

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 8

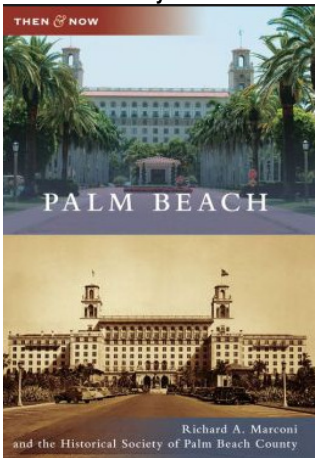
November 2013

PALM BEACH: THEN AND NOW

The Boynton Beach Historical Society is privileged once again to have a program presented by Richard "Tony" Marconi, this time on his newest book, *Palm Beach: Then and Now*. In this work he discusses how Palm Beach's most important buildings and houses have changed over the decades. Tony, who is curator of education for the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, used vintage and contemporary photographs to illustrate the changes in Palm Beach's landscape over the past 100 years plus. Once referred to as a "vertibable paradise" by Florida developer Henry M. Flagler, Palm Beach was transformed from a small frontier community to a remarkably picturesque historic town. Much of the charm of this seaside resort is found in its diverse architecture, landmarks, mega-mansions, beaches, and land and streetscapes.



Richard "Tony" Marconi



WHAT:

PALM BEACH: THEN AND NOW

A review and discussion of his newest book by Richard Marconi

WHEN:

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2013 – 6:30 p.m.

WHERE:

**The Boynton Beach City Library
Program Room
208 South Seacrest Boulevard**

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

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Our website is www.boyntonhistory.org. The e-mail address is boyntonhistory@gmail.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

www.twitter.com/@boyntonhistory

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. Copies from past years are posted on the website.

A VILLAGE TRAGEDY

By Janet DeVries

[Editor's Note: This story is currently listed as a Blog on the Society's webpage. Since it is a good story about an early occurrence in Boynton and many of you may not see it on the internet, it is included here.]

For nearly 20 years, I lived almost directly across the street from Boynton Memorial Park and Mausoleum, commonly called the Boynton Cemetery. This cemetery is located on the southwest corner of Woolbright Road and Seacrest Boulevard.

The cemetery is the resting place for a number of my family members. I visit there fairly often, and find myself drawn to the old section. Due to my ties to the community, the Boynton Beach Historical Society and my propensity for historical research, many of the old family names greet me like old friends.

At some point I found myself especially drawn to a rather lovely marker engraved with the name Albert J. Bowen. The dates on the monument indicate Bowen was born in 1865 and died in 1903. It dawned on me that his may be the earliest recorded death in this cemetery. Sure enough, according to Palm Beach County genealogist Marjorie Watts Nelson, Albert Bowen's 1903 tombstone is the earliest legible marker in the cemetery.

When I realized this Boynton pioneer had lived less than 38 full years, I couldn't help but wonder who this man had been and

why his life had been cut short. What I found shocked and rocked me to the core! Poor Mr. Bowen suffered from a poisoning, a lethal poisoning!

Born in Ontario, Canada in 1865 to Thomas Bowen and Tabitha Filmore Bowen, Albert J. was the fourth of six children, all boys. In 1878, the family immigrated to northern Michigan where Albert J. Bowen and several of his brothers worked on the river as log drivers.

When he was 26 years old, Albert married Flora B. Ackley, then age 16, in Sheridan, Michigan. Flora was the daughter of George W. Ackley and Lucy Hall.

The family moved to Florida sometime in late 1900 or early 1901. How they ended up in Boynton remains a mystery. It is possible they heard about the farming opportunities in the Boynton area through Major Boynton's Michigan Home Colonization project or they heard about the area from friends or relatives. As did many young families in Boynton at the time, the Bowen's and their little daughters, Rosa (born around 1893) and Ruth (born about 1897) boarded at a rooming house. In this case, Flora Bowen helped with the housekeeping at the Freedlund House, operated by Joseph Freedlund. Albert worked as a truck farmer, planting fruits and vegetables for export to northern markets via Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway. I can only imagine how hard both worked in the tropical frontier without the comforts afforded by our generations. Still perhaps to them this was paradise, a land of romance.

Their idyllic Florida dream came to a choking halt when Albert, only 37, met an untimely death from ingesting poison. The August 22, 1903 issue of Guy Metcalf's newspaper, *The Tropical Sun*, bore the headline "Took Strychnine and Died in Agony. Tragic End of A.J. Bowen, of Boynton."

