

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.

2013 Number 1

January 2013

PIONEERING PALM BEACH: THE DEWEYS AND THE SOUTH FLORIDA FRONTIER

is the title for the January program for the Boynton Beach Historical Society scheduled for January 21, 2013 at the Boynton Woman's Club. This is also the title of the recently published book by two Historical Society members, Ginger Pedersen and Janet DeVries. Janet has written, "Palm Beach's sunny and idyllic shores had humble beginnings as a wilderness of sawgrass and swamps only braved by the hardest of souls. Two such adventurers were Fred and Byrd 'Birdie' Spilman Dewey who pioneered in central Florida before discovering the tropical beauty of Palm Beach in 1887." Their story was nearly lost even though this dynamic couple was vital in transforming the region from rough backcountry into a paradise poised for progress. From the isolated frontier they moved to entertaining, among others, the Flaglers, Vanderbilts, Phippes, Cluett's, and the Clarkes. Ginger and Janet have used Birdie's autobiographical writings from her best-selling books to fill in the gaps of a history untold until now. The authors reveal the unique role of this pioneer couple in founding and building the Town of Boynton.



Byrd Spilman Dewey

[Photo courtesy Janet DeVries]

Ginger and Janet will discuss their research and what led to their decision to assemble their findings into a book.

Dr. Ginger Pedersen is a college administrator and history researcher who received her MS in psychology and her doctorate in higher education.
[Continued on page 2, Program Presenters.]

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION!

WHAT: Pioneering South Florida, a presentation and discussion by authors Ginger Pedersen and Janet DeVries

WHEN: Monday, January 21, 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Boynton Woman's Club
1010 South Federal Highway

**ALL PROGRAMS OF
THE BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ARE OPEN FREE TO THE PUBLIC**

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Our website is www.boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org. The e-mail address is boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com. Please mail inquiries or information to our local address P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425. Voncile can be reached at 561-734-5653.

You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter:

www.facebook.com/historicboyntonbeach

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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.

[PROGRAM PRESENTERS. Continued from page 1]

education at Florida Atlantic University. A native Floridian, she has long been intrigued by Florida history and the history of Palm Beach County in particular. Her earliest Florida ancestor arrived in Florida in 1886. She maintains two local history websites and serves on the Historical



Janet DeVries and Ginger Pedersen present their new book.

[Photo courtesy Coastal Star]

Preservation Board of the City of Boynton Beach. This is her first book.

Janet DeVries has lived year-round in Palm Beach County since 1987. South Florida history is one of her favorite areas of interest. Currently she is pursuing an MS in Library Science while serving as a library archivist at Palm Beach State College. *Pioneering Palm Beach* is her fifth published book. She has in preparation several others, including a cold-case crime investigation book and an historical fiction novel for juveniles. She is First Vice-President of the Boynton Beach Historical Society.

2013 DUES

The membership period for the Boynton Beach Historical Society is January 1 to December 31 of each year. The date your membership is paid through is listed on your mailing label attached to your copy of *The Historian*.

If your dues for 2013 were received prior to the issuance of the November *Historian*, your membership is on the list included in the November issue. Memberships received thus far, not including those received prior to November 1st, are listed below.

CORPORATE:

Dr. Tim Kehrig
George and Christine Weaver Ternenyi

PATRON:

Earl and Lenore Benson Raborn Boonstra
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Drs. Steve and Gay Voss

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David H. Bludworth
Janet DeVries
Jim Edward
William G. James
Sandra McGregor
Dr. Jeff Morgan
Marianne Nitzsche
Sandra L. Pike

[Continued on page 3. 2013 MEMBERS]

[2013 MEMBERS. Continued from page 2]

Anthony Rowson
Mary Lou Muster Ryder
Eleanor Murray Sala
Joanne Miner Shoemaker
John C. Watts
James H. "Jim" Weeks
Randy K. Weeks
Raymond E. Weeks
Marion Weaver Wester

Thanks to all of you for sending in your dues without a separate dues reminder. We hope that those who have not yet renewed or joined will mail in your dues soon. We will include a separate notice sheet in the February *Historian*.

