

Boca Raton Historical Society, Inc.

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OLD CITY HALL, HOME OF BOCA RATON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jeanne Nixon Baur, Artist

A report to the membership of

Boca Raton Historical Society, Inc.

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DEED

MODEL LAND COMPANY

TO

Mamie R. Myrick

Date October 19th, 1912

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SINGING PINES

The opening of the Singing Pines Museum on October 21, 1979 capped over four years of planning, frustration, disappointment, work, and dedication. The new museum not only adds to Boca Raton's cultural scene with its attractive facilities for exhibits, it also gives new life and a useful existence to an important part of the city's early heritage. The building, one of the oldest surviving houses in Boca Raton, was built a full decade before the Mizner Era of the mid-1920s. Although often referred to as a "Cracker Cottage," it is actually a finely proportioned bungalow of its era. A formally designed facade with a centered entry porch supported by six graceful Ionic columns adds to the house's architectural interest.

Singing Pines was built around 1913 by William Myrick on a lot purchased by his wife, Mamie R. Myrick, from the Model Land Company in October 1912. The company, the land division of Henry M. Flagler's East Coast Railway, was developing a small subdivision along the west side of its tracks just south of Palmetto Park Road. The Myricks, who had moved to Florida from North Carolina a few years earlier, purchased one of the first lots. Their new house incorporated features used by the earliest south Florida pioneers: some of the lumber had been found on the beach. In 1913 the location afforded a true window on the world. Not only did the house front on the only railway line serving south Florida, but across the tracks to the east ran the only major north-south highway.

William Myrick had many acres planted in vegetables in the Coconut Creek area. A couple of years of disastrous weather conditions ruined his crops and forced the family to sell their new home in 1917. The buyers were Mr. and Mrs. George Washington Race who moved to Boca Raton from New York state with their daughter Lillian.

Thus began Lillian Race Williams's (she was married for a short time in the early twenties to a childhood sweetheart from New York) association with the house and Boca Raton. The house was to be her home for almost sixty years. It was also Lillian who named the house "Singing Pines" for the sound of the wind passing through the pine trees on her property.

The Races were related to the Chesebros, another pioneer Boca Raton family. Singing Pines was thus from the beginning a gathering place for family and friends. Lillian had received formal music training and, with her mother, often entertained their guests. Over the years she played at services for several churches, including the Community Church and the Church of the Open Door.

Lillian also wrote verse. Much of her later poetry, coming after the deaths of her parents, details her love for Singing Pines and laments her inability to afford to properly maintain the house. Her financial problems forced her to open Singing Pines to roomers, at first taking in the wives and girl friends of servicemen stationed at the Boca Raton airfield, and later winter tourists and workers.

She was able to keep her home, though often only because of the generosity of friends, until January 1976. Then, after living at Singing Pines for almost sixty years, she fell and broke her leg in December 1975. Realizing that she could not care for herself, she sold Singing Pines and moved to the Boca Raton Convalescent Center. The property's location made it quite valuable for commercial development. Although the developers had no need for the house, many local organizations, including the State Historic Commission of Boca Raton, the Boca Raton Historical Society, and the Junior Service League, immediately recognized that if Boca Raton's heritage was to be preserved, Singing Pines had to be saved.

It was easy to make the decision that Singing Pines should be saved. Finding a location for a new home, and the money to move it, proved the difficult jobs. After architects gave assurances that the building could be moved the officers of the Boca Raton Historical Society began the job of finding a suitable site. An offer of land to the west of the city had to be rejected because of the cost of the distant move. Supposed county owned land at I-95 and Palmetto Park Road turned out to be owned by the state. Other locations also proved unavailable or inconvenient.

Originally the new owner of Singing Pines set August 1, 1976 as the date when the house would be destroyed if not moved. He was anxious to begin construction of a warehouse on the property. As it became obvious that no new location for Singing Pines could be found by then, he granted the house a reprieve until November 1st.

All the various groups working to save Singing Pines now realized they had to find a new location in just weeks or lose the house to the wrecking crew. At this time the Junior Service League agreed to take over the house and operate it as a museum. The League also committed itself to the work of restoration. With these assurances, on October 19th the Boca Raton city council allowed the house to be moved to city owned land at the north end of the block containing the new city hall, the community center, and the tennis courts. Although the historical society and the Junior Service League had pledged money for the move, sufficient funds were still unavailable, so the council also voted to use four thousand dollars from its contingency fund. Thus, only a little over a week from the November 1st deadline, Singing Pines was saved.

