

TRACKS OF TIME

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 19 – Number 11

November 2017

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 2nd in the meeting room of the *Zephyrhills Public Library*, 5347 8th Street. The business meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. and the program is at 6 p.m. Refreshments include drinks, which are provided, and food brought in to share by members. There will be ***no scheduled meeting in December***. Our Christmas get-together is set for Monday, December 4th, 5 p.m., at the Wedgewood Manor Community Clubhouse, 37420 Wedgewood Drive (off Geiger Road). *Also remember that Members will be decorating the Tennessee Christmas tree at Florida Hospital Zephyrhills on Sunday, December 3rd at 12:30 pm.*

Speakers

Our speaker for the November meeting was Damien R. Pickett, Sr., current president of the Zephyrhills Athletic League. My grandson began play this year in football. I attended some practices and some games, and I was deeply impressed by the dedication of the people I saw working with these kids. Damien is a fine example of these young people who have dedicated themselves to giving back to the community in which they were raised. He talked about his formative years here and about his plans for the future for the League. They have already branched out into a basketball program for young people and have plans to develop a mentoring and tutoring program in the future. We celebrate these fine people and wish them well. We enjoyed having Damien with us.

From the Desk of the Editor *Membership and Advertising*

It's time again to ask for your monetary support in regard to our organization and this newsletter. Dues are \$15 per year, advertising for members is \$15 (non-members is \$25), Boardwalk Booster is \$5, and contributions to the scholarship fund are welcome in any amount. If you are renewing and nothing has changed you can simply mail your check to me or bring it to a meeting. If something is different you are welcome to send me an email to keep the records straight. Thanks in advance.

Tuesday, January 23rd, is our next Give-Back Scholarship Fundraiser
at **Sergio's Italian Restaurant** on Hwy. 54 West in **Zephyrhills**. We are meeting at 4 p.m.
Contact Patty Thompson (813-780-8559 - pattycakeclown1@aol.com) for information.



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Jeff Miller **Pasco County Historian**

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Please consider contributing old photos for the
website.

My email address is on the opening page

ZHA Mission Statement

The mission of the Zephyrhills Historical Association is to research, gather, and share local historical information with all generations, through our literature, programs, and scholarships, and to volunteer assistance to the Zephyrhills Depot Museum and WWII Barracks Museum.

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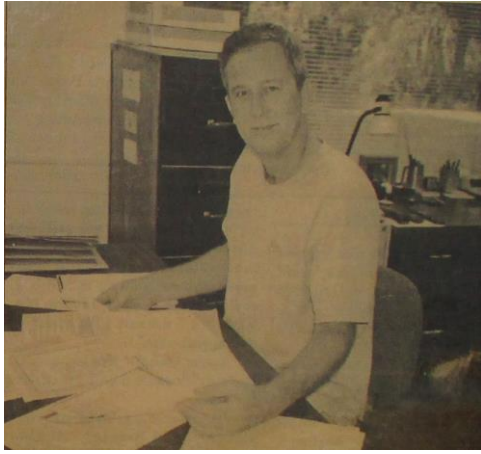
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Editor: Jerry Pricher, 5138 20th Street, Zephyrhills, FL 33542
 Phone: 813-788-2547 email: jerry@pricher.net



Clereen and Madonna have informed me that we recently lost someone who has played a significant role in preserving the history of our area, **Michael Boyette**.

I did not know Michael personally, but I can clearly see the results of his hard work and dogged pursuit of the early history of his family and this area.

Madonna sent along some articles about him and his work, so allow me to devote this edition of our newsletter to presenting them in his memory.

BOYETTE FAMILY TREE SPREAD ROOTS INTO NEARBY WESLEY CHAPEL

by Janet Watson

Zephyrhills News, Zephyrhills, Florida, August 5, 1999

'Grandma Boyette loved to tell stories, and as a boy, Michael Boyette loved to listen to them. When he was in his early teens, he learned more family history as he worked beside his grandfather in the citrus grove behind the Double Branch Baptist Church.

