed, and lived in by Ray Wilcox, is scheduled to be burned down as a training exercise for the Boynton Beach Fire Department.



Originally constructed to be Ray Wilcox's home

The one-story house pictured below was also designed by Ray Wilcox and built cooperatively with Harvey E. Oyer, Sr. They sold it to Howard Miller after it was completed in the 1920s. [Howard Miller's father was the original owner of Briney Breezes. His mother was one of the signers on the deed for the present Boynton Woman's Club. Howard, himself, was later imprisoned for rum-running.]



1920s House Built and Sold by Wilcox and Oyer, Sr.

MORE CONTRIBUTORS FROM MICHIGAN

Besides the founders of Boynton and Linton (now Delray Beach), other people who also had interesting backgrounds and were from Michigan settled in the area in Boynton's early years. One of these was Ray Wilcox. Several members of his family had moved here before he arrived, and he came because of good reports from them. He was a quiet, but resourceful person, who despite no formal degrees in either architecture or engineering was a successful designer and builder. He was creative and an effective problem-solver.

In the early days of automobile manufacturing, he designed and constructed the wooden forms which at that time were used in the construction of cars. Shortly after the Wright Brothers made their first flight in 1903, he began making airplanes, and subsequently learned to fly.

After the Boxer Rebellion ended in China in 1912, and Sun Yat Sen had assumed power to head that country, Ray and his wife Ida moved to China to build airplanes for the Chinese government.

When they left China a few years later, they went to India, then on to England, thus being better travelled than most people of that time period. When they returned to the United States, they came to Boynton where his parents and other family members had settled prior to World War I.

One of his first activities was to supervise the building of Scotia Plantation in Hypoluxo for James Brown. In the meantime, he went to work for Jessup's, a woodworking shop on Georgia Avenue in West Palm Beach. While he was there, Addison Mizner hired him to build replicas of woodwork and furniture antiques from the Renaissance which Mizner was using in the homes he designed in Palm Beach. One story concerns a 14th Century door for which Mizner requested seven reproductions. When Wilcox was ready to turn them over to Mizner, he asked Mizner to select the original. Mizner could not identify it from among the eight. They apparently drilled authentic looking worm holes and succeeded in creating other distressed features which led most viewers to believe they were true antiques. (What Mizner told his buyers we cannot report.)

Roy Wilcox was a member of the First Methodist Church and was in charge of constructing the new Sanctuary in 1947. Rev. William F. Bryant was the pastor at that time, and he, Ray Wilcox, and Allan Murray handled all the basic construction. The three

worked side-by-side, and the only one of the three who was paid for the construction was Allan Murray. [Allan Murray, from an old Central Florida family from near Arcadia, later opened a landscaping nursery on Military Trail.]

After the Methodist Sanctuary was completed, the Baptists, a block up the street, began work on their new building. In their congregation they had craftsmen and carpenters, but no one with construction supervisory experience. Ray agreed to handle the supervision of their construction. He gave his services to both congregations and asked no fees.

He and his nephew, James Miner, (for whom Miner Road is named) together constructed the altar rail and pulpit for the First Methodist Church.

In the late 1920s, Ray Wilcox and Harvey Oyer, Sr. bought the old building that now houses the restaurant, "Hurricane Alley," from the Methodist Church. The building was sinking on one side as it settled on the land. Wilcox figured out how to brace the building, reinforce the construction, and stop the settling. Whatever, he did has proved quite successful, because the building has stayed put for over 75 years since he directed the repairs.

[Information provided by Harvey Oyer, Jr. whose father was a close friend and business associate of Ray Wilcox.]



Sign currently on old Wilcox home on North Seacrest

WHAT IS LOXAHATCHEE?

