



# 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.

2014 Number 3

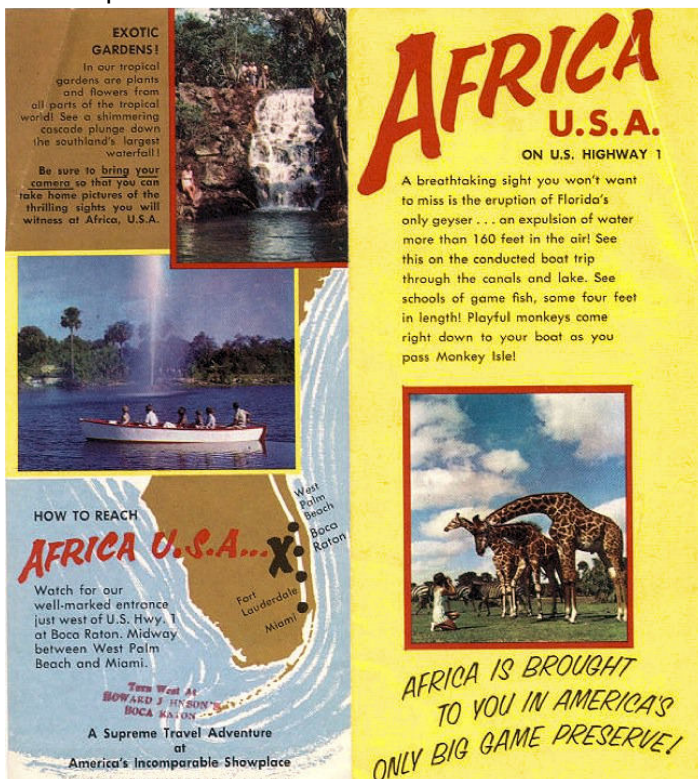


March 2014

## AFRICA, USA

### SOUTH FLORIDA'S LEGENDARY AFRICAN ADVENTURE

Did you know that right in the center of what is now part of the City of Boca Raton wild African animals roamed freely as late as the 1960s? Come learn about this unique circumstance at the Monday, March 17 meeting of the Boynton Beach Historical Society. The program will feature Shirley Schneider as she presents the unique story of Florida's first cageless wildlife attraction. Africa USA was situated on 300 acres in Boca Raton, Florida, and was open from 1953 until 1961. It provided a close-up look at African animals on its jungle train tour. The attraction also featured a jungle cruise to Monkey Island, trained cheetahs as friendly as house cats, and Princess Margaret the chimpanzee who could ride a bicycle and was adored by all. Mrs. Schneider is the daughter of the park's founder, John Pedersen, and brings to us her unique first-hand accounts of this Florida classic roadside attraction.



**WHAT:**

**AFRICA, USA: South Florida's  
Legendary African Adventure  
Presentation and Discussion  
by Shirley Schneider**

**WHEN:**

**Monday, March 17, 2014.  
6:30 p.m.**

**WHERE:**

**Boynton Beach City Library  
208 South Seacrest Blvd.  
Program Room**

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS--2013-14

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Our website is [www.boyntonhistory.org](http://www.boyntonhistory.org). The e-mail address is [boyntonhistory@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.facebook.com/historicboyntonbeach)

[www.twitter.com/@boyntonhistory](http://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.

### LIFE MEMBERS

Randall Gill  
Alexander "Sandy" Simon  
Curtis and Nain Weaver

## HISTORY OF BOYNTON BEACH

By Juanita Hathcock

[Editor' Note: This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series of articles published in May, 1946 in *The Boynton Beach News*. Juanita was a 17 year old junior at Boynton High School at the time. Date of this segment, May 24, 1946.]

