

HIGHLIGHTS — CLASS OF 1923

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

by Gertrude Boyd

The outstanding achievements of the class of '23 did not suddenly become evident in the spring of 1923. They really began in the year 1911-1912, which was the first school year for the class graduating from Fort Lauderdale High School in 1923. Each year we built on the foundation of the preceding year. Throughout our twelve years in the Fort Lauderdale schools, we had some very good teachers. We also learned with inexperienced teachers who really knew us and our families.

In 1911 our first grade attended Central School on South Andrews Avenue near South Fifth Street. This building was the first full-sized school in Fort Lauderdale. It was built in 1910, when Fort Lauderdale was still part of Dade County.

Out of a large first grade in 1911, Carl Philip Weidling and I are the only members who can boast of surviving twelve years in the public schools of Fort Lauderdale and graduating in 1923. Carl Philip, or Junie, as we knew him, started off on the right foot by entering school in September. His family came by train from Tiffin, Ohio. In Tiffin, they took a horse-drawn taxi to the railroad station. In Dania, a dray wagon brought their trunks from the railroad station to the house. They moved to Fort Lauderdale after living in Dania a short time.

School was a major adjustment for me in 1911. I had been the baby of the family for five years before my brother John William, or Bill, was born. Then, in the middle of October, I was placed in a large class of my peers who had already learned the rudiments of read-

ing, writing, and school routines. In addition, we had come from Kansas City, Missouri, where we had gas house and street lights, paved streets and sidewalks, and streetcars for transportation. In Kansas City, the school served hot soup on cold days. In Florida, we had kerosene lamps and lanterns. The streets were white Ojus rock. We walked to school and carried a sack lunch.

The teachers had little time to teach me what everyone else already knew. With the help of my older sisters and some of my classmates, I soon managed to recognize words from the wiggly lines on the pages of McGuffey's readers. Catching up with other class members made me feel less like a misfit, and I looked forward to going to school every day.

Our teachers were Fannie Bessant Bryan, wife of Frank Bryan, and Jean Bessant Oliver, wife of D. D. Oliver. Both women had taught before they were married. As I recall, grades one and two were in one room. There was so little room that two pupils used one desk or crowded around tables. If there was space, we sat on the floor.

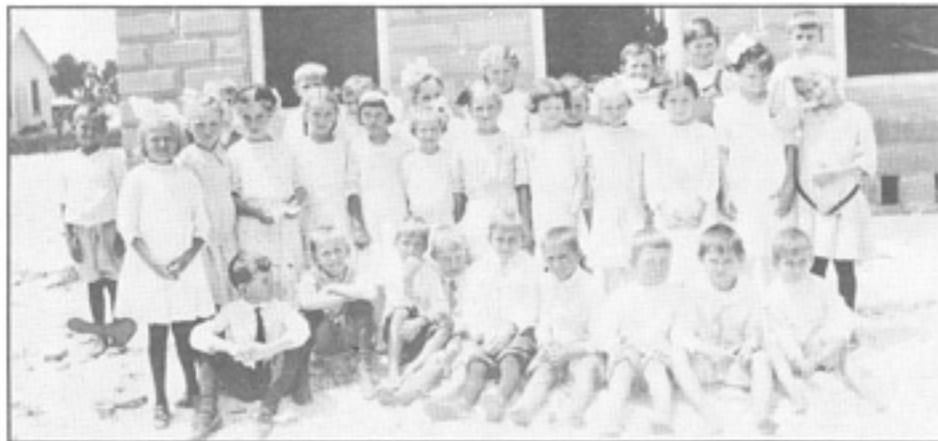
In the third grade, Eleanor King Smith drilled us on the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic. At this time she was a senior in high

fey's readers. Catching up with other class members made me feel less like a misfit, and I looked forward to going to school every day.

