

## Boca Raton Historical Society PRESERVATION NEWS September 2026

Susan Gillis, Curator

*In the rapidly changing world which is South Florida today, our very heritage is at stake as historic structures and sites—the few tangible reminders of our past—are fast disappearing. Our historic properties give texture, livability, and character in our fast-growing, ever developing modern city. While the Boca Raton Historical Society takes an active role in the advocacy of historic preservation, please remember that **as a private independent agency, the BRHS has no actual legal power to designate or regulate designated properties within the city.** Please let your city representatives know how important historic preservation is for the future of our community.*

**TOWN HALL (the Schmidt Boca Raton History Museum), 71 N. Federal Hwy**

*Opened to the public!!!Turns 100 in 2027!*



*Town Hall in 1927, left, and today, right*

Boca Raton's historic Town Hall, home of the Boca Raton Historical Society, has been undergoing extensive renovations since 2019. It also has a new name, **The Schmidt Boca Raton History Museum**. Renovations are finally completed including updating electrical wiring, HVAC, plumbing, and smart wiring. The old building's foundations had to be shored up as well and a new roof installed. Next came construction of our new History Alive! permanent exhibits by designers Creative Arts Unlimited from Pinellas Park, FL. Our new exhibit spaces include the Pioneer Room; Mizner Room; World War II Room; IBM Boca Raton Room; and Timeline of Boca Raton history. We have a new kitchen and meeting space as well as a new office addition on the back. The research library has received a complete makeover, and the curator finally has a real office. The Council Chamber will continue as our meeting venue; it is also the location for our temporary exhibit space.

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All of these improvements were impacted by COVID-19. Serious time delays in construction and inspections meant lots of cost overruns. Even though we have the original plans and those of the 1983 restoration, our crew was constantly uncovering new information about the (sometimes funky) construction of the old building. Dropping new electrical in our masonry interior walls was a serious challenge, not to mention the plumbing! Town Hall has just been painted—colors used at Palm Beach Town Hall—and major landscaping improvements are underway.

We want to thank our many wonderful donors who have made this project possible including our landlords, the City of Boca Raton. We are still seeking contributions and there are many naming opportunities left, so please contact [director@bocahistory.org](mailto:director@bocahistory.org) if you would like to support this wonderful project.



**FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY DEPOT, 747 S. Dixie Hwy, *Sold***



*FEC Depot, Count de Hoernle Pavilion ca 1930, left, and now, right*

The Florida East Coast Railway Station at 747 South Dixie Highway was commissioned by Clarence Geist, the second owner of the hotel, in 1929. The building was designed and built by the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) and opened in 1930, in time to welcome visitors to Geist's Boca Raton Club. The depot was operational until the mid-1960s.

By the 1980s, the depot was in a state of disrepair. **The Boca Raton Historical Society**, with assistance of the CRA, **purchased and restored the station to its former glory in the late 1980s.** Today the depot and two of the railcars housed there are listed on the **National Register of Historic Places** and the **Boca Raton Historic Register.**

In 1993, the BRHS signed a contract with the city of Boca Raton allowing the depot to serve as an overflow community center in exchange for day-to-day maintenance of the facilities. The BRHS received no income for this arrangement and was responsible for major repairs such as roofing, hardscaping, etc.

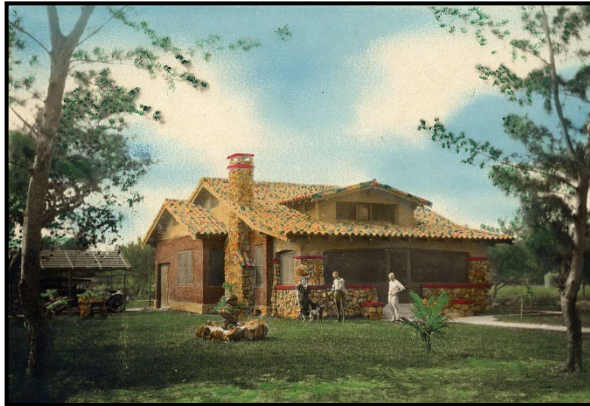
As our community grows, so does the demand for services provided by the Boca Raton Historical Society. The organization is experiencing growing museum collections, a growing professional staff, and aging historic facilities to maintain. In order to fund these efforts, the BRHS has found a new steward for this important historic landmark. Holly Meehan and her mother Donna Zoley have purchased the depot with the intention of using it as a venue for small scale events and performances. While the exterior will remain intact, the facility will receive

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restoration/renovation to both exterior and interior spaces. In addition to the designation status, the site is protected by a historic preservation covenant between the BRHS and the new owners that will ensure the preservation of the historical integrity of the building.

### ***LUFF HOUSE 390 E Palmetto Park Road Renovated as a restaurant!***



*Luff House ca. 1920s, left, and now, right.*

### About The Luff House

Pioneer residents Theodore and Harriet Luff had the house at 390 E Palmetto Park Road constructed in the early 1920s. It is built in a Florida interpretation of the bungalow style, employing oolitic limestone on the porches and chimneys. This type of bungalow, once fairly common, is now an exceedingly rare survivor in the state and is literally unique in Boca Raton today. As Palmetto Park Road grew more commercial, the structure was occupied by a number of businesses including Front Porch Antiques, the Boca Watch Shoppe, and Carousel Jewelers. The building was also home to community agencies such as the Junior Service League and was the first home of the Boca Raton Historical Society. It has been a vital part of downtown Boca Raton in historic and modern times, serving as a residence and successful retail establishment.

In recent years, the house has been threatened with demolition if a buyer and new site for the house were not found. The BRHS met with public officials regarding relocating the house (for public use) as well as private individuals interested in moving the house for adaptive use such as office space. Investments Limited (Batmasian) acquired the property several years ago and restaurateur Arturo Gismondi renovated the structure and opened it as Luff's Fish House in a fitting tribute to

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the original owners. Kudos to Arturo for this fine example of the ultimate recycling and preserving one of our increasingly rare historic landmarks.

