

40 THE PALM BEACH POST TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 1995



Maj. Nathan Boynton built his Boynton Beach Hotel on the ocean in 1897. The hotel was torn down in 1925.

## Key dates in Boynton history

**1885** — Maj. Nathan Smith Boynton visits and buys property.  
**1896** — Henry Morrison Flager's first passenger train travels through the area.  
**1896** — First school building opens.  
**1897** — Boynton builds hotel on the beach.  
**1909** — Norwegian cargo ship *Coginhu* runs aground near hotel. A few months later, the ship broke apart and timbers used the cargo to construct several buildings, including the first Woman's Club. The ship's bell was placed in the tower of the Methodist Church.  
**1911** — Nathan Boynton dies.  
**1911** — First bridge built over the East Coast Canal, now known as the Intracoastal Waterway.



Boynton Elementary School was built in 1913. It is being restored as part of a downtown redevelopment program.

**1913** — Boynton Elementary School built.  
**1920** — Boynton incorporated as a town.  
**1925** — The Boynton Hotel torn down.



Addison Mizer designed the Woman's Club, which was built in 1925.

**1926** — Addison Mizer-designed Woman's Club built on Federal Highway.  
**1926** — Boynton Inlet opens.  
**1927** — Boynton High School built.  
**1931** — A group of residents separate from Boynton in a tax dispute over the beach and formed town of Boynton Beach.  
**1935** — Ocean Avenue bridge built.  
**1939** — Boynton Beach changes name to Ocean Ridge.  
**1941** — Boynton changes name to Boynton Beach.  
**1952** — Bolling Green neighborhood begins to develop.  
**1956** — Bethesda Memorial Hospital opens.  
**1962** — City water plant opens.  
**1968** — Developers buy 415 acres to build Leisureville.  
**1977** — Interstate-95 goes through Boynton Beach.  
**1983** — Motorola begins operation.  
**1985** — Boynton Beach Mall opens.  
**1995** — City celebrates centennial of Nathan Boynton's visit.



## CENTENNIAL FESTIVITIES

It's being called "The Party of the Century."  
An 11-day celebration is planned to celebrate the 100th anniversary of city founder Nathan S. Boynton's first visit.  
Opening ceremonies Saturday will include a reconstruction of Boynton's landing followed by raft races on the Intracoastal Waterway and a Bahamian Junkanoo festival.

Here's the schedule:

### SATURDAY

**8:30 a.m.** — Local actor Burt Reynolds will perform at Boat Club Park on Federal Highway just south of Gateway Boulevard. Mayor Jerry Taylor and city commissioners, dressed in period costume, will come in horse-drawn carriages.  
**Members of the Palm Beach County Folk Musicians Association and the Royal Palm Sweet Adelines Chorus will perform. The Coastmen, a capella harmony group, will sing Happy Birthday. There is no charge.**  
**10 a.m.** — Participants in the raft races will put their ropes on the water at the docks behind the Old House restaurant in Lantana for the run to Boat Club Park. Prizes will be given to the most hysterical, most humorous, most hilarious and fastest rafts.  
**After the races, a barbecue and live music with the Serious Jambos band will continue until 6 p.m. in the park.**  
**11 a.m. to 8 p.m.** — Junkanoo Festival will pay tribute to early settlers from the Bahamas. The gala, at Sara Sime Park on Northeast North Court, will have a street market, reggae music, games and a reunion of Ponce de Leon School alumni. There is no admission charge.

### WALTER LACEY:

"It was different then"

Walter Lacey remembers sitting in his first-grade class in elementary school, watching workers build a high school next door.  
Two years later, when the 1926 hurricane ripped across South Florida, his family sought shelter in the new high school.  
Lacey was 8 at the time. His father, Henry Lacey, came to Lake Worth in 1912 and a few months later moved to Boynton. He was a jeweler by trade, but did a little bit of everything, including farming and metal work, to earn a living.  
"The hurricane and the Depression put an end to my life," Lacey said.

"The building boom" of the 1920s. The only jobs were on farms along the Intracoastal Waterway.

Boynton had about 1,200 people when Lacey graduated from high school in 1926. He married his wife, Mary Jane, in 1941 and then joined the Navy. When he returned, Lacey got a job as a barber. In 1964, he opened his own shop on Federal Highway just south of Ocean Avenue. He moved his shop twice before retiring four years ago.  
"It was different then. You know people and had friendships. Today, people don't have time for you."  
"There would be guys who came in who would say they were down and out and could get a job if they could get a haircut. Believe it or not, I had one guy who came back and said, 'but most didn't.'"

### TUESDAY, JUNE 27

**3 p.m.** — A free historical slide show at the library.

### SATURDAY, JULY 1

**7:30 a.m.** — In-line skating demonstration. Entry fee, \$5. At the Civic Center.  
**1 a.m.** — Volleyball tournament at the 913 elementary school.  
**10 a.m.** — Senior men's softball tournament. Pence Park.  
**10 a.m. to 10 p.m.** — Veterans Country Jamboree. A section of Ocean Avenue between Seacrest Boulevard and Fourth Street will be closed for the jamboree, which will include a farmers' market, up-time machinery display, an Indian village, Civil War reenactment and entertainment.  
**10 a.m. and 2 p.m.** — Tour of oak-wood groves. Buses will take visitors to the tour of the tour of the groves, which opened in the late 1920s. Lawrence Road.  
**10:30 a.m.** — Country street dance on Ocean Avenue. The Amario Band will perform to conclude the jamboree.