"I loved Granddaddy Boyette to death," said Michael Boyette, who is now known in our community as the *Travelin' Taxman* which is the name of his accounting business, located at 28237 State Road 54 West. "I was granddaddy's greatest fan, and I listened to him avidly. Anything he said, I believed."

As he got older, Michael realized that a lot of the tales he'd heard were conflicting, making him even more curious to learn more about his family. "I knew that we had a rich history in the South, but it wasn't until the Old Courthouse renovations in Dade City that I realized I needed to learn more. They were asking for information and artifacts. Unfortunately I learned about it too late, but it got me looking into records."

As a novice in genealogy, he wanted to throw his hands in the air and give up when he hit his first roadblock, but his research took a flying leap over a few centuries when a Charles Boyette from Mississippi contacted him. They shared some family stories but couldn't find a connection. Charles sent him a thick sheaf of genealogical research that he thought might be helpful to Michael and in the very last packet of information, Michael found the link. After that the pieces of the puzzle began to slip into place.

"The history of the Boyette's in the South tells us that they followed the land lotteries, always moving to the next territories that the government needed to be settled by homesteaders, says Michael, who pours over lists of land grants in his quest. The first Thomas Boyette on record was born sometime before 1670, probably somewhere in the British Isles (even though the name is French in origin and has a variety of spellings), and eventually immigrated to Virginia.

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Gina King Granger
Social Media & Digital Marketing Strategist

(813) 602-1818
PO Box 1718 Zephyrhills FL 33539
gina@offthechartmedia.com

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The family then moved on to North Carolina, Georgia land grants, in the early nineteenth century, brought the family to that state. Then in 1849, land grants began to be available in Florida and the Boyette's moved further south.

Michael has learned that he is a ninth generation American and a fifth-generation Floridian. His family tree is also largely intertwined with the Cooper, Wells, and Stanley families in this area. The Boyette appear to be the most fascinating branch, simply because they were very prolific and there is a lot of information available, once you get past the roadblocks. Right now, for instance, Michael is attempting to pinpoint the arrival of the Boyette's in the Wesley Chapel area. It seems that the 1849 land grant awarded 640 acres to John Boyette in Benton County (today's Citrus County), but both Hernando County and Pasco County lands were also once included in Benton. It might be that the Boyette's were Wesley Chapel "forty-niners," since the land grant could have been for acreage right here. (One branch of the Boyette family, incidentally did go to California during the 1849 Gold Rush and Miller-Boyette Productions, of TV sitcom fame is evidence that they were still out there.) Finding Wesley Chapel area land records before 1875 is difficult because at that time Pasco was part of Hernando County and a fire in Hernando that year destroyed all files.

Michael Boyette has a couple young apprentices working with him these days. His niece, 14-year-old Kristen Kalway, and his nephew, 16-year old Kyle Kalway. "Kristen was feeling bad because her name wasn't Boyette," Uncle Michael says, "but I explained to her it was the blood that was the important thing. Just because the name follows the male line doesn't really mean anything." He reasoned that the young Kalway's have the same inherited Boyette genes as a Boyette of the same generation.

Generations of Boyette farmers are buried at the old Holton Cemetery on McKendree Road. Michael points out that his family were primarily farmers, raising the cash crops of their time as well as subsistence crops to keep their families going. They also did some logging and served in the Civil War. Apparently none of the Florida Boyette's were slave-owners, and all but two, according to census records, could read and write. They also had no one categorized as "Idiotic, insane, feeble, pauper or convict," in the census, although Kristen thought that it might have livened things up a bit. Michael Boyette is pleased that Kristen and Kyle are so eager to learn about their heritage and he wants to document what he has learned for future generations as well. "My research has given me a great sense of pride—pride of place and pride of family. We stand for something in this community."