***SINGING PINES, the RICKETTS HOUSE & the RICKARDS HOUSE (Replica) *Future uncertain****



*Singing Pines shown ca 1920s, left, and today, right*

These three properties, formerly home to the Children's Museum, are no longer open to the public. The city proposed relocating two of the structures to Meadows Park, however, this move is currently off the table and the future of this part of the city hall campus is undetermined.

The beautiful little cottage Singing Pines, ca. 1913-1914, was rescued by the Boca Raton Historical Society in the 1970s and moved from 301 SW First Avenue to 498 Crawford Boulevard in 1976. It was then restored and turned into the Children's Museum by the Junior Service League.



*Ricketts House aka Arvida Real Estate Office ca. 1978, left, and today, right*

To the south is the Ricketts House, also known as the Arvida Real Estate Office or "the cottage." Built in 1938, it was the home of the Ricketts family, later serving as a sales office for Arvida on Palmetto Park Road. It was relocated in 1989 to serve as office and programming space for the

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Children's Museum. Although a number of structures from the 1920s still exist in town, there are very few from the 1930s-1940s pre –WWII era.



*The Rickards House ca. 1890s left, and the replica Rickards House, right*

In addition, in 2011 the Children's Museum constructed a reproduction of Boca Raton's first house, that of Thomas Rickards and family, to the south of its other buildings. The original building was built in the mid-1890s and stood on the east side of the Intracoastal and just south of the Palmetto Park Road Bridge. The modern building served as offices and educational programming space.

All three of these structures belong to the City of Boca Raton. Singing Pines is on the city's list of official historically designated properties; the Ricketts House is not so protected, and the Rickards House replica is too new.

***THE BOCA RATON (Formerly the Boca Raton Resort & Club) Celebrating 100 Years!***



***Please note: currently The Boca Raton (hotel) is NOT historically designated either on the City of Boca Raton's local register or on the NR despite the BRHS's continuous offers to assist the***

*previous owners in same. In addition, under our current Boca Raton historic preservation ordinance, interior spaces are NOT protected or impacted by designation.* The Boca Raton (formerly the Resort & Club) was purchased a few years ago by New York based MSD Partners. The new owners have completed a major overhaul of the entire facility. According to Daniel A. Hostettler, new President and CEO, the focus of the hotel will now be on luxury accommodations and club members, rather than heads in beds. MSD claims that unlike previous owners, they are committed to the long haul rather than a quick turnaround of the property. Before the pandemic, the architects allowed us to review plans for the site and make comments. We gave them our input on the surviving historic features.

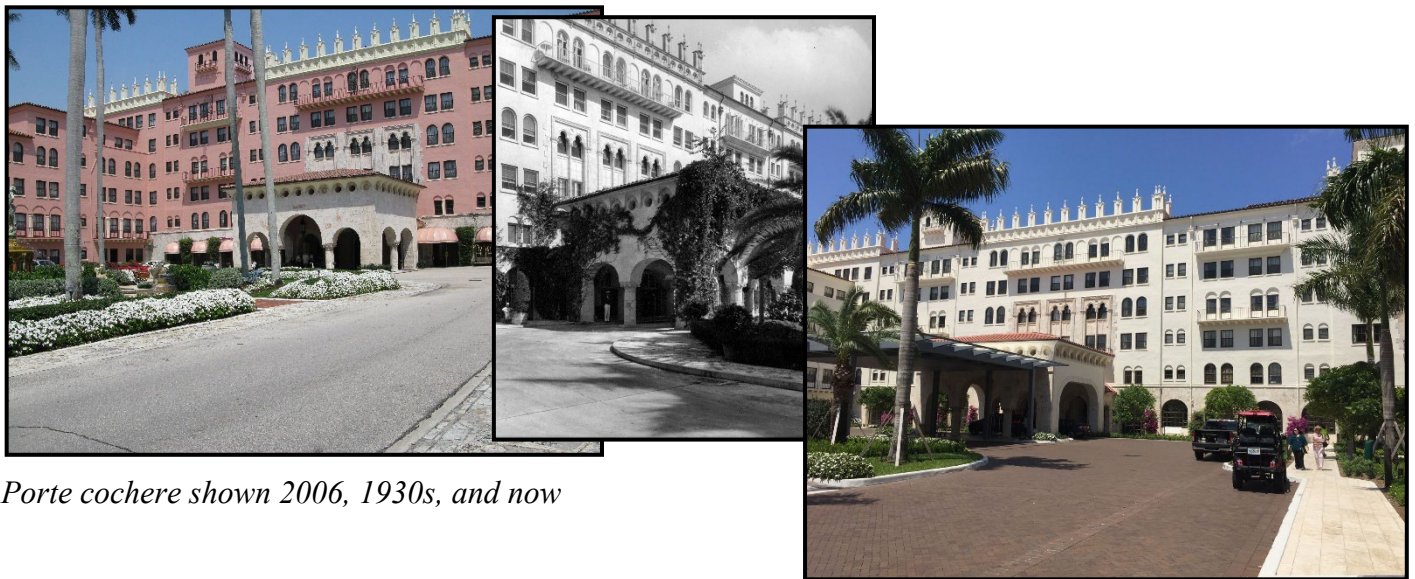
The biggest, most noticeable change of course, is the color. The hotel has indeed been pink for many years, but it was first painted pink about 1950 when J. Myer Schine owned the hotel. Schine was a hotelier and most of his hotels were pink—it was very trendy at that time. However, I have evidence that neither the Cloister Inn portion of the hotel (the southeast portion of the old hotel) and the Boca Raton Club portion (where the main lobby is, the courtyard, etc.) were actually not painted when they were new. According to the plans they were stuccoed—which could be tinted but not likely pink. There is no mention of exterior paint in the Specifications Book, which we also have in our collection. Of course, our old photos are black and white. At some point the hotel was painted white, and once you paint stucco you have to keep painting it. We have a film clip showing the hotel in 1938 and color slides from 1949 and the hotel is white. The new coastal white color is, I think, lovely and looks different at each time of day. It emphasizes the cast stone Mediterranean features. For all of you fretting out there, don't worry, it's just paint. The tower is painted a slightly different white which has a definite pink cast to it.