### SUNDAY, JULY 2

**8 a.m.** — Tour of historic homes. The tour will begin at the 913 elementary school and include about eight homes built in the early 1900s. Tickets \$5.  
**11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** — Crime Prevention Fair Day at City Hall.

### TUESDAY, JULY 4

**10 a.m.** — Big Boat picnic. An all-day party is planned with games, a bread-growing contest, pineapple recipe contest, exhibits, and a 50-foot birthday cake. At Boat Club Park.  
**7 p.m.** — Fireworks. Boat Club Park.

### MATHALENE DEAL:

"Kids today don't know how to have fun"

"The first black families, the Kings and the Cadés, came to Boynton in the 1880s. They farmed land west of the Intracoastal Waterway and showed the new settlers how to grow pineapples.  
Other black families came from the South and the Bahamas. Mathaleene Deal's parents arrived in 1923 from Americus, Ga. Her father, Matthew, worked on the Benson dairy farm.  
Deal was born on the farm 69 years ago. Her family later became one of the first families to live in the black community that formed near Seacrest Boulevard and 10th Avenue.  
"Kids today don't know how to have fun. We used to walk to the beach, and on the way home the boys would climb trees and get coconuts. We'd crack them open and drink the milk and eat the meat. We really enjoyed doing that."  
Black children attended classes in a four-room schoolhouse near 12th Avenue that was built about 1925. In 1952, six classrooms were added and the school was named Ponce de Leon Elementary. The old school building was torn down in 1990.

"I remember how my class used to walk to the beach to watch the sunrise. My oldest son was in the last eighth-grade class that had a graduation ceremony at the school."

### MARIE SHEPARD:

"A good, neighborly feeling in town"

Marie Shepard's roots in Boynton go back to 1910 — when her uncle, W.S. Shepard, became principal of the one-room schoolhouse.  
Her father, Alfred C. Shepard, followed. And her mother, Anne Streeter, came in 1913 to teach at the new elementary school.  
Although he was a pharmacist, Alfred Shepard worked in farming and real estate. He later opened a nursery along the big canal. The family home was where the police station now sits.  
"Growing up, it was 'can do, make do or do without.' There was a lot of make do," Shepard said.  
Everyone went to the opera-



Betty Thomas with her fifth-grade class at Boynton Elementary School in the city's tiny downtown, where she started her 39-year career in the Palm Beach County school system.

### BETTY THOMAS:

Teacher for 39 years

Betty Thomas and her husband, Bernard, who died last year, came to Boynton Beach at the invitation of Metropolitan Opera star James Melton.  
Melton's antique automobile museum was a popular tourist attraction on U.S. 1. Bernard Thomas painted an Old West mural in the automobile, which had previously been used as a gambling hall for the rich and famous.  
Betty Thomas worked 29 years in the Palm Beach County school system. One of her fifth-grade students at Boynton Elementary was former Pittsburgh Pirates and New York Yankees pitcher Rick Rhoden.

In 1976, she was named principal of Galaxy Elementary. Thomas remembers the time her husband tried to call a check shortly after arriving in town in 1953. He walked into a bank at Federal Highway and Ocean Avenue, but the teller told him he had to get the approval of the bank president.  
He asked where he could find the bank president and the teller pointed across the street — the local banker was pumping gas at a filling station.

### HARVEY OYER JR.:

His grandfather brought Maj. Boynton to area

Oyer, 68, is a fourth-generation South Floridian. His grandfather, H.D. Pierce, left Chicago for Florida in 1871. Pierce worked as assistant keeper of the Jupiter lighthouse, and caretaker of the Orange Grove House of Refuge, a government-built home in Delray Beach for people who were shipwrecked off the coast.  
His grandfather, Fred C. Voss, captained the boat that brought Maj. Nathan Boynton on his first visit. His father, Harvey Sr., came in 1912 and farmed before becoming a carpenter.  
Oyer opened his real estate and insurance office in 1953, joining the grocery store, pharmacy, fish market, men's clothing shop, general merchandise store, barber shop and two service stations downtown.  
"On Saturday nights, the merchants used to get together and have a projectionist to show movies on the side of a building. The



Harvey Oyer Jr. remembers when kids watched movies projected onto the exterior wall of a Boynton Beach building.

kids would be entertained while the parents shopped."  
Pencils on the beach were popular after the city built a Mediterranean-style casino.  
In 1967, Oyer was elected to the city council. He served as mayor in 1960, when the town had grown to 10,400 people.  
From 1970 to 1975, the population more than doubled — from 18,115 to 37,460 — after developments such as Leisureville were built for northerners looking for a place to retire. Today, Boynton has nearly 50,000 people.



Mathaleene Deal's family moved to Boynton in 1923. Deal, 69, remembers it as a fun place to grow up.

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"I remember how my class used to walk to the beach to watch the sunrise. My oldest son was in the last eighth-grade class that had a graduation ceremony at the school."

Deal, like many of Boynton's black residents, did farm work. She later worked as a housekeeping supervisor at Bethesda Memorial Hospital, raising three children.  
"Boynton is not as quiet and peaceful as it used to be, but it was a very good place to grow up."  
Shepard helped save the old Woman's Club building, designed by architect Addison Mizer in 1926. She is now involved in the restoration of the old elementary school as part of a town square. The two buildings are the only ones in Boynton listed on the National Register of Historic Places.  
"Children lose a lot by not having pride in their community," Shepard said.



Marie Shepard, who was educated in Boynton, is helping restore the old school buildings. Places. She's trying to revive some of the community spirit she felt as a child.  
"Children lose a lot by not having pride in their community," Shepard said.