### "Food of the Early Settlers:

"The early settlers frequently had hard goings as all pioneers do. Coons were cooked and eaten. 'Wild Hogs' on range were hunted and killed until they became extinct. Deer abounded in the woods to the westward and in the fall when the run of bluefish came along the beach, men, women and children ranged themselves along the beach and caught tubs full to be salted and later eaten. Turtles abounded along the coast with no law on them, so early in May and June groups of men and boys walked the beach to turn and butcher a turtle. The steak, if cut crosswise of the grain, makes very good eating if the turtle is not too old. The eggs were used for turtle egg pancakes, 3 doz. well beaten eggs to one saucer of flour was the rule, with salt

and baking powder added, made very fluffy and tasty pancakes.

"When the town was well underway, it needed a Post Office, and the writer is of the opinion that H.B. Murry (sic) was the first postmaster. C.W. Pierce of Hypoluxo opened a store, and Newlan's was the first drug store. (1920)

"Of late years many fine dairies have been built up, west and south of Boynton with herds of fine tested cattle.

"Also west of Boynton there is a large pineapple field. The settlers of Boynton started raising pineapples in earlier times but it didn't prove to be successful because of the pineapples which were shipped in from other lands.

"Boynton has one of the finest Woman's Clubs on the entire East Coast, which was the gift from Major Boynton whose portrait hangs on the wall of the auditorium. There was a later gift from Mrs. Paulley whose portrait also hangs on the wall. The Woman's Club of Boynton also has a fine library.

"Inspired by Mrs. Cora Stickney Harper, a small group of civic-minded women organized the Boynton Woman's Club October 9, 1909.

"Meetings were first held in the homes of the Club members, the women riding to the club meetings on bicycles.

"Two years after organizing, the Club purchased the building on the corner of Ocean Avenue and Palmetto Street where the Masonic Hall is now located.

"By 1924 those quarters were too small to accommodate the Club's various civic and social affairs. The first floor of the building was leased to a business firm. The second floor was the Club's meeting place and social center. The long, steep flight of stairs to the second floor was also an objectionable feature. Finally, after due deliberation, the Club members voted to sell the property.

"In the winter season of 1924 the property was sold for ten thousand dollars and a new site for a Club House became the chief interest of the Club members.

"At this momentous time the sons and daughter of Major Nathan Boynton were interested in erecting a memorial to their father in the town of Boynton of which he was the founder. Conferring with Mr. J.J. Williams and Mr. Charles Stitts, husbands of women active in the Boynton Woman's Club, the heirs of Major Boynton offered a donation of thirty-five thousand dollars toward erecting a Club House for the Boynton Woman's Club as a fitting memorial to the founder of Boynton.

"The stately Club House was designed by the famous architect Addison Mizner of Palm Beach. The building was completed at a cost of fifty-two thousand dollars. It is today the most beautiful Club House on the Florida East Coast."

## Boynton High School Stands as a Monument to Days of Old

By Adam Sinclair

[Editor's Note: The author is the grandson of the late Homer and Shirley Adams, son of Marcy Adams and Pete Sinclair. This is a compilation of information from articles dating back to 2009. Janet DeVries plans to post it also on the Society's website.]

For more than 30 years, the old Boynton Beach High School Building has sat vacant in the heart of what some people may consider downtown Boynton Beach. Built in 1926, it is one of only a handful of buildings in Palm Beach County that have withstood the test of time, and that alone should make it worth saving.



Fans of urban explorer websites would have a field day exploring the grounds of the school. The basketball hoops are still there, as are a couple of pull-up bars, bolted into the wall, and a pair of hand-shredding ropes that dangle from the ceiling. But the long-shuttered, 86-yr-old Boynton High School also contains calling cards from a squad of unwelcome visitors—humans, humidity, pigeons and plain old age.



West rear stairwell showing damage

The city and a revolving door of developers have forged numerous plans to resuscitate the structure, which has endured some narrow misses with the wrecking ball. Since 1993, Boynton Beach has paid about \$350,000 to conduct more than a dozen studies on just what to do with it.