*Main lobby (Schultze & Weaver design) left, ca. 1930s, Blackstone era, and now.*

The main lobby, originally designed by Schultze and Weaver (not Mizner), has undergone yet another major renovation. The new floor is limestone from Limoges. One of the most important renovation needs for the hotel was improvements to the porte cochere guest arrival area in the main courtyard. The old structure was cumbersome for modern vehicles. Architect Jorge Garcia was very anxious to save the distinctive original structure (another Schultze and Weaver design) which overhangs the main entrance. The central arch has been removed to allow for much easier traffic flow and unfortunately the oculi (round windows) that once graced the structure disintegrated as a result; they have been rebuilt. The porte cochere has been extended to the south via a simple non-permanent modern awning-like structure designed to not compete with historic features.



*Porte cochere shown 2006, 1930s, and now*



*The fountain and surrounding features are still intact*

The fountain with statue designed by Leo Lentelli and surrounding “mermen” is intact. The new design also called for the repositioning of what was once the gatehouse to the Boca Raton Club. The plan was to move it out towards the Camino Real entrance. However, this structure also fell apart when moved. The flute player sculpture was saved but the “East Meets West” tile mural of the north side was lost.



*The gatehouse crumbled when it was moved; the flute player statue was rescued but not the mural*

Inside, many of the interior spaces have been gutted and are being dramatically reimaged. The hotel has seen many, many alterations over the years with major changes to both the Cloister Inn and the Boca Raton Club portions happening during J. Myer Schine’s ownership in the 1950s, and the long years of Arvida. No architectural changes are being made to the all-important original Mizner designed Cloister Inn lobby, the small lobby south of the grand staircase area.

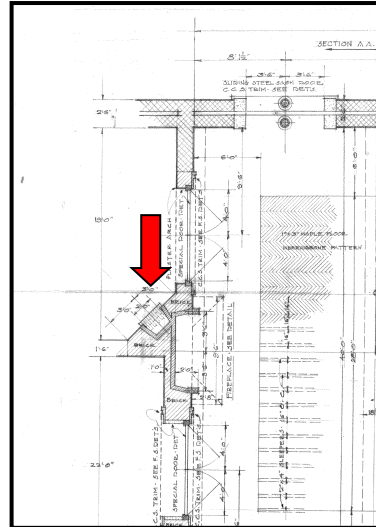
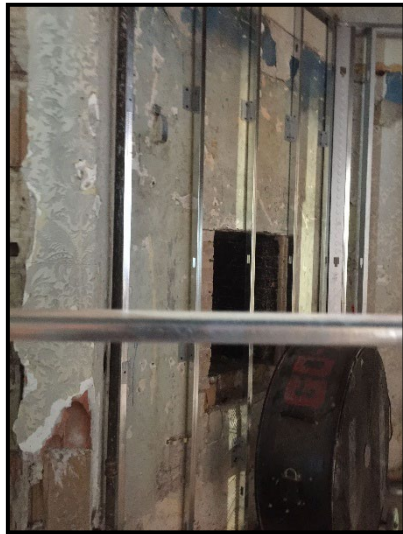


*Cloister Inn lobby then and now*



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The BRHS urged the architects to preserve the original Mizner fireplace and glass windows formerly visible in the Bar Luna and originally part of the Cloister Inn ballroom. The Bar Luna is now a kitchen, so the Mizner fireplace has been enclosed for its protection. Interestingly, the demo of Serendipity's ice cream shop has revealed a long hidden treasure—a “kidney warmer” fireplace located on the west side (back) of the Mizner fireplace. This small fireplace was once heating for the smoking/ card room of the Cloister Inn and appears on the original plans.

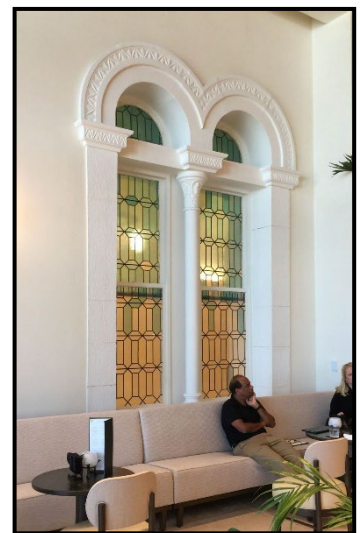


*Renovations revealed the kidney warmer fireplace found on the original Cloister Inn drawings shown at right*

The very rare Mizner Industries stained glass windows which could once be seen in the Bar Luna have been relocated to the Mizner windows in the Palm Court.



*Mizner Industries windows in the Bar Luna moved to Palm Court*



Note the whimsical Mizner column capital from what was once Mizner's "ballroom"—later Lucca's and the Bar Luna--now a kitchen and a new Italian restaurant, Principessa.



*Mizner designed columns visible inside and outside the Palm Court*

The Schultze and Weaver designed Cathedral Dining Room will not be altered; however the colonnade at the east end of the Palm Court (formerly Royal Palm Patio) designed by Palm Beach architect Marion Symes Wyeth in 1931 has been removed.

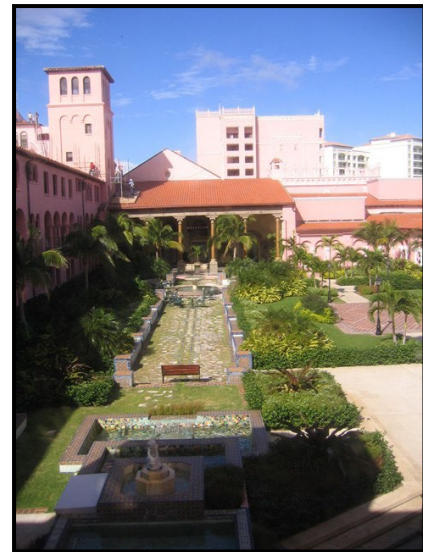


*The Cathedral Dining Room remains intact, but the Wyeth colonnade is gone.*

A new portico has been extended from the Mizner designed Mizner Loggia into the Cloister Garden to accommodate Sadelle's Restaurant. Unfortunately, the *charbagh* style garden water channels and tile fountains constructed in 1929 as part of the Boca Raton Club have been demolished. Part of the fountain was salvaged and reused.



