

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 7

October 2013

THE ROYAL POINCIANA HOTEL & THE BEACH CLUB

is the topic for the October program of the Boynton Beach Historical Society. Author Pat Crowley will present his research on the Royal Poinciana Hotel, once the world's largest wooden building and The Beach Club, E.R. Bradley's gambling and dining establishment—two Palm Beach landmarks of a bygone era.

The magnificent hotel, built in 1893 opened in 1894 and was Henry Flagler's crown jewel, featuring 1,150 guest rooms at its peak, every modern convenience and the famous Coconut Grove. The main dining room could serve 1,600 guests at the same time. With seven miles of corridor running throughout six stories, the Hotel Royal Poinciana was the largest wooden structure in the world. The wealthiest rich and famous flocked to Flagler's "Newport of the South" to make the Royal Poinciana their winter home.

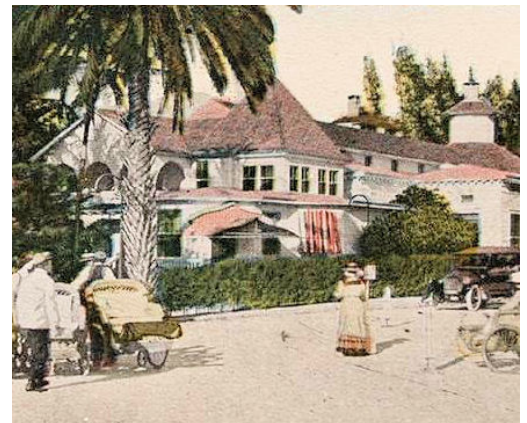
Thousands of local citizens were employed to keep the hotel operating. Both Palm Beach and West Palm Beach owe their existence to Flagler's vision. The Beach Club was Palm Beach's worst kept secret as a restaurant and gambling casino. Locals were never allowed to gamble, and E.R. Bradley, a horse-racing magnate, ran the Club as an elegant restaurant known as perhaps the best in the nation. But people didn't come for the food!



Pat Crowley



Hotel Royal Poinciana



The Beach Club

WHAT: The Hotel Royal Poinciana
& Beach Club
with Author Pat Crowley

WHEN: Monday
October 21, 2013
6:30 p.m.

WHERE: City Library, Program Room
208 Seacrest Boulevard
Boynton Beach

ARE ALL WELCOME FREE TO PROGRAMS OF THE BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Our website is www.boyntonhistory.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. Copies from past years are posted on the website.

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY to the BOYNTON SCHOOL

By Janet DeVries

[Editor's Note: Janet posted the following article on our website at Boyntonhistory.org, but since some of you may not have had an opportunity to read it, we are including it in *The Historian*.]

It is hard to imagine a Boynton Beach without a schoolhouse. In 1895 only a handful of people lived here, and for most of those, formal education was unnecessary. Between 1900 and 1910, the little settlement, known simply as Boynton, grew in population from less than 100 people to nearly 700.

Though they had no children of their own, Fred and Byrd Spilman Dewey recognized the need for a school in the growing settlement of Boynton. In 1887, Fred S. Dewey appeared before the school board and petitioned for a Boynton school, as reported in the August 5, 1897 *Tropical Sun*. A small one-room schoolhouse on stilts was erected on land donated by the Deweys in the area of the present day Dewey Park (Ocean Avenue and NE 4th Street). Miss Maude Gee was the first teacher, referred to in the *Tropical Sun* as Boynton's "Instructor." A makeshift school for African-Americans, known at that time as a "Colored School" opened in 1896 in the area of today's Poinciana School.

Albert P. Sawyer donated the land for the first permanent schoolhouse for white children from his Sawyer's Addition to the

Dewey's original Town of Boynton plat on November 29, 1902. In 1904 the two-room wooden school which was located near present-day Ocean Avenue and Seacrest Boulevard (then Green Street) opened with W.S. Shepard as Principal and Agnes Halseth as teacher. A few years later, in 1909, Palm Beach County was carved out of Dade County.