We are most happy to welcome the following new members among those listed above: Dr. Tim Kehrig, Dr. Richard Raborn, Donald G. Wilkens and Ann Thomas Wilkens, David H. Bludworth, Anthony Rowson, and Randy K. Weeks. We are so pleased that you have chosen to become members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society.

IN MEMORIAM

[We appreciate very much that Raymond Weeks, Sr. sent us the following.]

RAYMOND ERIC WEEKS, JR. Ray, age 64, of Boynton Beach, passed away August 12, 2012. He had resided in Boynton Beach all his life. Ray was employed locally as a banker for over 40 years after attending the University of Florida and graduating from Florida Atlantic University. He began his career with First Bank and closed it with Wells Fargo.

Ray was a 7th generation Floridian whose ancestor, Theophilus Weeks, began service in the American Revolution when only 16 years old serving two and one-half years. Theophilus came to Florida in 1825, twenty years before Florida became a state, and settled in Alligator, now known as Lake City. He may be the only veteran from the Revolutionary War buried in Florida, or in any case, he is one of the very few. Ray's family, including grandparents and great grandparents, moved to the Boynton area from central Florida in 1934. Ray's grandfather, Edward Brewster Weeks was employed for 37 years as the Forman of the Lake Worth Drainage District.

Ray is survived by this wife Susan, his father Raymond E. Weeks, Sr., a World War II veteran of 28 years service and a long time member of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, three children—Jason and his wife Melissa, Marci and her husband Jason, Shawn and his wife Stacy, and six grandchildren: Tyler, Caden, Alexa, Camrin, Maddex, Raymond, and Brynn. He also has a brother Randy [a new Historical Society member] and his wife Kathy and niece Samantha Weeks. We are sorry for their loss.

MORE ABOUT THE WEEMS FAMILY

We need to correct where Dr. Nat Weems received his M.D. It was Emory University, not Grady Hospital in Atlanta as we reported. He did work at Grady, possibly as an intern or a resident, and that is where he met Truly Fain who was studying nursing. Also the woman identified on the back cover of the November *Historian* as Alice Weems, Nat Weems' mother, may be another relative. Below is a picture of Alice Weems during middle age. The second picture is of Nat Weems with both his elderly parents.



Alice Weems – Nat Weems' mother



Nat Weems with parents

The *Historian* received a nice comment about the article from the November issue on the Weems family—BB Historical Society member Jim Weeks writes:

"It was a pleasure to read your article on Dr. Weems' family.

"I graduated from Boynton High School in 1946. For a graduation gift Mrs. Weems gave me a Seaforth for Men, cologne and shaving lotion set. I still have the bottles.

"All the Weems family that I knew were real nice folks.
Jim Weeks"

REFLECTIONS ON A HANDKERCHIEF

By Voncile Smith

While I was stowing away some Christmas linens in an old cedar chest, I came across a bag of lovely linen handkerchiefs that had belonged to my mother. What nostalgia they evoke. The ones Mother had saved showed techniques of stitchery I am unable to name. Embroidery, applique and fancy open stitching were never my forte, although Mother tried periodically to strengthen my skills by buying me a small stamped doily or a chair back or chair arm cover to complete to try to stimulate my interest. I might work part of an hour one day and leave the remainder for Mother to finish months later. Mother never learned to tat which is to make lace by hand, however. The handkerchiefs or scarfs adorned with this complex handcraft were left to the skilled fingers of my great aunts. Thus, to my considerable relief, I was spared efforts to teach me tatting since I saw these aunts only occasionally.



Embroidered and appliquéd ladies handkerchiefs

Handkerchiefs were a necessity when I was a child. Kleenex and other throw away tissues had not really arrived on the scene; and had they been available, few families' limited budgets would have permitted their purchase. I carried a handkerchief to school every day, the 25 cent piece with which to buy my lunch in the school cafeteria securely knotted in one corner. I stowed this treasure safely in a back corner of my desk having no fear that anyone would take it. We were in the same classroom all day, except for lunch and recess when everyone left the room together. But theft was really not a problem at that time. People left their houses, often for long periods, without locking them. Windows were unlocked and open most days when the weather was pleasant.