Shortly after arriving by train with her family in October, 1911, Gertrude Boyd began first grade at the old Fort Lauderdale School building on South Andrews Avenue (later Broward County's first courthouse). Graduating from Fort Lauderdale High School in 1923, she received her A.B. and M.S. degrees from Florida State University, and her Ed.D. degree from Colorado State University.

Following a long career in education, Dr. Boyd retired as Professor Emeritus at Arizona State University in 1972, and returned to Broward County. She currently makes her home in Plantation. She is the author of four books and numerous articles and bulletins on elementary education and language arts.

Through her many years as an educator, Dr. Boyd has retained clear and insightful memories of her own school days, which spanned the period between Fort Lauderdale's incorporation and the beginning of the 1920s land boom. Her reminiscences of the illustrious "Class of 1923" capture the flavor of childhood life and education in Fort Lauderdale during the 1910s and early 1920s.



Second grade class at the Fort Lauderdale school building on South Andrews Avenue, 1913. Gertrude Boyd is in center row standing sixth from left.

school. During that year she completed her high school courses. This seemed to be a common practice for several years when James S. Rickards was principal. My sister, Eleanor Boyd Miller, also taught third grade while continuing her high school courses.

In January 1914, Mark Mahannah entered our third grade class. His family came from Iowa by train, first stopping in Palm Beach. They moved to North Lauderdale, then known as Colohatchee.

After three years of local teachers, Mary MacGregor was hired. As I recall, she was from Canada. We soon were copying her clipped speech and clear enunciation. Geography was the new major subject in the fourth grade. Much time was devoted to learning the groups of states, capitals, largest cities, and principal rivers. For several years I tried to show off my new found knowledge. Sometimes family members were amazed; sometimes I was told such information was neither needed nor wanted.

I have no claim to fame in athletics. In the early grades the girls played jacks, marbles, and jump rope. In the upper grades Pop the Whip and Pom Pom Pull Away were popular. The boys played marbles, ball, and such physical endurance tests as wrestling. One year in high school I played running or side center in basketball.

During the year 1914-1915, the Fort Lauderdale High School building was completed at a cost of \$55,000. Among the items placed in the cornerstone were lists of names of all pupils enrolled in school. The lists were recovered when the building was torn down in 1970. The fourth grade list included forty-three names, twenty-seven of whom were boys. The ratio of boys to girls each year explains, in part, the discipline problems encountered by the

series of women teachers. Of the forty-three pupils listed in the spring of 1915, seven completed high school in 1923. These were: Gertrude Boyd, Editha Perala, Willis Johnson, Mark Mahannah, Carl Olander, Carl Philip Weidling, and Frank White. Four of the forty-three graduated in 1922 by completing the seventh grade during summer school. These were: Charlotte Farrington, Inez Reed, Robert Mathews, and Henry Marshall. Tony Tommie, a Seminole Indian, was listed among our fourth graders. Hugo Dichtenmueller entered Fort Lauderdale schools in the fifth grade. His family came by train from North Dakota.

The new Fort Lauderdale High School building housed both high and elementary school pupils. As fifth grad-

FORT LAUDERDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.	
<small>TEACHERS</small> C. D. HOFFMANN E. J. ALLEN L. W. CALDWELL <small>PRINCIPAL</small> JAMES S. RICKARDS	Fourth Grade Teacher - Mary MacGregor
Editha Adams	Carl Scholt
Gertrude Boyd	Charles Gordon
Mary Davidson	Wilburn Houser
Essie Abcher	John Hall
Charlotte Farrington	Willie Johnson
Winifred Fisher	Kenneth Kitchell
Alice Fisher	Robert Mathews
Frances Linton	Eugene Kitchell
Janice M. Lendon	John Kennedy
Rossie Newton	Harold Knopp
Sarah Gordon	Henry Marshall
Editha Perala	Mark Mahannah
Inez Reed	Earl Neal
Irene Randal	Carl Olander
Helen Steele	Rudolf Rode
Ora Woods	Raymond Reinhart
Walter Anderson	Maven Spear
Samuel Barrett	John Sprigg
Clarence Forbes	Edward Savage
George Foust	Tony Tommie
Chauncey Young	Carl Weidling
	Frank White

This roll of the fourth grade class (the graduating class of 1923) was placed in the cornerstone of the new Fort Lauderdale Central School when it was constructed in 1915.



