



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.

Recipient of the 2021 Judge James R Knott Historical Contribution Award

March 2023

THE GILDED AGE IN PALM BEACH

Monday, March 27, 2023 @ 7 – 8pm EST via Zoom

**If your email is on file, check your inbox for an invitation from BBHSPrograms@gmail.com.
If your email isn't already on file with us, send a request to BBHSPrograms@gmail.com and we'll send you the invitation.**

The **Boynton Beach Historical Society** presents tonight's speaker, **Michael McKeich**. The Gilded Age in the United States was a period of quick population growth from immigration, extreme industrial expansion that created great wealth, and lavish displays of that wealth. Nationwide it lasted from about 1877 to 1890. But it did not reach Palm Beach until 1894, when the rest of America was still suffering through the Depression of 1893. Tonight's lecture looks at the Flagler Era, when Henry Flagler brought the Gilded Age to Palm Beach County on his Florida East Coast Railway—wealthy guests of his Royal Poinciana Hotel and Palm Beach Inn (The Breakers) and new, wealthy residents.

Left: Hotel Royal Poinciana, Palm Beach, Fl. Right: Afternoon concert hour, Royal Poinciana, Palm Beach, Fl. Courtesy Library of Congress



Michael McKeich has lived in Palm Beach County since childhood. His career was split between BellSouth and Palm Beach State College, where he managed the phone system. He enjoys cruises and theater and serves on the board of the Lake Worth Playhouse. A long-time fan of the Lake Worth Playhouse and the Historical Society of Palm Beach County, Michael, after retiring and being inspired by his friend and role model, **Jim Ponce**, became a docent at the Richard and Pat Johnson Palm Beach County Museum.

All Programs of the Boynton Beach Historical Society are FREE and OPEN to the Public
Boynton Beach Historical Society The Historian March 2023



Boynton Beach Historical Society

Since 1968

2022-2023 Board of Directors

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President – Anne Rimler

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Boynton Beach Historical Society

PO Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425

Web www.boyntonhistory.org Facebook [@HistoricBoyntonBeach](https://www.facebook.com/HistoricBoyntonBeach)

Questions or comments: **Programs** bbhsprograms@gmail.com

Membership bbhsmembership@gmail.com

The Historian

The Historian, newsletter of the Society, is sent six times a year, between October and April, to dues-paid members (one per paid membership). Previous issues are on our website. See the mailing label for your **membership expiration date**. If you would prefer to receive *The Historian* via email (saves postage and printing costs, arrives earlier, links are active), tell us by emailing bbhsmembership@gmail.com. Dues paid at/after the last meeting of the season will be credited toward the following season. Memberships run Jan 1 to Dec 31.

How to Become a Member or Renew your Dues

Go to boyntonhistory.org. On the **Membership** tab, pay securely via **PayPal** or download the form and mail in with your check. Don't forget to email the contact info for your **BOGO** to bbhsmembership@gmail.com and we'll do the rest.

Historical Society Bylaws

Society Bylaws: www.boyntonhistory.org/membership/

2022-2023 Season via Zoom

Mar 27: Michael McKeich HSPBC: The Gilded Age in Palm Beach

Apr 24: Annual Meeting/Convertito: Key West Hand Print Fabric



Zoom Program Meetings are Recorded

Find us on YouTube at "BBHS Programs"

Like and Subscribe

The following represents our Membership Roll to date & Dues received from 2/07/2023 to 2/25/2023

Thank You to our Life Members

Vickie & Anthony Barbar	Susan Oyer
EasyPay Tire , Doug & Ruth Besecker	Anne Rimler
Candy & Doug Brueggemann	Sandy A Simon Jr
Linda & Mike Callaway	Scott & Camilla Smith Richardson
Robert and Jeanne Gayler	Voncile Marshall Smith
M Randall Gill	George & Christine Weaver Ternenyi
Robert & Carrie Parker Hill	William & Gaye Weaver
Robert & Christian Oyer Macoviak	Marion Weaver Wester
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Wayne & Eva Brooks Knuth Netzler	

Thank You to our Corporate Sponsors

Donald & Regina **Day, Delray Awning**
Laura **Hinzman, Scheurer's Chocolates**

Thank You to our Patrons

Tim Bednarz	Charles & Mary Theresa Bilthuis
Ron & Sarah Thomas Bollenbacher	George & Gayle Kranz
Chas & Elizabeth Miner LaBella	Billie Jo Swilley
Robert & Sheila Rousseau Taylor	Anne Watts
Suzy Winchester	

Membership Renewals Thank You For Your Support!