Flu and cold season [most people did not know the concept of seasonal nasal allergies] was a problem. Often

children with runny noses came to school with a man's white handkerchief safety-pinned to the front of their shirts or dresses. The boys derisively referred to these as "snot rags," and sometimes belittled my pretty lady's handkerchief with a similar epithet. If one had a runny nose, the lace and embroidery were rough impediments to comfort, and a small handkerchief was soon overcome by the moisture of a truly leaky nose. I had been taught not to share my handkerchief, but some children did. Adults assumed that what was going around would be caught anyway, so sanitation was not a serious consideration.

Handkerchiefs were also inexpensive, handy gift items. Even three or four men's handkerchiefs were available neatly displayed in gift boxes in Woolworth's or McCrory's for less than \$1.00, and individual handkerchiefs could be purchased for as little as 10 cents. For Christmas, I always received at least two boxes [8 or 10 inch square, very shallow, cardboard containers designed to show the contents to best advantage]. And my standard gift to both my parents and to my grandparents was determined by limited cash and a recognition that the times demanded a recurring new supply of "hankies."

Another inconvenience of handkerchiefs was that they had to be washed and ironed. One shortcut was to take the damp, freshly washed item and plaster it against a clean window pane to dry. The moisture held it in place and eliminated the need for ironing.

The disadvantages of handkerchief use have reduced their availability. I know few, if any, women who still carry them, and even though some men still stick one in their pockets, perhaps out of habit, they still prefer a small packet of disposable tissues when wiping their noses. Utilitarian aspects of the handkerchief have essentially vanished, and even carrying a handkerchief for decorative purposes is no longer in vogue. Perhaps the best available stock is now found in antique shops.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The Board of Directors did not meet in December. The January meeting will be Monday, January 28, 2013, 6:30 p.m. Board members will be sent an email before the meeting designating the location, and the location will be posted on our website before the time for the meeting.

Any member of the Boynton Beach Historical Society in good standing is welcome at any meeting of the Society. A non-Board member may participate in the discussion of the Board, but cannot propose or vote on motions. Items still under consideration are the expenditure of the Harvey E. Oyer, Jr. Memorial Fund, and the conditions for the archival repository.

QUESTIONS

ANS

When WAS INTERCOASTAL CANAL dug	1894
" " H-B-MURRAY house built	1895
" " BOYNTON BEACH hotel built	1896
" " First PASSENGER TRAIN	1896
" " First school opened	1898
" " PIERSON house built	1906
" " Ship KUKIMBO wrecked	1906
" " PAL BEACH A COUNTY	1907
" " First WOMAN'S CLUB built (Now BEANS)	1912
" " B-G-Hodges house built	1912
" " First Grade school built	1913
" " Woolbright Homestead built (South Dixie Now merckle)	1914
" " Boynton Hotel built	1915
" " First Lift bridge built	1918
" " Boynton became town	1920
" " F-E-C-R-R double tracked	1920
" " First water system	1923
" " First Fire dept	1923
" " Boynton Beach Hotel tore down	1923
" " BAD HURRICANES. 9-14-26 - 9-17-28 - 9-16-47	
" " NEW WOMAN'S CLUB built	1926
" " F-P-L took over electric system	1926
" " First sewer system	1926
" " Boynton INLET opened	1926
" " NEW High school built	1927
" " NEW school damaged by storm	1928
" " OCEAN Ridge became town	1932
" " Second bridge over CANAL	1933
" " F-E-C-R-R back to single track	1977
" " 15th Ave bridge built	1967

these dates from

H-B-MURRAY
 GLEN MURRAY
 FRANK FUNK
 WALTER LYMAN
 A-O-LUMSFORD

This timeline was sent by Maxine Keatts Lansford via Historical Society members Ben and Judy Keatts. It was apparently prepared in the late 1970s through recollections by the four men named at the bottom. Some of the last dates listed are somewhat difficult to read on the copy sent us—Ocean Ridge became town 1932, Second bridge over canal 1933, FECRR back to single track 1977, 15th Ave bridge built 1967. The "(Now Bean's)" comment after First Woman's Club built was before the City saw fit to demolish the building several years ago. Also following Woolbright Homestead Built, "(Now Merckle)" was the site of the Merkle Orchid Nursery and the home of Norman and Rebecca Partin Merkle. The property was sold and the land converted to condominiums.