Fort Lauderdale Central High School, 1915-1962.

ers, we attended the "new school," which stood where the Landmark Bank building now stands [the property bordered by Broward Boulevard, Federal Highway One, Southeast Second Street, and Southeast Third Avenue in downtown Fort Lauderdale]. Getting to school was a problem for the children in our family. We always had sack lunches and books to carry. Often getting a late start, we walked at a fast pace, sometimes running. We cut across an old cemetery to get from Southwest Ninth Street to Seventh. This was an area between the F.E.C. tracks and South Andrews Avenue. Later, during a period of rapid expansion in Fort Lauderdale, these two blocks were used as a campground for families who had not found a house to live in. Several years later, South Side School was built here.

Mrs. William Kimmel found fifth graders hard to control. She was not well, and, as an aid in keeping order, the shades were drawn and we spent the year speaking in soft tones and straining to see the chalkboard in the semi-darkness. It is not exactly clear what particular things we learned that year, but we were well prepared for sixth grade. There we had a light, airy room, and Mattie Baker for a teacher. Mrs. Baker taught with a firm, demanding voice and willow switches. We crammed more facts and worked diligently preparing materials for the county fair. Mark Mahannah relates with wry nostalgia that Mrs. Baker often sent Tony Tommie to the creek near the school to cut the willow switches. Tony often cut notches so the switches broke easily.

Another new year brought a teacher from out-of-state, a Miss Neal with beautiful red hair and a temper to match. In the seventh grade, boys were as large or larger than the teacher. We

were patriotic—we sang "America" or "The Star Spangled Banner," followed by the salute to the flag. We probably recited the Lord's Prayer, as a few fanatics had not begun to dictate the activities of the many at that time. The girls learned to sew and cook with Myra McIlvaine Marshall, and the boys made useful articles, such as bird-houses and cutting boards, in manual training with William Kimmel.

The eighth grade was a joy — Miss Holbrook came into our lives. She was a small woman, not much larger than I, with a ready smile and a sense of learning together which we had not experienced before. We tried to live up to her



Tony Tommie (right) with Edith Lewis, c. 1915, the year he entered the first grade at the Fort Lauderdale school. He was the first Seminole Indian on the east coast of Florida to attend a white school, and advanced rapidly, reaching the fourth grade before the year was over.

expectations. We all were in an operetta, and also sang at our grade school graduation exercises.

We began our first year of the four-year high school program in the fall of 1919. All four classes assembled in a large study hall each morning. Morning devotionals were a must. The first semester of one year the principal exhausted the topic "Keep your heart with all diligence," and the second semester we endured "For out of it are the issues of life."

Having a different teacher for each subject created greater interest. There were few choices. Some of us completed four years of history, English, math, and Latin. Other courses offered included Spanish, French, science, industrial arts, and business.

During our sophomore year we had two or three different teachers for English. During the second semester, a local minister, Dr. [R. D.] Tracy [of All Saints Episcopal Church], was hired. Our text became the *Saturday Evening Post*. In retrospect, I am amazed that we were allowed to abandon the textbook in favor of a weekly magazine which was just beginning to be widely read in our community. But this magazine, costing us five cents each week, worked a miracle to whet the jaded interest of restless sophomores. We studied grammar by noting good sentence construction. We learned how short stories, editorials, and articles based on facts were organized. By



Graduation portrait of Gertrude Boyd, 1923.

using current materials we became interested in learning the fundamentals of our English language. For years I looked forward each week to reading about the fishing escapades created by Philip Wylie for his two main characters, Des and Crunch.