Cecil Adderley	Charles & Mary Theresa Bilthuis
James Bonfiglio	Jackie Brant
Doris Brunworth	Ron & Sarah Thomas Bollenbacher
Donald & Regina Day, Delray Awning	George & Gayle Kranz
Nora Michuda	Joanne Miner Shoemaker
Debra Tucker	Drs Stephen & Gay Voss II
Michele Walter	

Special Welcome to BOGO Recipients & New Members!

Rick & Pam Day	Linda Gallagher
Lorraine Michuda	Lori and John Rodgers



Volunteer Opportunity

We are seeking a Zoom/Video Technical Support volunteer. If you are interested, please email us at bbhsprograms@gmail.com. Full disclosure: we have high expectations for our volunteers. Bring a team-oriented attitude of *historical* proportions and a good sense of humor. You may just find the extraordinary within yourself!

What is a BOGO, you ask?

When you become a member or renew your membership, it's our gift to you: you may give a FREE one-year membership to a friend, family member or fellow historian! BUY ONE:GIVE ONE. BOGO*! Simply provide your recipient's information and they also will become a member and receive "The Historian," via email, for one year, for FREE. See the membership form for details.

*BOGO recipient must be a new member to the Society.



The Historian

Project Update: Bernard Preston Thomas

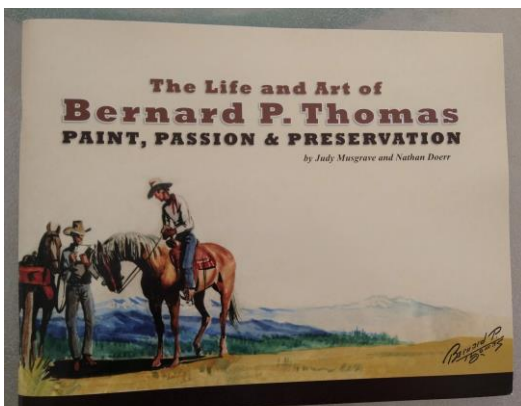
In March, the **Boynton Beach Historical Society** will be donating 40 copies of the 2007 book, "The Life and Art of Bernard P. Thomas: Paint, Passion & Preservation" by **Judy Musgrave** and **Nathan Doerr** to local libraries, historical societies, universities, art and history museums, the City of Boynton Beach Mayor and Commissioners, and others. The Society's project committee worked with the author, Judy Musgrave, and the artist's daughter and longtime Society member, **Sarah Thomas Bollenbacher**. The committee, chaired by President **Anne Rimler**, also included 1st VP **Barbara Ready** and immediate past President **Randall Gill**. This project was made possible by donations and your dues, in other words: **YOU**.

Bernard Preston Thomas (1918-1992), lived and worked in Boynton Beach, Florida, as well as in Wyoming and South Dakota. Thomas was an influential and important artist known for landscape and western genre, sweeping murals, and for his significant contributions to surrounding communities such as the Masonic Lodge in Lake Worth, the James Melton Autorama, and the Boynton Woman's Club mural and ballroom stage scenery. The artist's works have a special place on the walls of many residents.

This project furthers our mission to act as a living repository for Boynton Beach's traditions and history by raising awareness for the artist whose legacy is woven throughout the history of Boynton Beach. The books will provide recipients with relevant education about this Florida legacy. The project provided the Historical Society with the opportunity to thank our supporters and to share local history. These historical and educational opportunities enrich our community and serve to bring the Community together. Each book will carry an identifying label showing the name, logo and website of the Society should anyone wish to find out more about us.