*Cloister Garden in the Mizner era—note there is no real “garden”-- and under construction 2021.*



*The Cloister Garden looking south from the Mizner loggia in 1930 (left) and looking north from the “bridge” to the tower ca. 2006 (right). The channels and fountains have been removed (center).  
The fountain was partially recycled.*

Also demolished are the remains of the “Garden Pool,” constructed as part of the Boca Raton Club addition in 1929. Interestingly, the beautiful old walls of the pool were incorporated into the Great Hall, or old convention center building, when it was built in the late 1960s. Today an expansive multi-feature pool area has been completed featuring a “lazy river” pool and other amenities. We were told that the new complex had to meet modern elevation requirements which are quite a bit

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higher than the old structures due to rising sea/ Intracoastal levels. The old towers, Moroccan tiles, and colonnade were not salvaged.



*The Garden Pool, left, and the Great Hall construction at right. The Great Hall incorporated the pool walls into the building and the old pool itself was replaced with a large meeting room.*



*The Great Hall ca. 2006 showing the old south and north Garden Pool walls.*

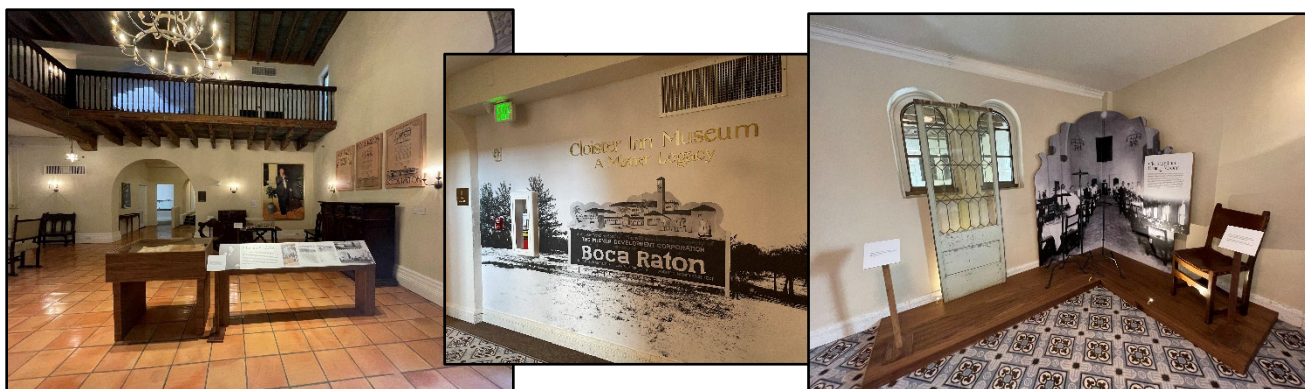


*The new pool complex at the site of the Great Hall*

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Despite its “undesigned” status, MSD Partners and Garcia and Stromberg have been most gracious in sharing with us their plans for the historic hotel. BRHS continues to campaign to mitigate the loss of historic features and would be happy to work with staff to nominate The Boca Raton to the National Register or local register. (In fact, we completed the work on the applications many years ago!) The Boca Raton Historical Society provides the only officially sanctioned tours of the hotel; this is the only way non-guests or nonmembers can access the fascinating complex.

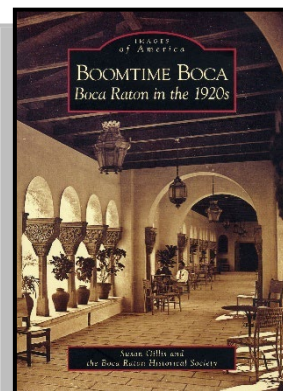
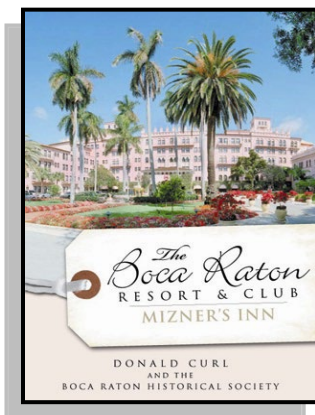
In honor of TBR’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2026, BRHS Curator Susan Gillis in conjunction with TBR programming chief Hector Rubio worked with exhibit designer Nora Pinell-Hernandez of Atomic Carrots to complete the “Cloister Inn Museum: A Mizner Legacy” in the historic Cloister Inn portion of the hotel. The exhibit begins in the Mizner lobby and proceeds up the stairs to the mezzanine overlooking the lobby and the Grand Staircase. There you will find displays of (some quite old) antiques from the hotel’s collection as well as antiques, images, and information from the collections of the BRHS. These include many actual Cloister Inn furnishings that were likely donated to the BRHS by the hotel in times past! This exhibit focuses on the original Cloister Inn itself and features a slide show of historic images of the hotel under construction and when it was newly opened. This exhibit is expected to be a long-term feature of the hotel.



TBR celebrated its centenary with two back to back celebrations on Jan 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> this year. The Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> event was held in the courtyard and featured fabulous food and live music from every decade in the hotel’s history. Animated images highlighting each decade were projected on the front façade in accordance with the musical selections. In addition, the weather was Boca-winter-wonderful.



For more information, check out the BRHS's scholarly history of the hotel by well-known architectural historian Dr. Donald Curl *The Boca Raton Resort & Club: Mizner's Inn*, published by the History Press. It is a comprehensive history of Boca's most famous landmark and features 120 black and white and color photos from the collections of the BRHS. In addition, Mizner and hotel enthusiasts will want a copy of *Boomtime Boca: Boca Raton in the 1920s* by author Susan Gillis. This photographic history by Arcadia Publishing features 189 images from the BRHS collections including two chapters specifically about the Cloister Inn and its successor the Boca Raton Club. Both books retail for \$21.99 and \$24.99 and are available at the Schmidt Boca Raton History Museum store as well as local book dealers. Proceeds from book sales benefit the programs of the BRHS.