The latest of these, a \$4.5 million proposal, envisions it as a magnet for a downtown revival, with a greenmarket out front and commercial space inside, a destination boasting an everchanging calendar of events. It was only days from approval in 2013, when a change of heart by the city council stalled the project in its tracks.

A recent survey commissioned by the city showed that a majority of Boynton Beach residents want the school to stand, to be rehabilitated

into something, but the current mayor favors sale of the site and demolition of the aging building.

"We're all for saving it," says the immediate past president of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, Voncile Smith, who attended the school in the 1940s. "It's wasteful to want to destroy a building that's useable. It's solid construction and represents a particular period,"



Art Deco detail – triple windows with columns

Designed by William Manly King, who was also the architect of several schools in the county, as well as the Armory Art Center and homes in West Palm's Old Northwood historic district, the school blends Mediterranean Revival and early Art Deco influences that have stood the test of time. The exterior details, still gorgeous despite the peeling paint, include arched arcades of windows, entrance urns and columns of the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders

The school opened for senior high classes in 1927, and served as a shelter during the great hurricane of 1928. Many residents took refuge in the building, and some were injured when the second-floor gymnasium gave way. King oversaw the repairs.



2nd Floor Gymnasium showing stage and basketball hoop

Back then, the school was about far more than education. "The basic activities in Boynton at that time, up until the war was over, were church and school," said longtime resident Curtis Weaver, Class of '45. "They had a very active PTA, and once a year they had a fish fry on the grounds. The parents put that on, and the fisherman donated the fish. It was a community activity." Weaver's wife, the former Nainie Weems, was in the school's final graduating class in 1949. Class size: 15.

"We were low man on the totem pole in Palm Beach County," Nainie Weaver said. "Because we were so small, they neglected us. Palm Beach High got the new stuff. We got what they were finished with . . .

[Continued on page 4]

**[1927 School -Continued from page 3]**

the old typewriters that were reworked and sewing machines that had been reworked."

After 1949, the building was used first as a combination elementary and middle school, and by the 1950s, solely as a grade school. Wendy Franklin attended fourth, fifth and sixth grades there from 1967 to '69. "You had your town kids, and you had your farm kinds, and I was kind of in the middle, where (Interstate) 95 is now."

The windows of the school were always open, recalled Franklin, a 56-year-old Boynton Beach resident. With few structures standing between the building and the Atlantic, said Franklin, "You could actually smell the ocean from there when you had a good breeze going." After the final bell rang in 1990 and the city purchased the building in 1993, the 30,000 square-foot school became, in essence, a giant storage closet. Bundles of blueprints are still scattered across one corner of the cafeteria, and large wooden signs lean against a wall in a room marked "Police."

"The city stored papers on the floor and the weight of that was so enormous, it pulled the flooring away from the walls," said Nainie Weaver. "I didn't think much of that."

According to a 2011 report, the building is in fair condition, but needs repairs to the roof, flooring, interior plasterwork, and electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems. Hazardous materials need to go, too, and the interior needs a good disinfecting.



West front entrance showing barrel tile roof, urn and columns

Poignant remnants of the elementary era remain, such as the front office's 1980s intercom system and record player, used presumably to broadcast the national anthem each morning, and the empty coat rack near a back door. Fluorescent light fixtures hang from the ceiling, like

some modern-art installation, and in the cafeteria, where generations of children ate lunch, ceiling tiles litter the floor like giant saltine crackers.

"This building reminds me of those movies where the astronauts go into space, and they come back 20 years later, and they find buildings like this, totally destroyed," said Fabian Proano, the city employee who's acted as the de facto caretaker of the school for the past 15 years. "It's a challenge to maintain this, but it's a legacy that we leave behind to other generations."

Of course, there is still a glimmer of hope left for the old school site, but it will take an outpouring of community support to get the redevelopment project, now more than 30 years in the making, to finally take place. In an era where individuals are more concerned with the latest cellphone and information travels at the speed of light, it is important to remember the past, and to preserve it for future generations.