Donald W. Curl, Editor

Ann Holly, "Early Days Here Not For Softies." *The Observer* (Deerfield), April 22, 1976.

Water everywhere...everywhere you looked...was how Mrs. Aldah Myrick Overstreet recalled her first look at Deerfield on that September day in 1910. Now living in Haines City, Florida, Aldah admitted her brother, Robert (14 years old) and Joseph (10) and she were delighted with all the water. "It was knee-deep on Dixie Highway," she remembered. "We promptly borrowed the gangplanks from the packinghouse and used them as boats. We were so disappointed when the water went down; we thought it great fun to live in a town that was underwater."

That wasn't the first disappointment for 12-year-old Aldah. William and Mamie Myrick, with their children, had traveled several days by train to reach their new home in South Florida. Aldah admitted looking forward to reaching Florida with great anticipation.

"We were told Florida was the land of flowers," she explained, "and the minute we crossed the border, I expected to see beautiful flowers everywhere. But what did we see? Nothing but swamps!"

....School attendance was also a requirement for the children. Between the three of them, they made up a good percentage of the pupils attending the one-room schoolhouse. The schoolhouse, across the street from the store, doubled as a church whenever a preacher would happen by.

Truck farming did well that first year for the Myrick's and Bill purchased land in Boca Raton and built their first Florida home. The house, stately with its six tall columns on the porch was located south of Palmetto Road alongside the railroad track and still stands today.

Although the Myrick's moved to Boca, populated with 13 families, they continued to come to Deerfield to do their shopping. To go shopping meant hitching up the wagon and the expedition would consume a whole day. Finding it incredulous to think it would take all day for the four-mile round trip, Aldah explained, by asking "Have you ever tried to drive a mule?"

Boca Raton, too had a school and Aldah continued her education, despite the five-mile walk each day. She soon graduated; the school only went through the eighth grade. With the nearest high school at West Palm Beach, out-of-state boarding schools were popular and Aldah with classmate Hattie Long, left the state.

While she was away, the Myrick's fortune flourished and Bill soon purchased 200 acres in the Cypress Creek area. But his luck ran out--days before his first bean crop was to be harvested, an unexpected and severe frost killed the entire crop. Not only the crop was lost, so was the 200 acres.

"Can you imagine?" Aldah shook her head. "What would it be now--200 acres in that area?"

But the same fate had occurred many times and she recalled the adage about a truck farmer in South Florida.

"The first year, he's dried out.
The second year, he's drowned out.
The third year, he's frozen out.
The fourth year, he walks out."

Noting the tall condominiums that have replaced the tall trees on the beach and the bumper-to-bumper traffic on what used to be a limestone highway, a more modern version might read;

"The fourth year, he's crowded out."

* * * * *



The Myrick Family in Florida. Note the car in the background. From the left: Robert, Joseph, Aldah (Mrs. Overstreet), and their parents, William and Mamie Myrick.

Joseph Myrick to Bradley Middlebrook, May 24, 1976.

...I helped my dad to build this house as our family moved to Boca Raton in 1911 when there was only 4 other families living there. I have several old pictures of date from 1911 through 1917 including the old one-room school, the horse and wagon that brought the children from Yamato to Boca Raton school. I thought you might be interested in some of this stuff. The sills used in the old home

were picked up on the beach by Harry Chessbro. They were 4" x 13" 30 feet long and we purchased them from him for \$1 each. I recall special roofing on rear porch that I have never seen any like it since then. It was one of the few that withstood the hail storm that damaged the slate roof on the Depot. Let me know if you would like some of the old history.

* * * * *

"Boca's Oldest House--Family Pride," *The Miami Herald*, October 10, 1976.

It was hot work lifting the lumber and pounding in the nails, but it was fun because the family was doing it together....In those days there were only four families in what later would become "Boca Ratone," and the Myricks--W.L., the father, Joe and Bob, the boys, Aldah, the daughter, and Mamie, the wife and mother who looked after them all--were one of them.

Their home, "Singing Pines," was a handmade, family affair, just south of the depot. The window sills were crafted from rough fir timbers that another pioneer resident found washed up on the beach. Four inches by 13 inches and 30 feet long, they sold for a dollar apiece. Well built as it is, the old home survived wars, real estate developments, and a few months of disuse since its last owner entered a nursing home.

But the old Myrick place isn't quite the beauty she was in the 1917 photographs from the collection of Joe Myrick, now 76 and living in Tampa. Boca Raton has matured, too, in those intervening 59 years, and where Joe remembers woods that harbored alligator nests and wildcats, there now stand office buildings. The free and open beach he remembers as a boy now is guarded by a phalanx of highrise condominiums....