**To learn more about the hotel and its history, join one of our docents on a guided tour of The Boca Raton.**

***MAURICE FATIO DESIGNED HOUSE AT 1240 COCOANUT ROAD Renovated!***



*1240 Coconut Road shown ca. WWII, left, and today, right*

The beautiful ca. 1930s Fatio-designed house at 1240 Coconut Road in the glamorous Estates section was sold a few years ago. This house is listed on the City of Boca Raton's historic register as well as the National Register of Historic Places. One of several fine spec homes built for Boca Raton Club owner Clarence Geist in the 1930s in a Tropical Georgian style, the house was home to Colonel Frank Fisher during World War II. Fisher was part of the command staff at the Boca Raton Army Air Field, originally headquartered at the nearby Boca Raton Club.

The house once belonged to Kathy and David Dickenson, well known historic preservationists. The new owners have received Historic Preservation Board approval for an addition, three car garage, guest house, and landscaping improvements. The main house has remained intact. BRHS is happy that the new owners have continued the stewardship of this rare local historic treasure, one of the gems of our city.

***MIZNER HOUSE IN OLD FLORESTA Restored!***



*The Aiken House, 801 Hibiscus Street, Old Floresta, 1928, left, and now, right*

The Mizner designed house at 801 Hibiscus Street, also known as the Aiken House, recently underwent extensive and historically accurate restoration under the guidance of architect and former owner Pablo Rodriguez. This house is listed on the city's historic register as well as the National Register of Historic Places, one of only two in Old Floresta to be so honored. Originally constructed ca. 1925 as one of the 29 homes in Mizner's Plat 11 development, the house has seen many additions and renovations over the years—many of poor quality. Pablo extensively studied the detailed original plans and photos in the collections of the BRHS to determine the true original features of the house and discern Mizner's original design scheme.

After the failure of the Mizner Development Corporation in 1927, the original owners of the Floresta land, Herman Von Holst, John Verhoeven, and Fred Aiken, completed the buildings Mizner had begun in the neighborhood and renamed it "Floresta." They also gave the flower and bird names to the local streets. Aiken served as landlord for many of the homes and resided at 801 Hibiscus for many years with his wife Lottie. It has been blessed with many subsequent loving owners.

Pablo documented the whole process for future preservationists. He told us of how he searched South America for the right "handmade look" roof tiles that would be strong enough to meet local building codes. He also found that many of the tiles arrived broken because various law enforcement agents have searched them for smuggled drugs! Not a problem Mizner faced, we are

thinking. Thanks so much for your efforts, Pablo; we are in total admiration of your efforts and we love finding someone as appreciative of historic properties as we are!



*Left: View of the interior of a wall showing the wood frame and stucco construction of the Mizner houses. Pablo told us if done properly, this construction style will stand up to many a hurricane—and it has!*

*Right: roof tile samples*



***FEE FOR BOCA RATON HISTORIC DESIGNATION APPLICATION \$1360!***

More than a decade ago, the City of Boca Raton initiated a fee for all applying for historic designation for properties in Boca Raton. ***Formerly there was no fee*** for this application; fees for local historic designation application vary widely across South Florida according to our research, however, Boca Raton's is extremely high. **This strongly discourages residents and property owners from applying for designation! Please contact your City Council members regarding this impediment to historic preservation in our community!!** Please note, the Boca Raton Historic Preservation Board itself has the right to initiate and make application for historic designation for historic sites, avoiding the fee.

***HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE REVISED!! WE NEED YOUR HELP IN GETTING IT PASSED!!!IT'S BEEN NINETEEN YEARS IN THE WORKS!***

***This is an update on the status of the revised historic preservation ordinance.*** Many years ago, the City of Boca Raton's Historic Preservation Board (HPB) approved an updated, modern version of our city's historic preservation ordinance. The new ordinance will streamline current procedures. For example, historic designation would no longer require the approval of the Planning and Zoning Board. Instead, the HPB historic designations would be referred directly to City Council for final approval. Most importantly, the technical changes to the city's preservation ordinance will assist the city in meeting the requirements for Certified Local Government (CLG)

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standing. The CLG “checklist” of requirements meets regulations of the U.S. Department of Interior and the State of Florida’s Bureau of Historic Preservation. A CLG status would allow owners of historically designated properties within the City of Boca Raton to take advantage of ad valorem tax incentives authorized by the Florida legislature once Boca Raton has passed its own tax abatement ordinance. This would be the first significant local economic incentive for historic property owners—a vital step for the future of historic preservation in our community. Additionally, each year the Federal government sends dedicated funds to the state specifically for CLG communities to use on historic preservation projects. The state, recognizing the economic hardships in recent years, does not require matching funds for these CLG grants. In other words, it is **free money** available for CLG communities. We can take advantage of these funds once we become a CLG community. The Boca Raton Historical Society worked with the city HPB and city staff to ensure that the revised ordinance includes all of the features required for the CLG status. The revised ordinance draft was returned from Tallahassee after review for CLG compliance. Since its return from Tallahassee, the HPB and interested parties have been waiting for the revised ordinance to be brought before the HPB and then City Council for final public hearings as required by law. The revised ordinance is still in the hands of city’s development services staff. The economy, pandemic, and countless other issues have put the ordinance on the back burner. It is now time to bring it to the front and get it passed! The BRHS and the City’s Historic Preservation Board as well as local citizens have launched a new campaign to ensure the passage of the updated ordinance and CLG status. We cannot, however, do it alone. We need your help. **Please contact members of the City Council and the Boca Raton Historic Preservation Board staff liaison, Peter Begovich, and urge that the revised historic preservation ordinance be brought before the HPB and City Council for final approval as soon as possible.** Peter can be reached at (561) 393-7760 or [pbegovich@myboca.us](mailto:pbegovich@myboca.us)

**PEARL CITY UPDATE *A Brand New National Register Historic District !!!!***



*Macedonia A.M.E. Church on Pearl Street*

Historic Pearl City, originally established in 1915, is Boca Raton's oldest historic Black neighborhood and one of two officially designated local historic districts within the city. In 2024, Pearl City (including the Dixie Manor and Lincoln Court) was officially accepted as a **National Register Historic District!!** This is a very great honor for our city—it is the first national historic *district* in Boca Raton and a tribute to Florida's Black history and Boca Raton history as well! We are very proud of our friends at DISC (Discovering Interracial Social Change) for persevering in obtaining this distinction!