For more information, contact the Boynton Beach Historical Society at 561-327-4690 or visit our website [www.boyntonhistory.org/](http://www.boyntonhistory.org/).

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### **2014 MEMBERS NOT PREVIOUSLY LISTED**

**Corporate:**

Gregory Bowser, Bowser Construction Services LLL

**Patron:**

Ralph E. Myers and Martha Swem

Susan Eve Oyer

**Family:**

Beverly M. and Margaret Shepard Brown

Ben and Judy Graybeal Keatts

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**Individual:**

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David H. Bludworth

Wendy J. Franklin

Barbara Louise Gellner

Gladys B. Knuth

Mildred Lofley

Frances Tuite McKeral

Mary Lou Muster Ryder

Frederick Senior

Howard Waite

Raymond E. Weeks

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### **BOYNTON INLET MARKER DEDICATION**

The South Lake Worth Inlet Historical Marker unveiling took place at Ocean Inlet Park, Ocean Ridge on February 18, 2014.

Approved by State and County authorities, the marker was sponsored by the Boynton Beach Historical Society and funded by the Robert Neff family. Speakers included County Commissioner Steven L. Abrams, Boynton Beach Historical Society President Janet DeVries, Gordon Broom representing the Neff Family, Laura Jervis descendant of Walter Lyman who captained one of first boats to navigate through the Inlet, and Eric Call the Director of Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation. Ginger Pederson, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the Society conducted the unveiling. The Historical Society provided refreshments and Sheila Rousseau Taylor sponsored music by the Sunsation Quartet. The Boynton Beach Fire Rescue Honor Guard presented the colors and little 7 year old Ella Jervis lead the Pledge to the Flag. About 100 guests attended.

## ON USING OUR RESOURCES

By Voncile Smith

I have been editing *The Historian* for over 12 years, and during that time many of you have told or written to me how much you enjoy receiving a copy. I am grateful for your comments and we expect to continue mailing it out regularly to all members for a long time to come. However, if you enjoy Boynton history and the history of other parts of the area, I would encourage you to log onto [\[www.facebook.com/historicboyntonbeach/\]](http://www.facebook.com/historicboyntonbeach/), our Facebook page, or have a relative or friend with a computer do so to give you an opportunity to share some of the information and the many additional pictures there. You will see also comments from other viewers and have an opportunity to respond, if you wish.

Janet DeVries and Ginger Pedersen are our webmasters and they post many more wonderful photographs than we could possibly include in our limited space in *The Historian*. Both are constantly adding new information that they discover in old records. They do a great job with ([www.boyntonhistory.com](http://www.boyntonhistory.com)), the Boynton Beach Historical Society website too. They include new blogs written by themselves and others in addition to the photographs. You will also find back issues of *The Historian* there that you can read and/or download.