* * * * *



A 1939 picture of Singing Pines taken by Lillian Williams showing her almond trees and one of her dogs.

"August 26, 1949--In a Hurricane" 5PM, by Lillian Williams.

"Where are you now that I need you, now that I want you
when you said you loved me so well?" (a song)

What good is a friend when 1800 miles off? Write sweet words
and leave me here in the midst of Hell broke loose?
For hours, 17 at least, wind has been blowing--I don't see how
a roof like mine can take it--

It has blown from NE-N-NW-& West--At present from west,
and rain you can hardly see through;

We are in the center,--of course--Always poor old Boca
gets it--

Billy, my little partner, my comfort in joys and sorrows
is with me*;

I have lifted, nailed, fastened, dragged, boarded, worried,
Aspirin, soda, Tried to lie and not think about it;

Never saw one that blew such rain, and almost twister;

They kept elec on til past four,--

Mrs. Mitchell and Bebout came this morning for me to come to
Mrs. Mitchell's and stay;

The forecaster didn't say it would be so bad and so wet;

ITS JUST AWFUL--

If I wasn't strong minded, I'd be sunk--

Sit in SE green room, where Frank stays--Johnny's has taken
all the rain and wind, on the North side, where is bad roof;
and the back porch; I'm surprised to see its still there;

I put big board on Garage for car and Washer--Paper on it--

Don't know as will hold;

Something sounded like big tree toppling on roof, few
hours ago; Can't think what, hear rattling up there.

Hope roof is there yet;

Guess will get drunk, the way some do, and sleep all thro;
In midst of all din and fuss, fire siren, and Co., came up near
here somewhere; Thought saw smoke by school--

Only four houses there, Roseques, Eulas, Ma Purdoms, & Fiskes;
Know Ma doesn't stay home in wind, don't think Eula, either;
& seemed too far for Roseque; Hope wasn't Fiskes, Its wood;

I'm so afraid of fire.

Do so wish could board up house, get good roof and go north--
There's six more weeks of this terror, before fall;

They said Club wouldn't let commoners like us, on
their nice beds, this year;--Must go in help part--Somebody
brought so many kids, and eats, etc;

Water was shut off there two years ago--Its been such a Port
in storm; Too bad for some to spoil it.

Well, I'll go walk round some more;

Didn't put a single board on house windows & so sorry--

Will never let it happen again.

Been reading letters and trying to forget it;

Weather man says this is center passing to Lake Ochobbee (sic)
now.

P/S/ Johnny's room can't take any more water,--It's coming
thro

Shingle off up there--and noone to help with a single thing,--

Just sweet talk, that's all--

If these roomers who come winters and beat you down
on your rent, etc., and sell that they own--Then ride round
and have good time--Then "Goodbye"

If they were here to go thro what we do, --Boy--
What would they think about it? huh?--

How much would they ask?
Double what we do--YEAH.

Note--Tree was thro roof, let in barrels of water,
Emptied into wastebasket and bathtub;
All everglades, a Lake for Months.--

*Billy was one of a series of dogs and cats owned by Lillian
Williams.



"Morning," by Lillian Williams, July 3, 1947.

I've named it "Singing Pines," when they're musical
They sing to me tunefully--
Radio playing cheerfully,
Diesel engine mooing carefully,
Poor old Hudson waiting faithfully,
All these things bringing Joy to me,
in the morning--Here beside the sea.

"How we put on the Roof" by Lillian Williams, July 25, 1952.

Did you ever try putting on a roof, with men that are
 slower than cows on the hoof?
 If you didn't just try it some time and you will no
 longer wonder why I'm writing this rhyme.
 First was the short little Englishman whose tongue
 wagged back and forth
 With the young nice looking one, from a state in the
 north.
 I've been sick--blood pressure was high--
 my temper will pop!
 First one thing, then another, as they come to
 drink water
 Every glass costs a dollar.
 What's the use, I can't holler, My voice gone I fear
 Once in a while drive a nail, I can count they're so
 near.
 Five dollars an hour, pay the negro just two.
 The small one, takes fingers, so dainty to pull off
 old rotten shingles
 Instead of a hammer, with claws. I've seen so many
 good ones, rip off those old things, not an
 instant to pause.
 Now, we've got no big boards, we lack nails we can use,
 Oh my, its so hot, have you any ice cubes?
 There they sit, then stand, come down for more water--
 Blood pressure, go back till the morning after.
 What should be done in a day, takes nearly a week--
 with these two lazy fools, How I could shreak.
 I had just so much money to pay for the job,
 Had waited a year and fought like a gob--to get it
 and there put a new roof over my head--just a
 small part;
 the rest sits there looking like dead.
 And when the end was in sight, just now I kept still--
 every word I spoke cost me one dollar bill.
 Here he comes "we lack shingles to finish," in fact--
 I was so mad--Didn't know how to act
 They'd put them so close to take up more time; so I
 ran for more nearly out of my mind.
 Are they fools, or just cheats? the latter I vow, and
 with lots of brass too, for they surely know how
 Thank God for the weather, a nice shiny sun--it will
 keep back the rain till these devils are done.

