

"The Mullikin Man"

Photos from the camera
of William V.B. Mullikin

Introduction by BARBARA A. POLEO

In the 1970s Edith Lewis donated a small cardboard suitcase and some boxes filled with glass negatives to her longtime friend and Broward County Historical Commission founder, Judge L. Clayton Nance. Mrs. Lewis had moved to Fort Lauderdale from Kansas with her husband in 1913. The following year she took charge of the Women's Department of the H. G. Wheeler Department Store. By the time of her retirement in 1970, she had managed the family sign painting business, worked for the Broward County Credit Bureau for twenty-five years and organized the Women's Credit Club.

Last year the Historical Commission began an extensive project to accession all items in our collections. One of the first boxes we opened contained glass negatives and a note from Edith Lewis, indicating that she had acquired them in 1921. Using the resources of the Broward County Historical Commission, we were able to determine that William V. B. Mullikin was the most probable original source of the glass negatives. He is the only photographer listed in the City Directory of the time and a search of our voter registration cards

confirmed that Mullikin was in Fort Lauderdale between 1914 to 1921 and listed his profession as photographer. By matching photographic backdrops on the newly developed photographs with existing photos in our files, we were able to identify some of the subjects and firmly establish the time frame. Many of the photographs appear to be graduation pictures. In a May 25, 1917 advertisement in the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel* Mullikin offers special

prices "For all size photos, school children and teachers, or any one."

According to the 1920 census, William V. B. Mullikin was born in South Carolina. He arrived in Fort Lauderdale in 1914 and bought the photography business of an individual named Sooy. Mullikin established his business on the second floor of the *Sentinel* building. There he photographed hundreds of people. Labeling himself "The Mullikin Man," he often publicized in the *Fort*

SUMMER RATE PHOTO TICKET

The holder of this ticket, when signed by "The Mullikin-Man" is entitled to half dozen \$4.00 per dozen Photos, Sepia finish, for **ONLY \$2.98** pay \$1 when ticket is signed up and the full balance of \$1.98 must be paid at time of sitting. One of them will be finished in Water Colors Free; if desired.

Good until October 1, 1916.

Signed _____

W.V.B. Mullikin's advertisement from the *Fort Lauderdale Sentinel*, 1916.

SPECIAL INDUCEMENT TO CLIMB THE GOLDEN STAIRS

...Until October 1st, I will mak

Until Oct. 1st I will make half doz-
en large photos in beautiful folders
5X9¼ inches and one of "them" finish-
ed in beautiful Water Colors. Regu-
lar Price \$5.50. All for \$2.90.

Remember this offer ONLY UNTIL
Oct. 1st, if folders last until that time.

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED.

Just mail your kodak films to me
I will do the rest.

W. V. B. MULLIKIN.

Photo Artist

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.



The Mullikin ad at left appeared in the *Sentinel* on September 12, 1919. The photo of the Sentinel building above dates from ca. 1916. Mullikin's sign and the "Golden Stairs" to his studio can be seen on the right side of the building.

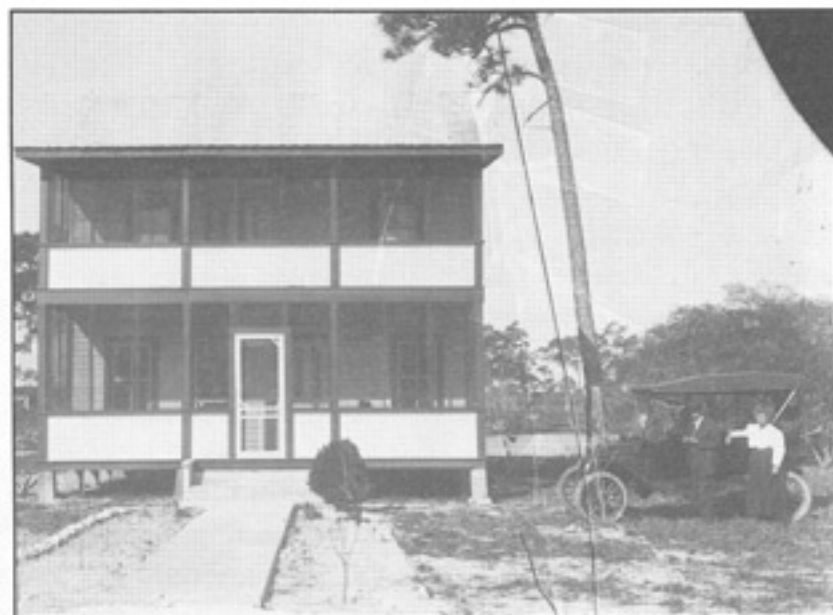
Lauderdale Sentinel. One advertise-
ment reads "Just mail your Kodak
films to me. I will do the rest. W. V.
B. Mullikin, photo artist." In the
words of landlord and *Fort Lauder-
dale Sentinel* editor George G.
Mathews, "... If you want the best
photographs, see Mullikin. We have
known him to improve the looks of
many people who were not favored
by nature." Another advertisement
states, "Sugar shortage serious, but