**156 PEARL STREET, FOUNTAIN HOUSE *New Owner!***



*Fountain House at 156 NE Pearl Street*

Boca native Ms. Sherry Randall recently sold the property at 156 Pearl Street, the oldest existing house in Pearl City, originally owned by Gladys and Alvin Fountain. Built in 1934, it is a very small wooden structure. For over a decade, Ms. Randall worked to try and restore this historic property; however, the cost of restoration unfortunately outweighed the cost of a new build. (Remember, there are no grants in our state or county to assist individual property owners with

historic preservation projects.) Unfortunately, the Historical Society's years-long efforts to relocate the house proved impossible. However, the house is in the hands of an investor who has restored historic homes in Delray Beach. We wish him success in maintaining this important contributing element.

**DIXIE MANOR HOUSING PROJECT** Rebuilt as Martin Manor



*Vernell Fountain and unidentified young lady pose with Dixie Manor in background 1944; modern entrance*

Dixie Manor was built ca. 1943 as one of two federal housing projects in Boca Raton. The Palmetto Park Project (later Garden Apartments) was for white residents and Dixie Manor for Black residents –remember, it was still the days of segregation. They were very prosaic, unglamorous masonry apartments built to house civilian employees and servicemen's families from the nearby Boca Raton Army Air Field. After the war, Dixie Manor grew derelict under private ownership; the Boca Raton Housing Authority acquired it in 1979 and began major renovations and additions to the complex. Today the Housing Authority is demolishing the old buildings and constructing new housing. The Housing Authority has generously agreed to retain one of the historic buildings with half being devoted to a “mini history museum” in which to share the proud story of Dixie Manor, Pearl City, and the Boca Raton Army Air Field and the Black soldiers who served there.



*New buildings of Martin Manor and original Dixie Manor building which will house a future exhibit about Pearl City etc.*

**BOCA RATON ROAD *Slated for demolition!***



*Boca Raton Road looking east ca. late 1940s and now*

After several tremendous decades of redevelopment, little of Boca's historic downtown section remains today. One of the few survivors is a section of Boca Raton Road, located just east of Sanborn Square and a block south of Mizner Park. These modest commercial buildings began shortly after World War II and housed the post office, department stores, and a variety of businesses over the years. Today they are amongst the few examples of the "moderne" style

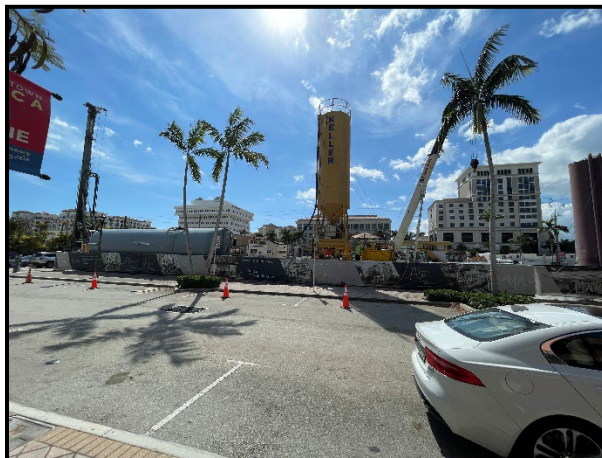
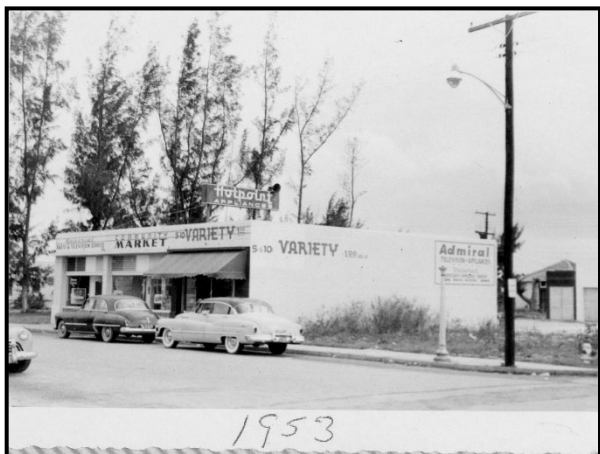
*Tower 155, formerly the site of the Eubanks house et al.*



popular in South Florida in the 1940s and 1950s left in Boca Raton. This last bit of downtown is not protected by historic designation. Currently a twelve-story condo named Tower One Fifty Five has been constructed on the north side of Boca Raton Road at the east end near Mizner Boulevard.

The 1946 Eubanks house and garage (most recently used as bank buildings) and adjacent office buildings have been demolished. The historic Cramer House (1925) has been demolished and we see that the two historic buildings at 114 and 124 Boca Raton Road (the south side of the street) as well as 50 N.E. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue have been demolished to make way for the very large Aletto Square Project..

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*114 Boca Raton Road 1953 at left now—demo'd*



*Cramer House on Boca Raton Road, ca. 1925, left, and now, right*



*Aletto Square office complex being built at Palmetto Park Road/ Boca Raton Road.*

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**Susan Gillis, Curator**

In 2011, Boca Raton Road, Northeast Second Street, Northeast First Avenue, and Palmetto Park Road underwent beautification and traffic calming improvements dubbed “The Promenade.” This has greatly enhanced the appearance of the area. Now the last surviving section of the road, the buildings at the west end on the north side, will likely be supplanted by the proposed “The Sanborn” eight story private club. These were built in the late 1940s as a post office and grocery store (late Roadman’s Department Store).



For over twenty years the BRHS has been struggling to preserve this last bit of Boca Raton’s original downtown. We have been entirely unsuccessful due to the lure of the almighty dollar as is virtually always the case with historic preservation. It is a great blow to me, personally, as I have tried to draw attention to these structures since at least 2004.