* * * * *

"What's the Use?" by Lillian Williams, April 24, 1968

Couch 100 years old, you can't sit on
 A bunch of beds 30 years old, that no one sleeps on
 Chairs I can't get out of
 Rugs my girl friend brought them from her house

In sympathy for me
 One burner oil stove, we shipped down here in the Thirties
 Ice chest we used fifty-three years ago,
 I sit on it now and view the Landscape
 Deer and Neighbors at my door!!
 The Hedge, tho dying hugs to life,
 In 1925 I planted it--and mother used to
 take a knife,
 before we spent the dough for shears to cut it with,
 Poor Dear Garage, no paint on it
 The big door has stayed open and stuck,
 all these many years--
 Thro canes and lightening we wonder at the miracle,
 The back screen door, alas, when not chained fast comes
 off the hinge,
 If you should pass
 I'm sitting in the car of ancient "Vintage"
 Its thirteen years old now and every time I go out
 in it,
 I pray the Lord to help me not get hit
 There's shoes, tables, clothes, end on end
 in every room
 The ceiling and I'm ashamed to say
 has not been fixed since the day
 The roof blew off.
 It just hangs, looking down on me
 and let it look
 While I lie in most comfortable bed and read a book!
 What can I do with all this age old stuff?
 Just write this page and not make a fuss!!



City of Boca Raton to Boca Raton Historical Society, March 26, 1976.

We appreciated the opportunity to have met with you on March 25th to discuss some of your objectives in the preservation of outstanding structures in the community, with your immediate concern to the preservation of the "Pioneer Home" directly west of the F.E.C. Railroad and south of Boca Raton Elementary School.

As I indicated to you, without benefit of discussion before the City Manager or the entire staff of the City, a thought would be to establish a center where not only the preservation of a singular housing unit might be accomplished but other artifacts of the City which are of such mass that they necessarily could not be contained within a building that might be devoted to items of historical significance.

Please do not consider these to be formal recommendations but some of our general observations made within the staff:

1. The setting should be in such a manner as to reflect the outstanding character of the community and the enhancement of the structures by rehabilitation or, otherwise, by the use of foliage natural to our area. With that immediate thought in mind, and without the benefit of discussions with the Board of Regents or with F.A.U., there is a unique site in the north-east quadrant of the F.A.U. campus immediately along the west bank of the El Rio Canal and south of N. W. 40th Street. The assemblage of such acreage could be accommodated, I am sure, and is "a natural" for the joint efforts of your society and the F.A.U. campus facility.

2. A site which has yet to be defined as use by the City and/or State but could be taken under lease would be the 17 acre tract which is immediately east of the I-95 and north of West Palmetto Park Road and has tremendous joint potential.

These are just a few of our immediate thoughts without consideration to the use of Spanish River Park, South Beach, or future site acquisitions by the City.

However, our further thought is that prior to your discussing this in a formal nature with anyone, the first party to contact would be the City Manager so that he can "spread it upon the table" for the comments and critique by the Development Review Committee.

* * * * *

Bradley Middlebrook, II, Chairman, Historic Boca Raton Preservation Board of Commissioners to County Commissioners of Palm Beach County, May 5, 1976.

We, the members of the Historic Preservation Commission, respectfully request that the County Commission consider leasing or deeding to the Historic Preservation Commission approximately 12 acres of county-owned property located immediately north of Palmetto Park Road and east of I-95 for use as a Historic Preservation Park.



The Races's celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary. From the left: Mr. George Washington Race, Mrs. Ethyl Chesebro, and Mrs. Nellie Race.

It is anticipated that the second oldest home in Boca Raton may soon be donated for historical purposes. The land, however, has been sold to a private concern for future development, and there will be a limited period of time to remove the house from its present site.