1st Permanent Schoolhouse in Boynton, ca/ 1907

In 1912, the Palm Beach County School Board approved a contract with A. Mellson to construct the first part of a new school building. The original plan left the upstairs unfinished and did not include the fire escape. The Board approved a contract for William W. Maughlin, and architect from Baltimore to design a new masonry vernacular school. Maughlin, born in 1847, had previously designed the Palm Beach High School in 1908-1909 and was a draftsman for the Florida East Coast Hotels. Maughlin and his firm of Ruggles and Weller constructed the schoolhouse. The Boynton School was Maughlin's last project: he passed away suddenly in October 1913 at his office and is buried in Woodland Cemetery.



The Boynton School, ca. 1913

In December, 1912, the Board of Instruction authorized work to be completed on the two-story, six classroom building. The structure, one of the first in Boynton to feature indoor plumbing, had a signature portico, large sash windows and transom windows to facilitate the flow of sunlight and fresh air. The floors were made from Dade County Pine, and walls affixed with bead board.

The sturdy school featured a new system in masonry known as Dunn Tile. The molds designed by W.E. Dunn Mfg. Co of

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Chicago, the largest manufacturer to make concrete block forms, transformed the building industry. The Dunn Co. used a revolutionary concrete and plaster mixer to make concrete for block, a precursor of the concrete block house.

The school opened September 8, 1913 for grades 1-12 with 81 students in attendance. Little Glenn Murray, age three, was hastily added to the list of pupils so the school had adequate students for the staff of three teachers and a principal. Miss Annie Streater taught the first year and Howard Frederick Pfahl, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, served as school principal for the years 1914-1915.

Principal Pfahl motored to school on an Indian motorcycle.



The Boynton School served grades 1-12 until 1927 when the Boynton High School opened next door. For the next three decades the building served as a traditional 1-8 grade school until Boynton Junior High opened in 1958. The structure served as a school for primary grades and elementary students until its closing in 1990.

THE EDITOR REMEMBERS

By Voncile Smith

I first attended Boynton School in January, 1938 when I was in grade one. Mrs. Vivian White taught us in the first floor classroom on the west side of the building. During those years the building was strictly an elementary school housing only grades 1-6. Later during World War II, because of the need for additional classes for 1st and 2nd grades, several classes were moved into the 1927 high school building which until then, from the time it opened in 1927, had housed grades 7-12.

I began 1st grade in September, 1937, in my father's home town of Russiaville, Indiana. In November we moved to Lake Worth where I attended West Grade School until I moved with my grandparents into their partially constructed house on Military Trail at the end of December, 1937. I was in a new school district so again I was transferred to another school. Some of my new Boynton classmates from that 1937-1938 first grade are still active, or recently have been active, members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society. Among these are Alice Nain Weems (Weaver), Gloria Partin (Turner), Eleanor Murray (Sala), Sue Murphy (Beaman), Fred Senior and I.

I can still recall the names of most of the other students in that class which totaled no more than 15. It was a wonderful class

size, and since the enrollment numbers in the other grades were similar, we soon learned to know everyone in school. We had recess and lunch times together. We played with members of other grades, not only during those times, but before and after school. Rough games, like dodge ball, are no longer allowed, but I remember no one was ever seriously hurt during our competitions. The girls played jacks and hopscotch on the front portico and both boys and girls played marbles in the sand. We played softball, usually using a tennis ball because no other ball was available. When struck with a bat, a tennis ball would soar so far that any player who could hit it was sure to arrive safely at first base. Jump rope was also popular, but in those depression times, a tow rope someone brought from home was the tool for that activity.

The playground was equipped with swings with wooden metal-edged seats hung by metal chains, seesaws which we called teeter-totters, and a merry-go-round which had 8 handles suspended from the center pole by metal chains that swung freely around if not occupied when the equipment was being used (a very dangerous piece of equipment by today's standards).

Students who misbehaved in class or disobeyed rules during time outside were required to "sit on the steps" during playtimes at recess or at lunch time. The teachers each handled disciplinary situations themselves. I can recall no time when anyone in elementary school was ever sent to the principal's office for discipline.

We were expected to pay an "art supply" fee of twenty-five cents each year, although I now suspect some children, especially those from large families, were unable to pay even that small amount. The teachers used this primarily to buy construction paper. We ourselves supplied crayons, scissors, pencils, paste and notebook paper or paper tablets. There were no inkwells (even though there were inkwell holes in the tops of desks), and we practiced "penmanship" in pencil on lined paper.