no need to look sour. The Mullikin
Man can make you look sweet."

In 1921, inspired by a friend's
praise of California, Mullikin packed
up his family, closed his studio and
moved west, leaving the glass nega-
tives with Edith Lewis. He returned
to Fort Lauderdale in 1923 and re-
opened his studio on the second floor
of Deacon Berryhill's store. Later he
sold the business and became in-
volved in real estate during the boom

years. William V. B. Mullikin died
in 1940.

Fortunately, these treasures
were rediscovered at a time when
the Historical Commission budget
permitted us to have them devel-
oped. Only a few of the subjects in
the photographs have been posi-
tively identified. The identity of
many of those pictured on the fol-
lowing pages remains a mystery.
Maybe you can help solve it.



While most of Mullikin's photos were
studio shots, his collection does contain
several good outdoor views. The man and
lady at the right of this picture
apparently wanted to preserve a view of
their new house, complete with tin roof
and screened porch.



The distinguished bearing and old style clothing of this man and lady suggest that they may have been people of prominence. So far, neither has been identified.



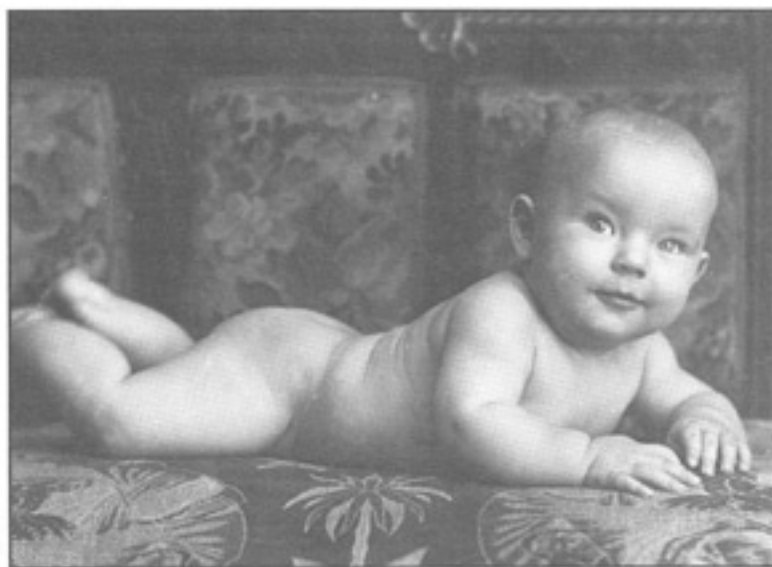
An inscription on the negative from which this print was made reads "Bryan," the only clue to this young lady's identity.