Please consider contributing or leasing the property described herein as a possible relocation site for this property and as a Historic Preservation Park which we hope to establish in this Bicentennial year.

* * * * *

Robert F. Culpepper, County Commissioner to Bradley Middlebrook, II, Chairman, Historic Preservation Commission of Boca Raton, May 21, 1976.

Thank you for your letter of May 5th requesting 12 acres of County land for Bicentennial purposes.

We will take this request under consideration.

* * * * *

Dennis L. Eshleman, Asst. County Administrator to Bradley Middlebrook, II, Chairman, Historic Preservation Commission of Boca Raton, May 20, 1976.

This letter is in response to your request for 12 acres of land located immediately north of Palmetto Park Road and east of I-95 for use as a Historic Preservation Park.

In investigating your request, it quickly came to our attention that the land does not belong to Palm Beach County. According to the Division of Land Acquisition, this property is owned and controlled by the State of Florida (Department of Transportation). I am quite confident that if you submit your request to the State, it will be looked upon favorably.

Being a resident of Boca Raton since 1950, I feel that your proposal for a historic park is a very worthwhile and needed project. I am sure that you are quite aware of Federal and State monies available for such a project, but if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

* * * * *

Boca Raton Center for the Arts to Boca Raton Historical Society, May 11, 1976.

The Board of Directors in its meeting of May 6, 1976 considered the proposal you talked about on April 15, 1976 and tried to consider it from any angle.

After considering it carefully the vote was unanimously "No". The points bringing about a "No" vote were these.

The wish to keep our property intact for a further period with the hope that we may wish to use it for future expansion.

We are short on parking space for the present use and will have to expand the parking area as more activities develop.

We could not see where any activities in the small building would tie into our program.

The fact that there had been material in the newspaper naming another possible location for "Singing Pines" caused them to believe that the proposed location was more advantageous than our property.

The members of the Board wish to thank you for bringing this to our attention and wish you well in finding a suitable location on which the house may be placed.

* * * * *

Boca Raton Historical Society to potential donor of site, September 13, 1976.

On Wednesday, September 8, at a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society, consideration was given to a report and recommendation from The Singing Pines Relocation Committee. The Committee reported that the cost of moving the home from its present site to the proposed site in Boca Del Mar was approximately \$10,000. Because of this expense, the shortage of time in which to raise money and various other considerations, it was the recommendation of the Committee to seek an alternative site on which to locate the Lillian Williams' home.

When this recommendation was made known to certain members of the Board approximately three weeks ago, those representatives approached the City Council of the City of Boca Raton in order to ascertain if any City owned property could be made available for The Singing Pines. The idea was to investigate alternatives to the Boca Del Mar site, so those alternatives could be presented to the Board of Trustees at its next meeting. The City Council seemed most receptive and interested in helping us.

After a thorough discussion it was the decision of the Board of Trustees at their meeting of September 8 that it was unrealistic

to think that \$10,000 could be raised within a short time. Mainly for this reason the Board voted to continue to explore the possibilities of obtaining the use of City property, hopefully at a site which is close enough to the present location so as to reduce the cost of relocation. We also intend to ask the City if there are any funds available through its various Federal sources which could be used to assist in the saving of the house.

The Board of Trustees was most emphatic that I should contact you as quickly as possible to notify you of the decision I have just explained. We are all most appreciative of the generous offer that you made and for your enthusiastic willingness to help the Historical Society. I can assure you that it has been far too seldom that we have found persons in the Community who have come forward as you did and offered assistance to us. Especially in view of this, we hope that you can understand and appreciate the reasons why the Board of Trustees has decided to proceed in the manner it has.

Please call me if you have any questions or comments.

* * * * *

To Members of the Historical Society from Frank P. Saier, Chairman of the Board, Boca Raton Historical Society, August 1976.

Based upon previous discussions with past City Attorneys and based upon negotiations dealing with the lease on the room in the old City Hall, I feel that the City of Boca Raton will request that the owner of the Singing Pines comply with all statutes, ordinances, rules and regulations, and codes of the City of Boca Raton and the State of Florida. In addition, I feel that all the expenses of moving the Home, of maintenance, renovation, utilities, security and supervision will be suggested as the responsibility of the Historical Society. The City Manager's office is also concerned that in the event that a later City Council desires to have the Home removed from City property, that the Historical Society will have a certain period of time in which to remove the Home or it will be demolished by the City.