Many children came from very poor families and often had only one set of school clothes and no shoes. Often their school clothes were worn all week probably following a warning to try to keep them clean, since they would be washed only on weekends.

The classroom windows, which were high sash windows with wooden sills, were kept open most of the time so air and sunlight could enter freely. We considered it a privilege to be allowed to help close them during a rainstorm by standing on the sill (even 2nd floor) to reach up and pull them down to close.

In 1943 when I was in 6th grade my family moved to Michigan where my father was a foreman in a Chrysler automotive factory which was manufacturing military tanks. When I left in May, the original gray concrete blocks which make up the outside walls had never been painted. What a surprise to me to return in the fall of 1945 to find a coat of ivory-colored paint now covered the familiar gray. By then I was a ninth "grader," and in junior high school. Like the other students in grades 7-12, I now attended classes in the 1927 building. Even though we took high school subjects such as algebra and biology for high school credit, we still "graduated" from junior high at the end of ninth grade in ceremonies held in the gymnasium of the high school building in May, 1946.

THE DEDICATION OF DEWEY PARK

Thanks in large measure to the efforts of Boynton Beach Historical Society Vice President Ginger Peterson, a little park next to the Oyer Buildings on Ocean Avenue and Northeast Fourth Street has been renamed Dewey Park to honor the real founders of Boynton, Fred S. Dewey and his wife Byrd Spilman Dewey.

The dedication took place on Tuesday, September 10, 2013 when the new marker was unveiled by Mayor Jerry Taylor and Vice-Mayor Woodrow Hay assisted by City Commissioners Mike Fitzpatrick and Joe Casello. City Manager Lori LaVerriere and other City officials also attended.



Some of the members from the Historical Society who attended the dedication include those pictured above—from left to right, Janet DeVries, Mike Fitzpatrick, Frances McKeral, Voncile Smith, Rev. Randall Gill, Diana Dennis, Steven Anton, Judith Merkel Howard, Susan Merkel Schaffer, and Ginger Pedersen. [Steve Anton Photography]

During the ceremonies the Mayor presented a plaque to Ginger in part recognizing the contributions she and Janet DeVries have made through the Historical Society in uncovering more on the story of the City's origins.

ROBERT NEFF'S MARKERS COMMEMORATE HISTORY

In 2009 Robert Hudson Neff contacted the Boynton Beach Historical Society about his underwriting an historical marker for the South Palm Beach Inlet, better known as the Boynton Beach Inlet.

He believed markers at historic sites not only commemorated the location, but helped to create interest in what had happened there. Several descriptive markers with the words "Sponsored by the Robert Neff Family" have been erected in his hometown of Canfield, Ohio, and a number of others in Palm Beach County including one honoring three pioneer women who donated the land that is now the Delray Municipal Beach. He also paid to have a marker erected in Delray Beach at the First Presbyterian Church on Gleason Street to celebrate its recognition as a State of Florida Point of Historical Interest. Another contribution is a marker that rests on the south lawn of the 1916 Palm Beach County Courthouse in West Palm Beach.

Mr. Neff was 93 years old when he first contacted the Boynton Beach Historical Society about the marker for the Inlet. He had sent the Society \$1,000 toward the total cost of \$2,110 for the marker before he died in 2011. The remainder will be paid by the Neff Family Charitable Trust.

Why should there be a marker for the Boynton Beach Inlet?

Early settlers dug out the Palm Beach Inlet in the northern part of Palm Beach in the mid to late 1800s. Before that the location of a natural inlet had shifted with weather conditions and tides. This first inlet was stabilized in 1917, but as the population of the area increased, officials decided the county needed a second inlet to improve water quality and circulation in the southern part of the Lake Worth Lagoon. The quality continued to deteriorate as both the cities of Lake Worth and West Palm Beach diverted sewage directly into the Lake.