Pictured below are **Nancy Russell** (L), So Fl National Parks Curator, and **Betty Thomas** (R), wife of the artist, in 2007. They rediscovered the rolled-up "The Five Elements of Nature and the Five Elements of Life" mural stored in a canoe at the Everglades National Park Visitor's Center. The mural was thought to be destroyed by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. The mural was created by the artist in 1966, and is now safely in storage at Everglades National Park, in Homestead, Fl. It may be seen, by appointment only, by calling Park Ranger Rudy Beotegui, Everglades National Park (305) 242 7013. It was conserved by the museum in 2013. The mural, an oil on canvas, was originally commissioned by the National Park Service for the Parachute Key Visitors Center in Everglades National Park.

Special Offer for Members: Judy Musgrave, the author, has offered to autograph a copy (let her know if you would like it personalized) for the discounted price of \$16 (includes shipping) per book ordered. To obtain an autographed copy of this delightful book, contact Judy by emailing her at judy@musgravemt.com.



Photos
Courtesy
Judy
Musgrave





The Historian

Boynton Beach Historical Society Sponsorship

Society Sponsors Schoolhouse Children's Museum & Learning Center

This Spring, the **Boynton Beach Historical Society** will proudly renew our sponsorship of the **Schoolhouse Children's Museum & Learning Center**, extending a partnership that dates back more than 40 years. This sponsorship is made possible by donations and a portion of your dues, in other words: **YOU**.

The Schoolhouse Museum is housed in the Boynton Elementary School. The School addressed the growing needs of the town, which expanded from 100 residents in 1900 to 700 residents in 1910. The contract for the construction of the School building was approved by the Palm Beach County School Board in 1912. **William W. Maughlin**, an architect from Baltimore, was contracted to design the new masonry vernacular School.

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 also featured a new masonry system, known as Dunn Tile, a revolutionary mix of concrete and plaster.

The School closed in 1990, however, community programs continued to be held in the building. In 1994, the Boynton Beach Elementary School was added to the National Register of Historic Places, thanks to the efforts of the Boynton Beach Historical Society and local supporters. Title to the property was transferred to the City of Boynton Beach in 1994, which sparked a movement to raise funds and create plans for the building to be restored and converted to a South Florida history-based Children's Museum. The Schoolhouse Children's Museum & Learning Center opened in 2001 and has delighted children and families who enjoy 'old-school' Florida come to life. Visitors take an historical journey exploring life as a pioneer with hands-on, interactive play that integrates arts, humanities, and science in an historic setting.

The Museum will hold its annual event, **SchoolHouse Bash – Back to School**, benefitting the Museum. The event will be held on **Friday, September 22, 2023**. According to the Museum's Executive Director, **Suzanne Ross**, "We are gearing up for the event which will take place at the Boynton Beach Arts and Cultural Center." It is located at 129 E Ocean Ave, Boynton Beach 33435. For more information and for details about the upcoming Bash, go to <http://www.boyntonhistory.org/tag/schoolhouse/>

To read more about the history of the School, go to <http://www.boyntonhistory.org/tag/schoolhouse/>.

From Ella Harper
Album 1915-1918
Courtesy Boynton
Beach City Library
Archives





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Boynton Beach Garden Club

Invitation Extended to Our Members

The **Boynton Beach Garden Club** joins the **Boynton Beach Arts and Cultural Center** for a better-than-ever **Annual Art in Bloom** event. Participants are given colorful pieces of artwork by elementary school students which they interpret with a floral design. Location: Boynton Beach Arts and Cultural Center

Fri Mar 10 at 5pm to 7pm. Reception.

Sat Mar 11 at 10am to 2pm. Enhanced Art in Bloom.

Besides the judged floral arrangements, there will be a demonstration of floral designing and various crafts for children.

Boynton Woman's Club

Invitation Extended to Our Members

You're invited to The **Boynton Woman's Club Annual Scholarship Luncheon** when this year's high school scholarship winners will be announced.

Thu, Mar 16 at 12pm. The luncheon will be held on at the Quail Ridge Country Club. Lunch, which includes soup, salads, a beverage, and soft serve iced milk, tax, and tip, is \$20. Please bring cash or check.

Reservations can be made with Michele Walter at 314-306-4490. You must call or text her in advance so your name will be at the gate. Entrances are at both 3717 Boynton Beach Blvd. and on Golf Rd. between Congress and Military Trail.