According to the news article, Albert Bowen had worked hard all day in the fields, planting pineapple slips and came home tired and achy. He took some medicine and what he thought was quinine. Shortly after supper, he retired to his bedroom. Another boarder heard a disturbance and upon investigation found Bowen writhing in agony, screaming and convulsing. Joseph Freedlund went to West Palm Beach on the first train out and summoned Dr. Merrill, who rode back in a carriage driven by Richard Gardner, only to find Bowen's soul had long left his body. His heart-broken wife and neighbors said Bowen made a mistake and took strychnine instead of quinine.

After the tragedy, Flora and children, who were only nine and sixteen years old, must have left town. Losing Albert and staying in Boynton likely was too much to bear. The 1910 census shows Flora, Rosa and Ruth living with relatives in Pennsylvania. In 1917, 40 year-old Flora (occupation listed as dressmaker) married Ivan E. Smith, four years her junior, in Flint Michigan. By then Flora's and Albert's daughters would be grown women, probably with families of their own.

Albert Bowen's headstone is engraved with the following words: "To Live in Hearts We Leave Behind is Not to Die." At first I wondered why I was drawn to this marker and was compelled to research Albert Bowen 110 years after his death. I needed to tell his story, to make sure he is not forgotten.

[Continued on page 3.]



Albert J. Bowen – 1865 – 1903

HISTORIC MARKER APPROVED FOR BOYNTON INLET

The October 2013 issue of *The Historian* discussed the efforts of Robert Hudson Neff to place an historic marker at the South Palm Beach County Inlet, better known as the Boynton Beach Inlet. Thanks to the efforts of Janet DeVries and sponsored by the Boynton Beach Historical Society that marker has been approved by the County. Dedication should take place early in 2014. Janet hopes to have the Society sponsor a gala celebration to mark the occasion. Further information will be forthcoming.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO CHRISTINE TERNENYI

The Society recently received a packet of materials on the Weaver, Knuth, Kirton and Yanke families. We are most grateful to Chris Weaver Ternenyi and hope others will send us materials about their families too. We depend on you to provide information for the Boynton Beach Historical Society to preserve. Your family's information is important to us!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

When the little park at the corner of Ocean Avenue and 4th Street was renamed Dewey Park, the Board of Directors agreed that we would adopt the park and help to maintain it. We have yet to determine when this responsibility will start, but we will have information soon. In the meantime, we hope to begin lining

up people to help. Our responsibilities are primarily surveillance and to report any irregularities or damage we may note. The City maintains the plantings and their upkeep, but as your editor understands we may make suggestions. We will document any other responsibilities later. If you are willing to help, you may contact us by internet, boyntonhistory@gmail.com, by regular postal service, P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425, or by telephoning Voncile at 561-734-5653 to leave your name and contact information.

OUR FARM PRODUCE IN 1905

COUNTY.	VALUE.
DADE COUNTY	\$ 1,248,388.00
Corn, acres, 3; bushels, 65.....	65.00
Sweet Potatoes, acres, 28; bushels, 4,445.....	4,102.00
Sugar Cane, acres, 1.....	40.00
Field Peas, acres, 6; bushels, 135.....	545.00
Hay (native grasses), acres, 31; tons, 30.....	480.00
Velvet Beans, acres, 27.....	10.00
Celery, acres, 1; crates, 220.....	400.00
Pepper, acres, 58; crates, 15,222.....	19,114.00
Irish Potatoes, acres, 71; bushels, 4,175.....	6,391.00
Cabbage, acres, 10; crates, 727.....	1,247.00
Tomatoes, acres, 2,143; crates, 424,297.....	648,718.00
Squashes, acres, 10; crates, 2,015.....	2,190.00
Egg Plants, acres, 75; crates, 19,970.....	32,617.00
Cucumbers, acres, 41; crates, 4,078.....	7,706.00
Watermelons, acres, 13.....	1,025.00
English Peas, acres, 2; crates, 33.....	171.00
Beets, acres, 1; crates, 200.....	500.00
Beans, acres, 79; crates, 11,763.....	22,807.00
Orange Trees, bearing, 15,430; non-bearing, 59,801; boxes, 14,226	28,794.00
Lemon Trees, bearing, 315; non-bearing, 42,767; boxes, 130	396.00
Lime Trees, number, 8,040; crates, 931.....	1,392.00
Grape Fruit Trees, 148,770; crates, 12,418.....	29,848.00
Pineapples, crates, 189,130.....	272,248.00
Bananas, bunches, 5,938.....	2,250.00
Sugar Apples, crates, 115.....	72.00
Avocado Pear Trees, number, 5,139; crates, 1,146....	5,316.00
Guavas, crates, 5,550.....	2,923.00
Cocanut Trees, number, 3,419; number of nuts, 14,700	1,725.00
Strawberries, acres, 13; quarts, 1,380.....	465.00
Peach Trees, number, 471; bushels, 2.....	5.00
Grapes, pounds, 440.....	32.00
Live Stock—	
Mules, number, 172.....	32,670.00
Horses, number, 415.....	51,375.00
Stock Cattle, number, 1,203.....	13,050.00
Cows, kept for milk only; number, 295.....	15,649.00
Hogs, all ages; number, 125.....	786.00
Poultry, all ages, common; number, 23,393.....	12,073.00
Eggs sold and used, dozen, 51,951.....	14,996.00
Milk sold and used, gallons, 34,880.....	13,197.00
Butter sold and used, pounds, 955.....	314.00
Honey, stands of bees, 141; pounds, 1,076.....	684.00