When someone says, "I live out in Loxahatchee," what are they referring to? Most of us would recognize that they do not mean the meandering South Florida river that eventually empties into the Jupiter Inlet. Some of us may relate the name to the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge located off U.S. Highway 441 and much closer to Boynton than the area usually defined as "Loxhatchee." Loxahatchee has a post office, but does it represent a town? Some say, "Oh, it's out along Southern Boulevard west of West Palm Beach." Your editor decided to do some searching.

There is no incorporated city or town solely by that name, although Loxahatchee Groves, incorporated in 2006, represents the newest incorporated area in Palm Beach County. The residents it represents seek to gain control of development and other encroachments on their lifestyle.

Loxahatchee overall appears to be only a vaguely defined community located in the areas west and northwest of Royal Palm Beach slightly over 15 miles west of West Palm Beach. It is located within the Indian Trails Improvement District and the Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District. The tourist attraction, Lion Country Safari, is within the Loxahatchee area. Police and fire protection is provided by the County.

The name "Loxahatchee" means in an Indian dialect "turtle creek," inspired no doubt by the animal life on the river.

According to the *Palms West Almanac* [www.palmswestalmanac.com/history-lox.htm], most of the current history of the area stems from 1917. In that year, a developer by the name of George Bensel founded the community of Loxahatchee Groves and continued to influence its growth until his death in 1961.

As early as 1850 a large tract of land was transferred from the Trustee of the Internal Improvement Fund to the Disston-Land Company. Additional transactions followed and in 1902, two million acres, including Loxahatchee, were sold to the Southern States Land and Timber Company for the amazing price of 25 cents per acre.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened the West Palm Beach Canal (C-51) for travel in 1917. This was followed shortly by additional roads and canals which opened up the western areas of the County.

In 1925 the Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District was chartered under Florida Statute 298. After the drainage district was established, Bensel added a post office, a single-pump gas station, and a little grocery store—all on State Road 80 near "D" Road.

Ten and 20 acre tracts were platted with three acres dedicated exclusively to citrus trees. The agricultural opportunities were soon realized by the residents. Bensel's brother, Tom K. Benzel, planted another 56,000 trees. The first year of production the area shipped 20,000 boxes of fruit. The output eventually reached 100,000 boxes.

In 1958 Loxahatchee Groves was sold to Loxahatchee Investments, a subsidiary of the Food Fair Grocery Corporation. A year later, the Village of Royal Palm Beach was chartered by the same company. The rural lifestyle in Loxahatchee Groves started to change.

In 1969 the residents of Loxahatchee organized the Loxahatchee Groves Landowners' Association. The development and growth of Wellington, Royal Palm Beach, and The Acreage in the 1980s and 1990s have made it difficult for Loxahatchee Groves to continue to maintain a rural lifestyle.

Although, as mentioned above, incorporation has been recent, the residents still consider themselves to be the oldest established western community in Palm Beach County. In 2002 they marked their 85th anniversary with a big event which some labeled a celebration of "a rural community wanting to stay rural."



Old Packing House of Palm Beach-Loxahatchee Company

What the future holds is anybody's guess. Their dirt roads, excellent for equestrian activities, still offer them some isolation. The current decline in the real estate and housing market probably delays impending development. What's next? Who knows?



Boynton High School Faculty, 1929-1930
 Back Row: Mildred Granger, Principal Professor Robert Williamson, Betty Granger, Marjorie Coon.
 Front Row: Roberta Williamson Goodwin, Frederika Medley
 [Photo courtesy Frances McKeral, from her mother Mabel Tuite's collection]



Boynton Schools ca. 1935. [Photo courtesy Frances McKeral from Mabel Tuite's Collection]

We are proud to serve Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, Briny Breezes, and all areas west of Boynton Beach to U.S. Hwy 441, and, on occasion, greater Palm Beach County.

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Boynton High School Class of 1933
 Harold Lacey, Ernest Near, William Butts, Joe Powell, Esther Rousseau, Elizabeth Rousch, Eunice Lewerenz, Mildred Woodruff
 [Photo courtesy Frances McKeral from her Mother Mabel Tuite's Collection]