Boynton Beach Historical Society Membership

Special Offer: BUY ONE:GIVE ONE

My Name _____

Select one – this is a:

___ New Membership. ___ Membership Renewal.

Street _____

New? Welcome! Tell us how you heard about us:

City _____

State / Zip _____

Select Membership Type:

Email _____

___ Individual \$25

___ Family \$35

___ Patron \$50

Phone # _____

___ Corporate \$100

___ Student* \$10 (provide valid Student ID)

___ Life (one-time payment) \$500

BOGO Recipient's Information – YES! I would like to share a Free One-Year Membership with:

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State / Zip _____

Email _____

Phone # _____

**The BOGO recipient must be a NEW member to the Society. Student membership level is not eligible to give BOGO specials.*

Complete and mail with payment: Boynton Beach Historical Society PO Box 12 Boynton Beach FL 33425-0012. Or pay online using PayPal at www.boyntonhistory.org/membership/ and send BOGO Recipient Information by email to bbhsmembership@gmail.com.

The Society is a 501(c)(3) Organization; dues are tax deductible.

Membership year runs Jan 1 to Dec 31. Dues are not pro-rated. Expiration date is shown on your mailing label.



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Archivist's Corner by **Georgen Charnes, Library Archivist, Boynton Beach City Library**
<https://www.boynton-beach.org/city-library> (561) 742-6390 100 E Ocean Ave, Boynton Beach, FL 33435 charnesg@bbfl.us

Vivian Bonert, Charter Boat Captain

"Caught on the *Vicamus*." When I saw that little sign nearly hidden in a photo last summer, I was intrigued to know more of this unheard-of boat. It led to a charming surprise: captain of the charter boat *Vicamus* was **Vivian Bonert**, one of the first female charter boat captains in Florida.

Born in Norway in 1911, Vivian married **John Bonert** at 19, had a son, **Gary**, and lived in Freeport, Long Island before divorcing and moving to Florida in 1945. According to an article in the Palm Beach Post (27 Feb 1949), in 1946 she bought a sport cruiser from singer **Kate Smith** and renamed it *Vicamus*, which she said meant "We shall conquer" in Latin (although shouldn't it be "Let us live"?). After a few years in Deerfield and Boca, she began working out of Boynton Inlet with occasional forays into Daytona and the Islands.

Between 1946 and 1956, Vivian ran a very successful charter service, catching a lot of impressive fish and winning in tournaments. Articles also mentioned **Fred "Punch" Stone** on the boat. He was referred to alternately as the mate, co-captain, and co-owner. In about 1950, they were married, but Vivian continued to be referred to as "Vivian Bonert" more often than "Vivian Stone." She became the "yeoman" of the local Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla and Punch joined the Boynton Kiwanis. Apparently, there were lots of changes in 1956 for Vivian. She and Punch chartered the *Vicamus* together in July, filed for divorce in August, and he married someone else in November. I can find no evidence of her continuing as a boat captain after this.

By 1963, Vivian was working as a clerk at Bethesda Hospital, and later worked for many years as a secretary and accounts manager for JFK Hospital. From 1967 to 1975, she was living with her son Gary in Lantana. Gary was wheelchair bound with cerebral palsy (CP). In 1980, Gary had moved to Woodhouse I, a residence for adults with CP in Dania, Florida. Vivian died in Lantana in 1982.

I found another photo, one that documented a trip made during the Delray Beach fishing tournament, April 1949. Handwritten on back "Left: Punch - far right: woman is his girlfriend - co-owners of the boat, **Irvin Lacey, Ruth Jones**, possibly a relation of Ruth, **Mason Jones**," alarm bells sounded in my mind: a clear photo of Vivian Bonert!

As a bonus, the photo also offers an image of **Ruth Jetzne Jones** (1923-2015) and **Mason Jones** (1915-1965). Ruth Jones moved to Florida in 1942 and married **Thomas Mason Jones** in 1946. The Jones family ran the Jones Hotel on Ocean Avenue. Their home at 201 NE First Street was built by **Otley Scott** in 1940 was purchased and moved by the Boynton Beach Community Redevelopment Agency in June 2011 to the corner of Fourth Street and Ocean Avenue.

Sometimes a small thing can lead to some interesting little histories. [Photos Courtesy Boynton Beach City Library Archives]