After analyzing current writing for unity, coherence, and emphasis, English and American literature, with extensive descriptive passages and long, involved sentences, was boring. Getting ready for finals during our junior and senior years required memorizing the table of contents. What a contrast to the previous year!

School spirit was high for our basketball and track teams. We practiced yells and sang the "Flying L" song with gusto. The melody was from the University of Illinois, but the words were the first school song for our high school. This song, with some changes, is still used.

Our class took honors in athletics, especially in our senior year, but we also achieved in other areas. On the lighter side, we participated in plays and operettas. The Literary Society was organized in our sophomore year. We became acquainted with plays and other literature suitable for reading aloud. About half the class sang in the Glee Club or chorus one or more years, thus providing a nucleus of singers for operettas and plays. Marston Bates played cornet in the orchestra for four years. Frances Coleman and Berniece Albertson played violin.

Nothing But the Truth, by James Montgomery, was our senior class play. Philip Weidling had the lead with eleven other characters, which included four of our star athletes: Mark

Mahannah, John Burwell, Carl Olander, and Willis Johnson. We raised \$250.00 on tickets which probably sold for fifty cents. This money was our gift to Fort Lauderdale High.

The Radio Fair Committee was started in our sophomore year. John Burwell was executive chairman. Among the other active committee members were Evelyn Fritz, Robert Blakely, and Winfred Stilwell.

During our senior year, the Dramatics Club presented three one-act plays under the stage title "The Masqueraders." Evelyn Fritz, Ruth Teal Dichtenmueller, and Philip Weidling distinguished themselves in the Freudian comedy **Suppressed Desires**, by Gaspell.

The debating teams were organized by Carl Hiaasen. For the tri-county debating meet, three 1923 seniors presented the affirmative side of the topic "Resolved — That the United States should own and operate the coal mines of our country." Marston Bates, Evelyn Fritz, and I won the championship at the White Memorial Temple in Miami. Fort Lauderdale High School won the negative side of this topic at our high school auditorium, debating against West Palm Beach High School. The champions for the negative side were: Maude Flowers Cason, Winifred Dalquist Smith, sophomores; and Delmar Portwood, freshman.

Other medals were also won. In 1921 Editha Perala won a mathematics medal, and I won an English medal. The following year Ruth Teal Dichtenmueller and Cecil Turner won recitation medals.

Late in our senior year we received the first charter for a Broward County school for membership in the National Honor Society. Among those accepted were: Marston Bates, Evelyn Fritz, and Gertrude Boyd.

The first "Flying L" was published by our class. Almost half the class worked on the annual. This book, consisting of fifty pages, cannot compete with the streamlined, professional annuals coming from the Fort Lauderdale high schools today. But for the year 1923 it was quite a feat. Unlike the class of 1919, whose class will, prophecy, and history were published in the local paper, **The Sentinel**, our annual is in permanent form for all posterity to peruse. The Class of 1924 found getting out an annual required more planning and work than they were willing to give. They settled for a short booklet.

After graduating from high school, individuals continued to achieve. We can boast of one Ph.D., one Ed.D., three masters, and at least five bachelors degrees. Our scholars also have published books, pamphlets, and articles to their credit.

From these firsts and outstanding achievements of the class of 1923, well . . .

As you can clearly see
The Class of Nineteen Twenty-three
Could rest on its high school laurels.

But over the last sixty-four years
or more
Each member has added to the score
As homemakers, writers, teachers,
businessmen
Continue to strive to reach a star.



Students, and one teacher, from the Fort Lauderdale High School Class of 1923, photographed at a 1978 reunion. Standing (left to right): Philip Weidling, Mark Mahannah, Hugo Dichtenmueller, Carl Olander. Seated (left to right): Marion Hill, former teacher Carl A. Hiaasen, Gertrude Boyd.