"I sometimes become frustrated about what's happening to the land. I want to protect it. Things are changing so fast," he says, reminiscing that "We still had an outhouse in the 60s!" Michael has joined the genealogical group that meets at the New River Branch Library every Friday morning and was recently appointed as the Greater Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce representative on the Pasco County Historical Preservation Committee. His research has established that Boyette's are "of the Land." For the most part, they were solid, honest, straightforward citizens. That doesn't mean that there wasn't an eccentric now and then, like the big red-haired, red-bearded ancestor, a giant of a man, who once knocked a horse unconscious in a fit of temper. Those are the stores that make the whole endeavor so interesting."

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PRESERVING PASCO HISTORY: CEMETERY GETS A MARKER**Residents Are Eager To Save Area Legacy***By Kevin Wiatrowski*

A piece of Pasco County history will get its due today when the Pasco County Historical Preservation Committee dedicates a marker at the Holton Family Cemetery on McKendree Road.

The marker was installed Friday. The dedication is set for noon at the cemetery.

Holton Cemetery lies about three miles south of State Road 52. It dates to the late 19th century and is the burial place of some of the county's earliest pioneers, among them veterans of the Third Seminole War and the Civil War, said MICHAEL BOYETTE, the cemetery's caretaker and a Holton descendant.

Care of the cemetery has passed from father to son in the Boyette Family for three generations.

The Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce paid for the \$1,850 cast-metal marker which was made by an Ohio company.

"With the new growth and the environment changing in Wesley Chapel, it's a good idea to look back at the historic pieces, said chamber president, Janice Scott. "With everything new, we don't pay attention to what is old."

A regional park will be developed near the cemetery, a fact that illustrates the challenge history buffs face trying to save Pasco sites before development plows them under, preservations say.

"We're in a rapid-growth state," said Fred Gaske, head of the state's Bureau of Historic Buildings and sites are sometimes disappearing faster than we can identify them."

In general, buildings and sites must be at least 50 years old to qualify for historic preservation, Gaske said.

Some like the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, are significant enough to avoid that restriction. Others, even prehistoric sites, aren't important enough to save.

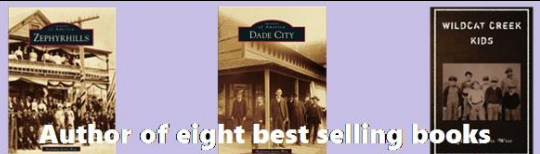
The challenge is identifying potentially historic sites before bulldozers reach them, Gaske said.

The state's review process for developments of regional impact, reserved for large scale subdivisions and commercial projects, has helped state and county officials keep track of sites the might need saving, Gaske said.

"You have to be on the outlook all the time for things," said Donna Swart, curator of the Dade City's Pioneer Florida museum & Village. "Sometimes, we are quicker at destroying our history than we should be."

Lately preservationists have found themselves fighting to save the state's cultural landscape," not just the buildings and other sites that make it up.

In Pasco, that can mean setting aside a ranch or orange grove—an expensive prospect at a time when those properties are rapidly giving way to suburbs. "Preservation takes a lot of money, Swart said.

 <p>Author of eight best selling books</p> <p>Madonna Wise Books Author, Research & Consulting Madonna Jervis Wise Zephyrhills, Florida Murphy, North Carolina</p> <p>813-469-8627 MadonnaJWise@gmail.com http://madonnawisebooks.wordpress.com</p>	<p>Joni Gauger owner</p> <p>Cutting Edge Beauty Salon</p> <p>813-782-4001</p> <p>cell 813-469-3437</p> <p>6132 Ft. King Rd. Zephyrhills, FL</p>
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Her group has received thousands of dollars in state and private donations to preserve examples of Pasco's historic buildings. The museum is rebuilding the Blanton Citrus Company's packinghouse as citrus fades from economic prominence in Pasco.

In recent years, Pasco residents have been eager to preserve their history, Gaske said.

Since 1987, Gaske's agency has given just shy of \$3 million for preservation from New Port Richey to Zephyrhills.

The Blanton packinghouse got \$305,000 in state preservation funds last year. This year, \$12,038 will help the Florida Museum preserve the Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"Our board members work very hard to keep their eyes and ears open for things that aren't going to be needed any more or torn down," Swart said.

But she like other preservations, realize there's a limit to how much can be saved.