***RAULERSON HOUSE, 290 SW Second Avenue***

The ca. 1905-1913 Raulerson House is probably the oldest existing structure surviving in Boca Raton today. Originally it sat on the north side of Palmetto Park Road and east of Boca Raton Boulevard, just east of current city hall. It was relocated to its present site, 290 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue—note it actually faces onto SW 3rd Street-- and restored by Diane DeMarco in 1987. It currently serves as a boarding house (as it did for many years before it was moved). This house is designated as an official historic site by the City of Boca Raton. It currently appears to be in good condition.



*Raulerson House in ca. 1914 and now*

**WOOD FRAME HOUSE 214 SW Second Avenue *Undesignated!***



BRHS staff and volunteers have been trying to research this charming wood framed cottage just to the north of the Raulerson House at 214 SW Second Avenue. The property appraiser's office lists this house as ca. 1940 but we believe it could be from the 1930s or 1920s. If it is, it is certainly a rarity in this town. Only a few wooden structures, once very, very, common here, still survive. The house, I believe, was moved in the 1960s—possibly from SW First Avenue, that is, just west of the FEC RR tracks, literally a block away. If anyone has information on this property, we would be interested in learning about it.

**IBM MAIN COMPLEX BUILDING Boca Raton Innovation Campus *Sold!***



*IBM Main complex shown ca. mid 1970s and now*

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One of Boca Raton's most historically and architecturally significant landmarks is the former IBM Main Complex Building, now part of the Boca Raton Innovation Campus or BRIC (former T Rex or Blue Lake site) located between Yamato Road and Spanish River Boulevard just west of I-95. It has just been purchased by West Palm developers Related Ross from CP Group, owners since 2018.



In 1967 IBM opened a large-scale manufacturing plant at Boca Raton to produce the System/360 Model 20 midsize computer. In December 1966, IBM announced its purchase of 550 acres west of what is now I-95, south of Yamato Road and east of Military Trail. The original site eventually grew from 620,000 square feet to 3.6 million square feet in more than 40 buildings. The main complex building was modeled after IBM's research center located in LaGaude, France. Marcel Breuer and Robert Gatje, the famed architects who created the LaGaude building adapted the design for Florida's flat terrain and hot sun. It is a significant example of what is known as "Brutalism," and of course IBM Boca Raton is the home of the IBM PC, developed in 1980 and introduced to the world in 1981—with global implications. The Main Complex Building has now reached 50 years of age; that and its architectural and historical importance make it eligible for City of Boca Raton historic designation and the National Register of Historic Places. The BRHS met with CP Group regarding the nomination of the building to the National Register, however they were opposed to this move. BRHS also partnered with management to create a series of displays of IBM vintage computers and memorabilia within the building and were represented on BRIC's AHA (Arts, History, and Architecture) committee and will continue to advocate for the preservation and protection of this historic treasure. Although we have no immediate concerns for the historic Breuer/ Gatje structure, the plans for the extensive development of the surrounding site under the Related Ross management will impact its context and setting.



*The segue between the original the manufacturing building on the west side has been replaced with this new porte cochere, allowing easier access from the north to the south side of the entire complex.*

### ***BOCA RATON ARMY AIR FIELD PRESERVATION UDATE***

Boca Raton was home to the Army Air Corps' only war-time radar training base during WWII, the Boca Raton Army Air Field. Radar was top secret during those years, and all Army Air Force pilots, mechanics, and navigators working with the new technology had to come here to learn it. The base (initially housed at the Boca Raton Club, now The Boca Raton) comprised over 800 buildings; less than twenty survive today. The base was active from 1942 until 1947, when most of the structures were destroyed by a terrible hurricane in September of that year. The base extended from Dixie Highway on the east to the Seaboard RR tracks (think Amtrak tracks—approximately the route of I-95) on the west and from Palmetto Park Road on the south to north of Yamato Road.

### ***BRAAF HQ BLDG 101 Pine Circle *Demolished!****



*101 Pine Circle during WWII, left; 2012, right; now, center*

The headquarters building for the base was located at 101 Pine Circle, on the “the hill” just off NW Fourth Avenue. Since WW II it operated as an apartment house. This building was one of the most historically significant structures in all of Boca Raton. Built in 1942 as the base headquarters (T-1052) it was strategically located on the highest elevation in Boca Raton as the gateway cornerstone building overlooking over 5800 acres of the airfield.

BRHS staff met with the property owner Armen Batmasian on several occasions to encourage him to consider rehabilitating this important structure for use as an apartment building or other use. In March of 2013, BRHS engaged the services of a local historic preservation architect and contractor to do an assessment on our behalf. Their findings were that the original core of the building was sound despite several poor-quality additions; that the core was entirely salvageable and might be eligible for future ad valorem tax incentives were it to be historically designated. The BRHS shared this report with Mr. Batmasian and interested parties in the community in the hopes that someone might step forward to purchase the property and salvage the structure. Unfortunately, time ran out and the building was demolished in August 2013. Mr. Batmasian's contractors have kindly salvaged the cast iron door from the room sized vault and a number of WWII era room doors for us. The vault door below had found a new home in our History Alive! World War II exhibit room.



*Rear of site, demolition in progress, left; original room sized vault with door, right, and now part of the World War II room at the Schmidt Boca Raton History Museum*

### ***T BUILDINGS AT FAU... Saved!***

Amongst the surviving BRAAF structures are four buildings on the campus at FAU. A cluster of four structures (T-5, 6, 10, and 11) exist on the northeastern part of campus, immediately to the west of the El Rio Canal. The university has reroofed these structures and made a commitment to their preservation and restoration. FAU in association with the Boca Raton Army Air Field Preservation Committee of the BRHS engaged the services of a preservation architect, who has completed a comprehensive assessment and plan for the existing structures and the surrounding

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space. The architectural plan will serve as a pivotal guide in the rehabilitation and restoration of the buildings and is a necessary document for any future grant applications.

A number of years ago, FAU kindly offered space in T6 to the BRAAF Preservation Committee of the BRHS for use as museum space. However, we found that the fee for rehabilitation of the proffered rooms at T6 to make them occupy-able according to university standards (not including the exhibition itself) will be many times our committee's actual budget. Unfortunately, we will not be able to pursue this longtime dream of our supporters at any time in the near future.