In previous meetings with the City Council it has already been represented that the cost of moving will be borne by the Society. It is suggested that if this is accomplished, because we are furnishing the City with a unique project which, as a junior museum, will benefit the young people of the City for generations to come, we should request financial assistance from the City in the form of a waiving of the fees necessary for permits to move the premises, and of fees necessary for occupational licenses, repair permits and the like. In addition, substantial expenses in order to renovate the house and bring it up to the level necessary for compliance with the City code can be foreseen, and if the City is willing to agree to assist in the expenses of restoration, I would suggest that we agree to make certain space, such as one room, available to the City for use by its shuffleboard Club.

Viewed generally, it seems that the suggestions herein are to propose that the Historical Society and its supporting organizations bear the cost of moving the premises and the cost of day-to-day maintenance and upkeep, while requesting the City to assist financially in the restoration of the Home, bringing it up to Code, and of the costs of permits which will be required both for the moving and for the establishment of the Home.

* * * * *

Remarks to City Council

The Historical Society appeared before the City once before, on August 23, with a request for a permanent location on City owned property for Singing Pines. Their advice was to get together with the City Manager, Mr. Crawford, and decide upon a permanent site. This we have done. We have recommended a lot at the corner of Crawford Boulevard and Fourth Diagonal, next to the Shuffleboard Courts. This would be an ideal site for five reasons:

1. We wouldn't have to move the building very far therefore the cost of moving would be much less.
2. Parking is available both at the Community Center and at the Shuffleboard Courts.
3. No land would have to be cleared.
4. Sewers are available.
5. Easy access for community.

Mr. Crawford has stated to the Historical Society that he thinks this is an appropriate site for a bit of early Boca Raton history.

* * * * *



"Groups try to protect old home from bulldozer," Andy Mead in the *Boca Raton News*, April 30, 1976.

Lillian Race Williams lived in the old house off and on for 60 years--the last few years fighting off real estate brokers who wanted to buy the house and tear it down to use the land.

Lillian, 85, gave up last December when she broke her hip and had to sell to get money to move into the Boca Raton Convalescent Center.

The house--called Singing Pines--probably is the second oldest in Boca Raton. It's scheduled to be torn down unless the several groups trying to save it can find the money to move it and somewhere to put it.

The house, which sits by the railroad tracks at 301 SW First Avenue, was built around 1914. That's when houses were built of sturdy cypress to stand the ravages of hurricanes and time.

"This (house) goes back prior to the Mizner era," says Bradley Middlebrook, chairman of the state-appointed Boca Raton Historical Preservation Commission.

His group is working with the city's historical preservation board, the Boca Raton Historical Society and the Junior Service League in attempts to save Singing Pines.

"I understand the new owner wants the house to go to the historical society, but there's some time pressure because they want to build on the land," says Middlebrook.

He's written to Bill Medlen, chairman of the county commission, asking if the state historical commission could use part of a 17-acre-county-owned tract at I-95 and Palmetto Park Road. Medlen says he wants to check whether the county has plans for a vehicle inspection station or a park on the land before making a recommendation to the commission.

The state historical commission is important to the plan because--while it has no funds--it has the power to own land....

* * * * *

"Fate of 'Singing Pines' is still up in the air," Larry Fortner in the *Boca Raton News*, August 26, 1976.

Nothing is so lonely as a house without a home. Nothing is so uncertain as the fate of "Singing Pines," the house that has stood intact...for 60 years. Now "Singing Pines" must be moved. Or destroyed....

The new owner plans to build warehouses on the property. He'll give the old Cracker cottage to any historical society that might put it to good use. But he won't wait much longer. Already an Aug. 1 deadline has been forgiven. A new one--Nov. 1--has been established.

That's why the Boca Raton Historical Society, with no land of its own, has asked the city to provide a new home for the old house.

Monday, two representatives of the historical society asked for use of a small, city-owned lot near the intersection of Southwest Second Avenue and Southwest Third Street. Council members were reluctant to grant that request. The lot--only 50x110 feet--is too small to provide a permanent home, they said, and they wondered if moving the house twice might damage it beyond repair. Also, some said, residents there might not approve of their new Cracker cottage neighbor.

There was strong sentiment, though, for helping the homeless house.

"If it can be moved," said Mark Byron, "it is deserving of being put in a permanent place." Byron was not one of those who worried about the "impact" of the house on an existing neighborhood.

"I think that wherever a home like that is placed, and I have seen the structure, it could be an asset for any neighborhood. It is wholly different than the standard concrete block and stucco crates which are not in themselves any gems that need to be duplicated."

...John Gresham said he would "like to see us find a spot" for the house.