"We can't save everything," Swart said, "though we'd like to."

DESCENDANTS OF PASCO'S EARLY SETTLERS TEND TO GRAVE SITES IN FAMILY TRADITION

by Alex Orlando

WESLEY CHAPEL — In a rural pocket where neighborhoods give way to pastures and palms turn to pines, where the roads narrow and the pavement gives way to limestone lined by cattle fences, some of Pasco County's earliest settlers lie eternally beneath crooked rows of headstones. The names and dates etched into the granite harken to a time when family ties were forged over gator hunts and jars of moonshine.




Michael Boyette stood in the dew-soaked grass on a crisp fall morning and surveyed the cemetery. He wore boots, denim shorts and a gray T-shirt and twisted a pair of work gloves in his hands. "Well, it looks like Mother Nature has already done some of our work today," he declared, looking at a wreath of dead limbs that had fallen around the trunk of an oak tree.

He was the first to arrive at Holton Cemetery on Saturday. Twice a year — usually in April and October — descendants of the Stanley, Cooper, Boyette, Gillette, McKendree and Helveston families come to tend the graves of their ancestors and share a meal and stories.

A sign at the front of the cemetery, on McKendree Road, gives the lay of this plot of land: "All are descendants of the pioneer families buried here and most are related to one another, often through more than one line."

They come because of family tradition, to honor their ancestors and "because we were raised that way" said Boyette, 58. And because "I promised Grandma after Daddy retired I'd do it, and I'm afraid she'll haunt me if I don't," he said laughing.

Boyette said he used to come out to the cemetery with his grandfather when he was in grade school. His grandfather would mow the grass with a tractor and Boyette trimmed between the headstones with a push mower.

 <p>Garage Doors, Inc. Kerry Ryman President</p> <p>36413 SR 54 • Zephyrhills, Florida 33541 Telephone: 813-782-5926 • Fax: 813-788-6773 E-mail: kerry@rymanconstruction.com License # GDI 09084</p> 	 <p>ARMY STRONG <i>Airborne-Ranger, "All The Way"</i> MICHAEL J. COCKILL Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)</p> <p>8469 Maybelle Dr. (352) 596-9751 (h) Weeki Wachee, FL 34613 (352) 584-0758 (m) mcockill@tampabay.rr.com ZHS JROTC Bulldog Battalion, GO FOR IT!</p>
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He remembers using his imagination to make up stories from the names carved in stone.

There was Malinda Stanley, born in 1892 and died in 1942, whose headstone stands next to six small nameless markers — five daughters and a son. Boyette's boyhood mind cast her as a baby murderer in the stories it spun. In reality, "she was a sweet woman," he said. "She just couldn't seem to carry a baby." Malinda Stanley actually became a midwife after her children's deaths.

Around Holton Cemetery, which overlooks Holton Lake, Boyette pointed out iron crosses placed by the Daughters of the Confederacy marking the graves of Confederate soldiers. The oldest headstone in the cemetery reads "James B. Wilson, 1834-1883, Second Florida Cavalry."

"But you know what?" Boyette said standing over the grave. "He was a damn Yankee."

Then, a pickup truck appeared between the cemetery gates and cut a wide curve around the graves before parking near a wooden shelter at the back of the lot. Gary Cooper, 60, and his four mop-haired boys piled out of the truck, ready for work. They grabbed brooms and a weed whacker and took to the grave sites.

Eric, 12, and Travis, 14 stood on a marble slab covering a relative whose name they did not know, sweeping grass clippings and pulling weeds from between cracks.

Asked why they came to clean, Travis stopped his sweeping. He squinted his eyes while he thought. "If we're gonna die here, then just make it look good," he said plainly. "Put respect into it."

On the other side of the cemetery, retired Pasco Sheriff's Sgt. Marco Stanley, 58, used a leaf blower to clean the headstones of his father, mother and uncle. The plot belonging to his mother, Lillian, sits empty between her two husbands. She's 92 years old and was at home crocheting.

Stanley's father died when he was a child. His mother then married his great uncle who died in 1976.