*T6, one of four builds BRAAF buildings left on FAU campus*

### ***SPANISH VILLAGE HOUSE (Christian Warren House 200 NW 7th Street) Designated!***

Located at 200 NW 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the Christian Warren House is located on the southwest corner of NW 7<sup>th</sup> Street and NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The home is contiguous to and acts as an entry to the small cohesive quiet residential neighborhood known as Spanish Village.

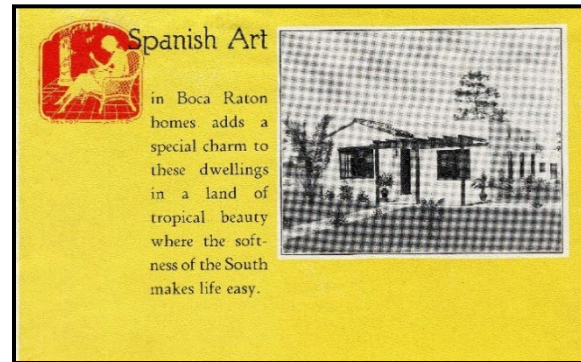
The Christian Warren House was one of the original 100 houses planned for Spanish Village (only partially completed) by builder Harry Vought and Company for the Mizner Development Corporation in 1925-26. An ad by Harry Vought in 1925 noted that the design and materials used on the Spanish bungalows in Spanish Village were approved by Addison Mizner. To entice visitors, Vought's ad suggested that it was a unique opportunity to buy in the "pre-development" period of Boca Raton when a new owner could witness the Cloister Inn (now The Boca Raton) being completed, Camino Real being paved, lakes and canals being dredged, and golf courses laid down. "These houses represent happy living conditions for the man who looks for comfort and convenience, coupled with a price that is affordable," the ad stated. The cost-- approximately

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\$7000—quite a sum at the time. Less than 20 houses in Spanish Village were actually completed. Today eleven of the original bungalows can be found in Spanish Village.

Recognizing its historic significance, Chris agreed to have his house placed on the city's historic register in 2012. Kudos to Chris!!



*Christian Warren House now, left, and Spanish Village house from MDC brochure, right*

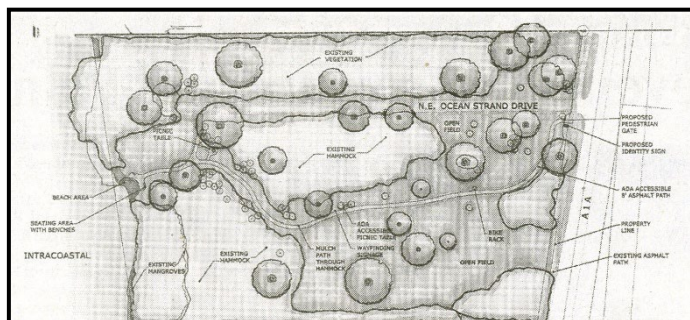
### **MORADA BONITA 741 E Palmetto Park Road *RESTORED!***

Pioneer realtor Harley Gates constructed this Mediterranean gem on the road to the beach in the mid 1920s. It has survived little changed, through many owners over the years. In 2006 realtor David Roberts beautifully restored the charming structure to serve as the Royal Palm Properties office. For his efforts, the BRHS recognized Mr. Roberts with its 2007 Preservation Award.



*Morada Bonita 1920s and today*

***OCEAN STRAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE***



*Proposed site map Ocean Strand; ceramics found at site*

Most Boca Raton residents are not aware that people lived in Boca Raton thousands of years ago. The Glades Culture, as archaeologists refer to them, were here as early as 500 B.C. There are a number of known archaeological sites along the beach in Boca Raton and Highland Beach, several found with human remains. One of the most significant sites is the Barnhill Mound, a burial mound east of Federal Highway north of Yamato in what is now Boca Marina on the west side of the Intracoastal. The Barnhill Mound in the 1950s was home to a tourist attraction known as Ancient America. E.G. Barnhill has tunnels dug through the mound and one could walk through the mound and view the interments visible behind glass. There was also a museum of Indian artifacts, gift shop etc. The site still exists on private property. Recently archaeologist Bob Carr has unearthed shells, bones, and ceramic artifacts from the Ocean Strand site, a beachfront park owned by the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Parks District. The ceramics are consistent with a date of 600-1400 A.D. Fortunately, the Ocean Strand site is only slated to be developed as a park, not another high-rise condominium. Nonetheless, the BRHS believes it is high time we add an archaeological site to the city's list of officially designated sites.

***THE ADDISON 2 East Camino Real Celebrating its second century!***

The jewel in our city's historic preservation crown is The Addison, at 2 East Camino Real. Originally two buildings, it was known as the Administration Buildings and housed the sales staff, surveyors, and draftsmen of Mizner Development Corporation. The north building was completed in 1925, and in December of that year the south building got underway. The official grand opening was November 9, 1925. The Ad Building, as it has always been known to the locals, also housed Boca's first restaurant –the Administration Restaurant.



In 1927, the Mizner Development Corporation assets were acquired by Clarence Geist, who tripled the size of the hotel to become the Boca Raton Club. The Ad Building continued to serve the hotel as dormitory for staff and plain old storage area until the 1980s, when hotel owner Arvida sold it. Not, however, without a fight from the BRHS, who got it listed on the local and National Register of Historic Places with strong resistance from Arvida.

The buildings then became the popular Addison restaurant and later, The Addison special event venue. It is an excellent example of adaptive use of a historic property and we praise the management for their continued support of this beautiful historic landmark. We understand that management spends as much as \$1 million per year on the upkeep of its historic features. Recently, Addison has completed more restorations including new courtyard windows (that originally were open air—not windows at all), new paint job, and new roof. The Addison has also joined with the BRHS to present our annual Boca Bacchanal and other wonderful events—such as the BRHS 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. And in November we joined with The Addison to celebrate the city's centennial as well as her own 100 on November 9, 2025!



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