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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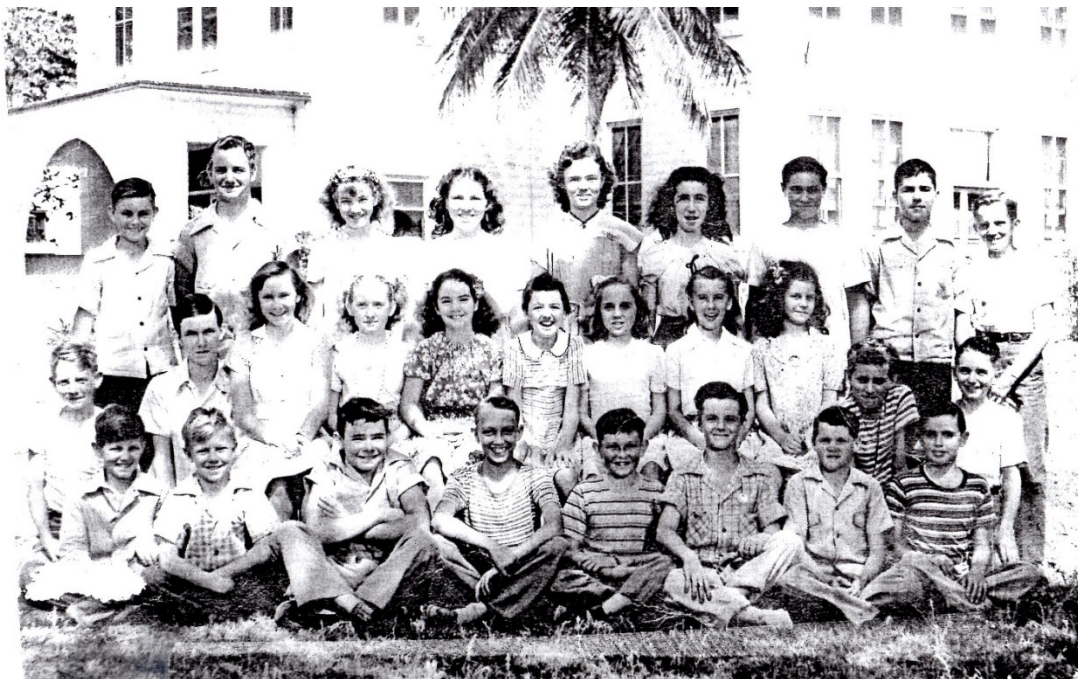
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Complete this form and mail it with a check for the appropriate amount to Boynton Beach Historical Society, P. O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

THE HISTORIAN

P.O. Box 12
Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012

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.



Boynton Elementary School Yard ca 1946, 6th Grade Class. Ava Weaver, teacher. Back Row: Jerry Scott, Delma Swilley, Unknown Stevens, Joan Slone, Maxine Keatts, Shirley Yeager, Kelly Baker, William Roush, William Mohr. Middle Row: Unknown boy, Robert Scarboro, Iris Westbrook, Carol Unknown, Unknown girl, Ora Lee Keller, Evelyn Ward, Unknown girl, Unknown girl. Front row: Unknown boy, Jimmy Lunsford, Charles Melear, Kenneth Murphy, Harry Nichols, Major Calloway, Geston White, Buddy Brown, Unknown boy, William Parks. (Maxine writes that she has forgotten the names of those marked "Unknown" since many were students whose parents enrolled them only for the winter season.) [Photo courtesy Maxine Keatts]