"She promised him she'd never change her name," Stanley said with a smirk, "and she didn't."

More family showed up, and the buffet under the shelter grew. Bill Smith, an 86-year-old man with a wise, wobbling voice, took a spot in the shade and passed along his stories.

He talked of times when everyone in town could be seen on Sundays at the First Baptist Church in Wesley Chapel, and "if somebody didn't go to church, they went to inquiring about them," he said.

They knew every gator hole in Pasco and the surrounding counties. He remembers several nights of sculling a john boat along nearby Holton Lake with a headlamp and a 12-gauge shotgun waiting for sets of gator eyes to pop over the water's surface.

He remembers playing with friends in the woods, jumping out from palmetto bushes to scare each other. He later watched an uncle crouching into those same bushes, tending to a hidden moonshine still.

"That was for income," Smith said. "They needed it. Times were tough then."

Joe Ahrens, 61, recalled stories he'd heard about his grandfather, Adolphus Desco Helveston, the district fire chief for Tampa, who ran moonshine from Wesley Chapel into the city by bribing police officers with free samples.

The stories trailed off when relatives were called to supper, a Southern smorgasbord of potato salad, coleslaw, baked beans, pulled pork and sweet iced tea. Before they ate, they bowed their heads and prayed.

FOUNDERS' ANCESTORS HELP HONOR WESLEY CHAPEL

St. Petersburg Times, page 123, Friday, September 21, 2001

By Michelle Jones

When the Wesley Chapel historical marker is dedicated at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Michael Boyette will stand next to it with pride. The marker will commemorate the community his ancestors founded more than a century ago.

As a lifelong resident of the community that was once nicknamed Gatorville, after the animals that were hunted for hides and meat until it became illegal.

“My great-great-great grandfather, Edward Boyette and his four sons moved here in 1843 from Lowndes County, Georgia,” he said. “We haven’t been able to determine whether his wife, Rebecca was with him or not. And, we are still trying to find their grave sites.”



The Boyette, Gillette, Godwin and Kersey families received land grants in the 1840s. However the real influx of settlers came during the Civil War era, when the Stanleys and Coopers arrived.

Wesley Chapel was originally called Double Branch for the twin creeks that flowed across the Boyette land. Its present name came from the Methodist Chapel that stood on the northwest corner of State Road 54 and Boyette Road.

On Saturday, Pasco County Commissioners and the Pasco County Historical Preservation Committee will dedicate the five-star bronze marker. It will be placed next to the First Baptist Church of Wesley Chapel at 29716 State Road 54 near Saddlebrook Resort.

Boyette, 47, a preservation committee member and an accountant who calls himself ‘the travelin tax man,’ will preside over the dedication.

The Reverend Frank Scott will give the invocation.

Pasco County planner, Erica Klevers said officials are trying to identify historic sites throughout Pasco County and develop markers for the locations. This project began in 1976 and committee members are celebrating its 25th anniversary.

A turpentine still and a sawmill represented Wesley Chapel’s early industries, although open range cattle ranching, hog and crop farming and citrus growing were dominant. When times were hard, people turned to charcoal making and moonshine to survive. The construction of Interstate 75 and the opening of Saddlebrook in in 1979 marked the beginning of growth in the community.

Boyette said his great-great grandfather, Thomas Ashley Boyette, founded the church where the dedication will take place.

“I have been able to trace my family back to 1650 when Thomas Boyette came over from England to Virginia,” Boyette said. The internet helped me do research to locate ancestors. I’ve always been fascinated (with heritage); my grandmother used to tell me stories.

Officers and Board for 2018-2020

A new slate of officers and board was approved at the November meeting. Their term begins in January. President - Jerry Pricher, Vice-President - Rod Rehrig, Treasurer - Andy Nagy, Secretary - Anna Boone, other board members are Tenci Alexander, Clereen Brunty, Polly Gill, and Patty Thompson.

Minutes from our previous meeting, which normally appear on page 8 of our newsletter, will be included in our next newsletter in December. Our next meeting is in January.