Finally it was decided that representatives of the historical society should meet with City Manager Don Crawford in an attempt to find a site for the home. The city manager, Gresham said, might be able to arrange a "one-shot move."

Frank Saier of the historical society was so encouraged by the council's response that he's ready to ask for use of the vacant lot at the intersection of Crawford Boulevard and Northwest Fourth Diagonal near the city's shuffleboard courts. "Our aims are now elevated," he said after the meeting. "That location would seem to be a natural." The house, Saier says, is "still sound--its moveable and useable."

The historical society, Saier says, would pay to move the house. He estimates it would cost about \$2,000. A property owner has offered the use of land outside the city, Saier says, but it would cost the historical society about \$10,000 to make that move. It's "very doubtful," he says, that the society could raise that much money. Besides, an out-of-town site would be impractical. City organizations, Saier says, "wouldn't want to meet there." Saier sees the old house as a new home for civic groups and as the home of a city museum. Although the historical society wouldn't have the money to do much more than just move the house and pay for its insurance, Saier says the Junior Service League has agreed to take on the task of renovation....

The results of Monday's discussion might have put Crawford in an uncomfortable spot--right in the middle. The historical society

wants to save the house. So does the council. Now it's up to the city manager to help iron out the details.

"Frankly there are a number of things to be looked at," Crawford says. Just one of those "things" he says, is whether the building will ever be able to meet fire marshal requirements for public occupancy. "I see a lot of headaches ahead," Crawford says. "There are a lot of long-range costs that need to be considered."

The pressure of that Nov. 1 deadline adds urgency to those considerations. Nothing is so final as the crash of the wrecking ball.

* * * * *

MEMORANDUM, files of the Boca Raton Historical Society, n.d.

Called Dick Huopana to complain about the City Manager's office--September. Two days after August 23rd meeting we called City Manager's office--no return call.

Sent letter August 25th suggesting a specific site--no acknowledgment or answer to request.

Deputy Mayor Huopana was perturbed and promised a call to Mr. Crawford's office. That afternoon, Crawford returned our call and we were placed on the agenda for that evening. The City Council unanimously agreed to provide city-owned land for "Singing Pines."

* * * * *

"'Singing Pines' may be saved," Larry Fortner in the *Boca Raton News*, September 15, 1976.

...The city council has told City Manager Don Crawford to reach a formal agreement with representatives of the Boca Raton Historical Society so "Singing Pines" can be moved to city-owned land at the southeast corner of Crawford Boulevard and Northwest Fourth Diagonal.

...The land...meets the approval both of the historical society and the city Department of Community Development. The land is zoned for the proposed use of the old house--it would become a museum and a civic center--and it is large enough for the parking that would be needed....

* * * * *

Howard E. McCall of McCall & Lynch, Architects to prospective mover, 24 September 1976.

Enclosed please find a copy made from the Boca Raton City Map on which I have traced a proposed route for moving the Williams Residence.

The streets on the route marked are paved all the way and it appears to me that there would not be any obstacles. The blue lines on the map show the approximate location of overhead electric lines and the location of one traffic light to be moved at Palmetto Park Road.

I discussed the cost of moving FP&L's power line with their representative Mr. Gerry Kliner. He advised me that the estimated cost for this work would be \$625. This is an estimate only and must be paid prior to the work. We will then either get a refund if the work costs less or will be billed for the additional cost.

In discussing this matter with Gerry Kliner this morning, it occurred to me that we have not obtained the cost of moving the telephone line, nor have we obtained the price of moving the one traffic light at the corner of Palmetto Park Road and First Avenue. I am reasonably certain that telephone lines of any significance would occur only in two places, at Palmetto Park Road and N.W. Second Avenue....

* * * * *

Mrs. Charles E. Waldner, President, Junior Service League to Frank Saier, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Boca Raton Historical Society, October 14, 1977.

The Junior Service League of Boca Raton is honored to have the privilege of participating in the "Singing Pines Project."

It is with pleasure that we have allocated the sum of \$1,000 specifically for the movement of "Singing Pines" to a new location. These funds are set aside and are to only be used for the above stated purpose. In the event the house is not moved by November 15th, the commitment will be withdrawn and funds will be released for another worthy project.

This letter guarantees the monies aforementioned are available and will be dispersed to the Boca Raton Historical Society on the day the house is moved.

* * * * *

"City to the rescue: Council votes to help save 'Singing Pines.'" Larry Fortner in the *Boca Raton News*, October 20, 1976.