Ginger Pedersen sent us the copy of the table above from a Florida Census book from 1905 she found at the website <http://books.google.com/books?id=HJxAAAAAYAAJ>. It shows the value of each of the crops grown in Dade County, which in 1905 included most of what today is Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Martin Counties. She writes, "Not surprisingly, tomatoes topped the dollar value, followed by pineapple. This really echoes what was grown in Boynton too, where farmers raised tomatoes along the shores of Lake Worth in the rich muck soil. Pineapples thrived further inland in the sandy soils along the pine ridge."

MISS WILLIE

By Charles Stanley Weaver

[Editor's Note: The following is one of the papers Christine Weaver Terenyi recently sent the Boynton Beach Historical Society and describes much of what life was like in Boynton during most of the 20th Century.]

Born February 15, 1877 on a farm near Jacksonville, Alabama, of Marquis Taylor Weaver and Alice Green Weaver, Willie Frances was the oldest of nine children all of whom reached adulthood. They were Lydia Ida, Emma E., Marcus Aeschylus, Myles Lawrence, Vaiden Green, Miller Curtis, Lucille and Lois Marian.

Even though she was our aunt, contrary to all established southern society manners and rules of etiquette, we never called her Aunt Willie. It was just "Willie" as if she were an older sister. You could say that she treated us as younger brothers and sister. Almost as equals. The age difference was the one element we were expected to recognize in the relationship, showing respect where it was due.

I have only a smattering of knowledge of her early life, gathered from over-hearing conversations and being told "stories" of the past. Her education was received at home and in Alabama schools. I'm not sure if she went to the State Normal School in Jacksonville, Alabama. This was to become a part of the University of Alabama in later years. She learned to be what today would be called a dietician from working with her Aunt Frances, who at one time was employed at the School for Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, Florida.

Any romantic attachment she may have had as a young person never matured, and she remained a single lady all of her life. I suspect that she helped raise her younger brothers and sisters before she left home. She was a firm believer in education and gave financial support to both Lucille and Lois for their college educations. Willie was enough older than the youngest to have been their mother.

Three of her brothers, M.A., V.G. and Miller, had come to Florida beginning with M.A. in 1907. Willie came to the Palm Beach—Boynton area in the late "teens." She kept house for her brothers, and, for a time in the early 1920s, was manager of a log cabin style restaurant known as "The Thornton Inn" on Datura Street between Olive and South Dixie in West Palm Beach. Halsey Griffith Office Supply and Cater's Furniture were neighboring stores.

By 1926, Miss Willie was living with M.A. and his new wife Marion Grace (Knuth) and managing a Feed and Seed store for M.A. The store, located at East Ocean Avenue, Boynton Beach, in a frame stucco building that was demolished by the 1928 hurricane. M.A. was the local distributor of feed for the Ralston Purina Company.

Following this, the store moved to a corrugated metal warehouse located on 4th Street (Palmetto) where the Weems Medical Clinic was later built. The next move was to the one-story frame stucco building just west of the F.E.C. R/R track on Ocean Ave. Here she operated until after World War II. She spent the remainder of her life as home-maker for her brother M.A. and his family. By this time her sister-in-law Marion was terminally ill with cancer and not able to care for the home without help.



[The building in the background is on the site where M.A. Weaver's second Seed and Feed store was located. This is on the west side of SE 4th Street off Ocean Blvd. just south of what is now The Little House Restaurant.. This was the location where Dr. Nat Weems built his medical clinic which he later sold to his son Dr. N. Marion Weems. When Marion retired he sold it to another doctor. The buildings have been added to, but are still the offices of a group of medical doctors.]

Go back to the time of the move to the store's last location. This placed Miss Willie on Main Street of down town Boynton within one block of the Post Office, drug stores, soda shop, grocery stores and between down town and the only public school. In the center of activity for the whole town.