In 1923 the South Lake Worth Inlet District was formed and \$225,000 was appropriated for the work. Dredging began in September, 1923 and by August, 1924 a concrete bridge was completed over the location to accommodate traffic along the ocean front road which is now State Road A1A while the work on constructing the inlet was continued. On March 16, 1927 the Lake Worth Lagoon officially joined the Ocean at this point.

The coastal farming was dying out due to salt water intrusion, but a new industry arrived—commercial fishing. This was accompanied by the growth of the charter boat industry.

Official approval for the marker should occur in the next few weeks. Then the crafting of the marker is expected to take some additional time. The Society expects to have a dedication ceremony sometime in the early spring.. Even though Robert Neff did not live long enough to see it happen, thanks to his generosity, it will.



Robert Hudson Neff

JUST FOR FUN

Sometimes as the Editor of this paper, I think about the changes to our culture that I have observed in my lifetime. From time to time my awareness of these changes is underscored by novel pieces I receive from friends via the internet. Below are some examples of terms I suspect some of you readers have forgotten. They belong to the 1950s and 1960s—a few to even earlier times.

FENDER SKIRTS – attached by clips to the fender in front of the tire to provide a more streamlined look (a real nuisance if one had to change a tire!)



A fender skirt

CURB FEELERS – an antenna like extension attached to the body of the car next to the tire (usually white-walled) which made a scraping noise if the tire was in danger of being scarred by coming too close to the curb during parking.



Curb feelers and White Side Walls

WHITE SIDE WALLS – a band of white rubber built into the face of the tire. Width varied, but they were a nuisance to clean and increased the purchase price of the tire. (See picture above.)

STEERING KNOBS – AKA “Suicide knobs” and “Necking knobs” they were attached to the steering wheel and made it easier to drive with one hand, thought to be especially useful on a date.



Steering wheel with steering knob

CONTINENTAL KITS – bumper extenders and spare tire covers designed to make any car as cool as a Lincoln Continental. (Does anyone remember Chrysler Corporation's Lincoln?)



CLUTCH – Those who drive a stick shift know that this is a necessary pedal to depress before a driver can hand shift gears. Everyone drove with them before automatic transmissions.

RUNNING BOARD – a little shelf like protrusion just below the car's doors, usually coated with a strip of rubber that facilitated stepping into the car. Old gangster movies often show hoodlums standing on them in car chases.

PICTURE SHOW -- In South Florida we considered “snowbirds” use of the word “Movie” to be an affectation.

BRASSIERE – Does anyone wear them anymore? They have been replaced by bras.

SUPPER – Formerly the evening meal. Many had their main meal at noon which was dinner.

PERCOLATOR – in effect they boiled the coffee. Dripolaters were available, but one had to heat the water in another container to pour it through the grounds. Now we have “coffee makers.” most of which use some type of drip process.

HELP US FILL THE VIVA FLORIDA 500 TIME CAPSULE

YOU can help make history as we create the Palm Beach County 2013 Time Capsule!

The Palm Beach County Library System is seeking community input on the time capsule contents. The items chosen will reflect Palm Beach County's unique community and will represent what future generations should know about present-day Palm Beach County.

The Boynton Beach Historical Society will participate in the official VIVA Florida Celebration. We are looking for volunteers to man a table on Nov. 16th between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Please make plans to celebrate Florida's 500th Birthday. Those willing to serve as a table volunteer should email Janet at janetdevries1@gmail.com or call 352-409-426.

The time capsule will be sealed for 46 years as a part of the Viva Pam Beach County celebration to be held on Sat. Nov 16, 2013 at the Main Library beginning at 9:00 a.m. and will be opened on Palm Beach County's 150th anniversary, Jul 1, 2059.

All ideas will be considered and the final determination will be made according to the time capsule best practices and guidelines.

DUES DUE SOON

Just a reminder – Dues to the Boynton Beach Historical Society are due at the start of the calendar year. If you send them in now, you will be paid through December 31, 2014. Please help to make your elected officers' lives easier and send them in now. The amounts are indicated on the form on the cover of this newsletter. Unless you have a change in your name, address, or phone number, you do not need to send in a dues form. Only your check. Thank you.

**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.

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 HISTORIAN

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



Miss Annie Streater (Shepard) with her 1st and 4th grade pupils at Boynton School ca. 1913.