There's still some question about what to call the second oldest house in Boca Raton. City Manager Don Crawford calls it "Whispering Pines." The Boca Raton Historical Society and the Junior Service League call it "Singing Pines." Mayor Dorothy Wilken, amused by the confusion, has called it "Murmuring Pines." Call it what you want. Call it saved. The city council Tuesday night unanimously approved spending as much as \$4,000 to move the old "Cracker cottage" from 301 SE First Ave., to a new home on city-owned land at Crawford Boulevard and Northwest Fourth Diagonal.

The city, with the same \$4,000, also will provide a foundation of piers for the house that will be renovated and then maintained by the Junior Service League of Boca Raton. The city money will come from the \$100,000 contingency fund.

* * * * *

"'Singing Pines' is saved," Editorial, the *Boca Raton News*, October 20, 1976.

Congratulations are in order now that the second oldest house in Boca Raton has something to sing about. "Singing Pines," a 60-year-old pioneer home, will be moved to city-owned land at the city's expense and put down on a foundation of piers at Crawford Boulevard and Northwest Fourth Diagonal. If a new home had not been provided for the old house it would have been destroyed by its new owner.

Lillian Race Williams, the 82-year-old former owner of the old house, was forced to sell her home and move to a convalescent center because of an injury. We're sorry she had to leave her home and we hope her years of love and care for the honorable cottage are not forgotten.

We're happy, though, the house will be saved and put to such good use. Once "Singing Pines" has been moved, the Junior Service League plans to turn it into a junior museum--a welcome addition to the bustling community center we enjoy so much.

Much work remains to be finished and much money remains to be raised. This is an ambitious project.

Our congratulations go to members of the city council, the Boca Raton Historical Society and the Junior Service League. They worked together to save a bit of history and to provide a valuable asset for the future.

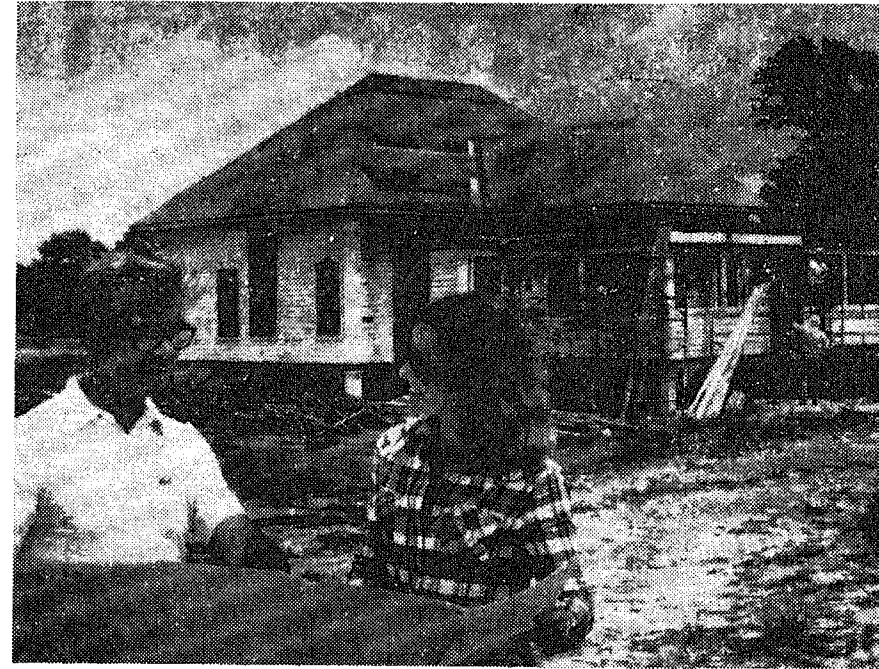
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Mrs. David B. Dickenson, Chairman, State Historic Boca Raton Preservation Board to CETA of Palm Beach, December 15, 1977.

The State Historic Commission of Boca Raton would like to state for the record the importance of "Singing Pines" as an historic site in our community.

Being the second oldest wooden structure in Boca Raton, and the only wooden structure in original condition, it serves to illustrate to modern day residents how the early settlers in this area lived. We feel it is vitally important to preserve this building, and have pledged support.

Florida is a rapidly growing state, fast losing its sense of the past. We must preserve it by re-cycling some of the significant early buildings. We therefore endorse the Junior Service League's restoration endeavors for "Singing Pines."



The remodeling begins. Mrs. Richard (Christine) Critchfield discusses plans with Robert Messmer, general contractor for the project. Photo, *The Fort Lauderdale News*, April 20, 1978.

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