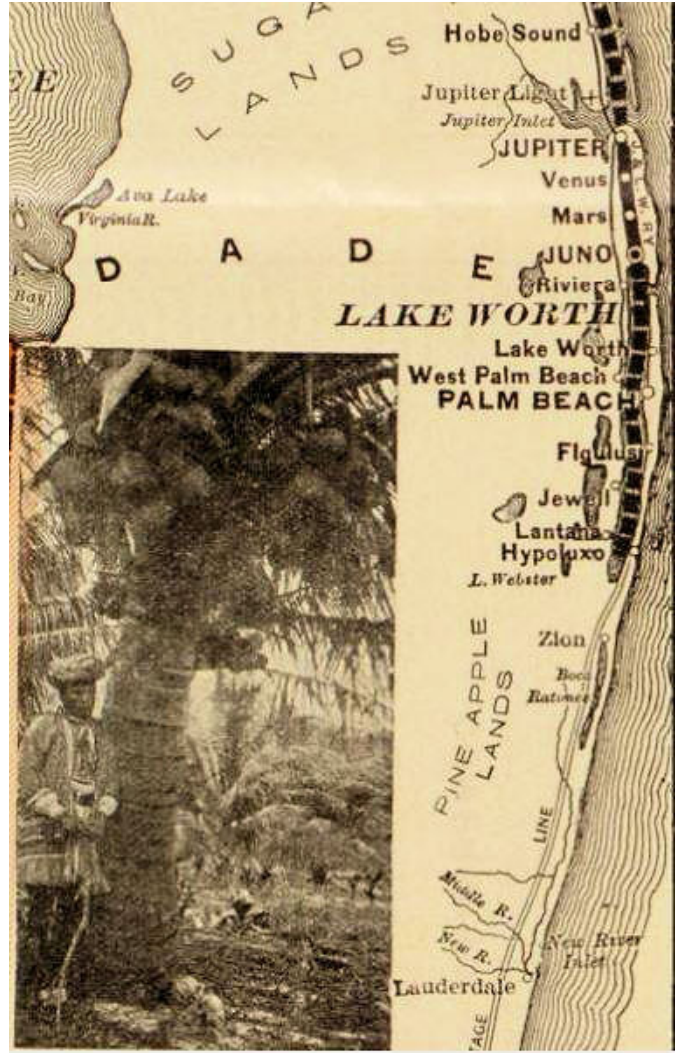
Here are some of the pictures taken directly from the Facebook site that you may not have seen:



Busch's Seafood on A1A , a wooden building closed in 1992 when the Town of Ocean Ridge refused to renew their license because of a new Town policy prohibiting commercial establishments within the town limits. Famous for lobsters, stonecrabs and Key lime pie recalled fondly by many former patrons.



Ye Tower Restaurant on US 1 in Lantana. For many years the only restaurant between Boynton and Lake Worth. More on owner Paul Dunbar on Facebook.



1894 Tropical Trunk Line map shows how early settlers saw the area. At the top is the Celestial Railroad with stops in Jupiter, Mars and Venus. Lake Worth, the body of water which now constitutes part of the Intracoastal Waterway, is the first area settled, often referred to as "Lake Worth Country." Notice there is no "Boynton" or "Delray." Byrd Spilman Dewey owned the lands, but had not yet developed the townsite of Boynton. Major Boynton's hotel opened in January 1898. Zion is the area that grew up to be Linton, then renamed Delray. Jewel was a post office at what is now Lake Worth



One of the original entrance gates to Lake Boynton Estates. The other is no longer standing. The City's Historic Preservation Board is considering how to conserve this one.

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Member's

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

INDIVIDUAL

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

FAMILY

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

PATRON

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

CORPORATE

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

STUDENT

(\$10.00) \_\_\_\_\_

LIFE

(\$500.00) one time

payment only.

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*

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

**UPCOMING**

**HISTORY STROLL:**

Saturday, March 22, 2014, 10:00 a.m.

*Loxahatchee River Battlefield Park*

At 10:00 a.m. Christian Davenport, County

Archaeologist will present a lecture. At

At 11:00 Guy Bachman, President of the

Loxahatchee Battlefield Preservationists

will lead a tour of the battlefield.

The Loxahatchee River site shows historic and

Prehistoric habitation dating back at least

5,000 years. Two major battles of the Seminole

Wars occurred here in 1838.

**APRIL PROGRAM MEETING:**

Monday, April 21, 2014, 6:30 p.m.

*The History of Boynton Beach* – 1976 Digitally restored film in which Harvey Oyer, III provides a new introduction and Tom Warnke, whose father, Jim Warnke, produced the original film shares new insights. Presented at the City Library, 208 S. Seacrest Blvd.

ALL PROGRAMS OF THE SOCIETY ARE  
FREE TO THE PUBLIC



Boynton Junior High School Cheerleaders ca 1966  
Can you send us the names of any of them?

3-14