[This photo from ca. 1927 shows the building on the right just west of the Florida East Coast Railroad tracks on Ocean Avenue where Miss Willie worked in the third location of the Seed and Feed store until after World War II.]

It was the custom, at the noon lunch hour, for the older students to walk the three blocks to town and back, perhaps to buy some ice cream, a Coke, candy or just for the fun of it. The walk usually included at least a short visit with Miss Willie at the Feed Store. (Some liked to use the large scales to check on their weight.) Since the town was small it wasn't long before she knew practically all of the children by their first names.

To fill in the long hours alone tending the store, she began sewing and altering clothing for those who couldn't do it for themselves. She built up a fairly busy trade. She also did all of

[Continued on page 5.]

Miss Willie [Continued from page 4.]

the sewing for the family. Much of this work was done during the big depression when it was difficult for many people to afford new clothing. Her work made it possible for some to have a new dress or shirt, even underwear, pajamas, sheets and pillow cases. Most of the items were made from feed sacks.

Willie was always happy. She loved growing plants and worked in the yard at home when she had time. As a personal income and as her contribution to the food supply at home, she "kept" chickens. There were, at one time, five chicken yards in the area around the Weaver home in Lake Boynton Estates.



M.A. Weaver house in Lake Boynton Estates

She supplied all the eggs and chickens consumed in the home for years. People would order chickens and eggs and come by the house to get them. (The chickens were sold live.) Another activity in the kitchen, which she practically claimed as her own, was the churning of butter, and the making of cottage cheese from "clabber," a by-product of butter making. The "clabber" was also served as a beverage and when there was an excess was fed to the chickens. The milk came from the Weaver Dairy which was located at the corner of Old Boynton Road and Military Trail.

There was some canning activity during the season when locally grown fruits, guavas, mangos and huckleberries were available. We had guava jelly, guava butter, and canned guava shells, which were later used in a cobbler. Also canned mango and huckleberry jam. Huckleberry is a low growing shrub which grew on the sand ridges in the area. They produced a fruit very similar to the blueberry in appearance as well as flavor. Probably the only jam or jelly ever purchased at the grocery store was grape. Marion loved grape.

Before home freezers became popular, canning was the most popular method used to preserve many different food items. West of Boynton there were many winter vegetable growers and M.S. knew all of them, many being good friends. Thus the source of tomatoes, many varieties of beans and other winter vegetables. It was not unusual for him to come home with several bushels of beans or crates of tomatoes. Willie's motto was "waste not want not." So we canned and canned some more. Preparing the food for canning was an activity that the entire family was involved in. Willie was at the helm.

Probably the most remarkable thing about Willie and Marion was their long relationship and association in the home. Each established her sphere of influence and each recognized and

accepted the other. In all the years together not one of the children can recall a cross word or critical statement by either of the other.

Some of the fondest memories are of the quiet time just before bedtime. Willie was deeply religious, a Presbyterian, and always read her Bible lessons. Many times one or two of the children would listen to a story before going to bed. She also loved music, mostly religious, and knew many of the old gospel hymns by heart. You could hear her singing as she worked in the kitchen, cooking, churning, cleaning up: "Bringing in the sheaves."



[This is the vacant site where the last Seed and Feed store was located. The property now belongs to Susan Oyer, Harvey Oyer III and Christian Oyer Macoviak. The old building which had stood there for so many years was bought by Harvey Oyer, Jr. from his mother's (Freda Voss Oyer) estate and willed to his children. The building which had been victimized by assorted insects—primarily termites, was further damaged by Hurricane Wilma several years ago. Harvey, Jr. had considered restoring the building, but his heirs found the rehabilitation costs prohibitive, and at the City's urging had it razed in 2012.]

SEACREST PONY LEAGUE ALLSTARS



Rick Scargill, Delmer Hackle, Larry Marsh, Tom Pignato, Rick Rhoden, Alan Franklin, Charles Zofay and Greg Weeks. Coaches [in uniform] Tommy Rhoden and Wilbur Hackle. Raleigh Weeks president of Seacrest Pony League. Rick Rhoden is in the middle row, second player from the right. [Photo courtesy Jessica Rhoden and identified by Greg Weeks.]

BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Member's
Name _____
2nd Member's
Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____ Cell _____
E-mail _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

INDIVIDUAL (\$25.00) _____ FAMILY (\$35.00) _____
PATRON (\$50.00) _____ CORPORATE (\$100 or more) _____

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

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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.



The Old Dutch Mill ca. 1945 on North Federal Highway. Owned by the Yanke family
[Postcard courtesy of Christine Weaver Ternenyi]