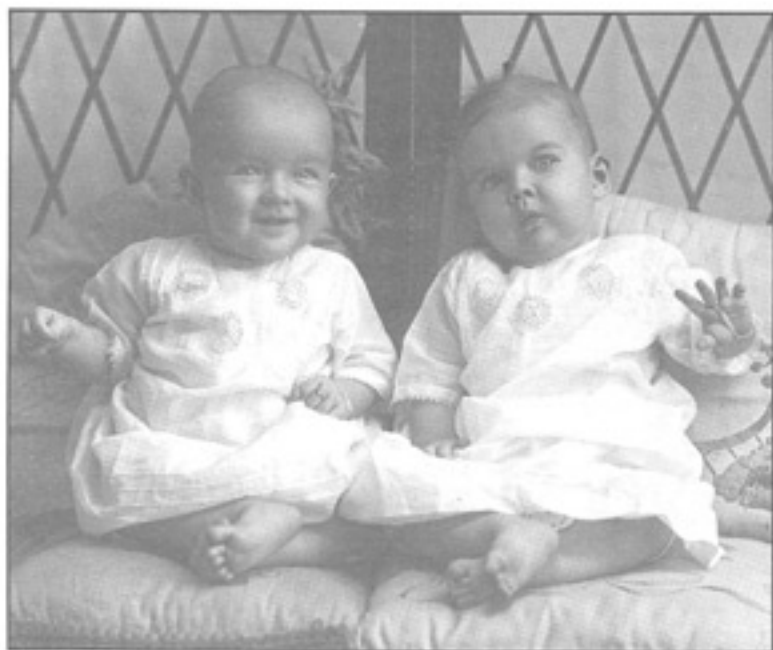


Several pictures of this lady appear in the collection. This view, which clearly shows her retouching a photograph, suggests that she may have been Mr. Mullikin's assistant.



Children and babies were among Mullikin's favorite subjects. Perhaps some of the youngsters in these ca. 1914-1921 photos are still living in Broward County.







Fresh flowers and wreaths marked "My Wife" and "Sister" cover the grave of Eunice M. Agee at Fort Lauderdale's Evergreen Cemetery. Mrs. Agee died January 1, 1921. The stone marks the grave of her son Robert, killed in World War I.

This cemetery scene poses a greater mystery. The graves are marked "George Boston Wright, born Washington Co., Ga., 1853, died Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. 1918;" "Clifton Mims, born Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. 1914, died Oct (?) 1918;" and "Mrs. Amanda Harris, born in Newman Ga., Dec. 25, 1845, died Oct. 1, 1918." Broward voter records show Boston Wright as a black laborer. A railroad crossing sign is visible in the background, just left of the shed, but the location has not been established.



The seated man and lady are identified as the parents of William C. "Pete" Morris, also killed in action in World War I. Is the young man standing behind them Pete?



This family, like many in the collection, is completely unidentified. Were they local residents or perhaps visitors?



This photo is marked only with the name "Marshall." Did these people belong to one of the several related Marshall families prominent in early Broward history?



George P. and Easter Lily Gates. In 1928 Mrs. Gates would be elected Broward County Supervisor of Elections, a post she would hold for forty years. This is the earliest photo of her in the Historical Commission collection.

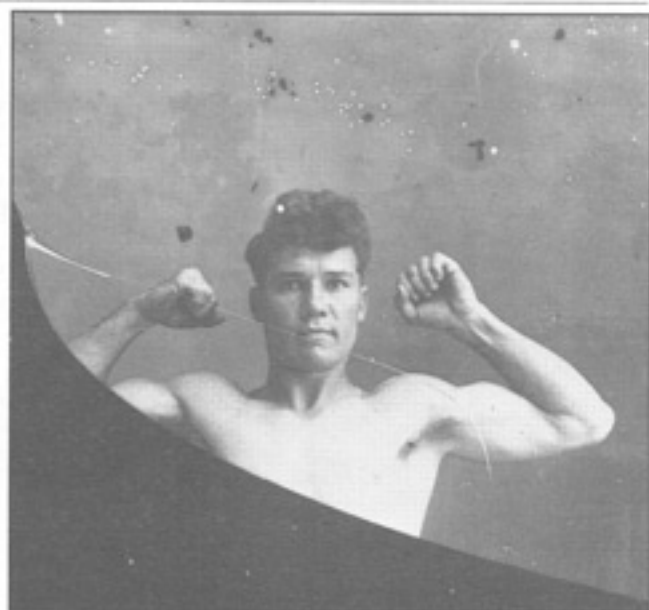


The young family above is labeled "Burris." Three Burris families--those of John W., Robert A. and C.H., all farmers from Illinois--resided in Broward County in the late 1910s and early 1920s. At right is another unidentified family group.





Here an unidentified lady and two children pose near the banks of a peaceful stream--perhaps New River?



Only a broken fragment of the glass negative preserves this unusual pose. Was the man a local athlete, a touring boxer or wrestler, or perhaps the circus strongman?



This is one of two photos in the collection depicting uniformed Coast Guardsmen. The Coast Guard took over the old House of Refuge on Fort Lauderdale beach in 1917. During the 1920s, the station they established there was enlarged to become Base Six, which remained in operation until after World War II.



The different poses, draped clothing and empty background of this photo make it unique in the Mullikin collection, but no explanation of its origin or subjects is given.