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# Boynton Beach awarded grant to help document city's black history



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**T**here's a lot that's unknown when it comes to Boynton Beach's black history.

City officials say that much of the city's African-American history has remained undocumented, but a \$32,492 grant from the National Park Service will help the city create an interactive website focusing on the city's African-American and Bohemian past.

"There's little black history included in the published books," said Warren Adams, the city's historic preservation planner. "We have almost no information on the black history of Boynton Beach. The history deserves to be recognized."

Adams is encouraging residents to contact the city with any pictures or information to help resolve that.

"The most important thing to stress is that the community has the information," Adams said.

In the early 1900s, "Boynton Colored Town" was a thriving community with a downtown, schools, churches and its own city council, started by Robert E. Wells, a farmer from the Bahamas.

The township spanned between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to the south, the C. Stanley Weaver Canal to the north, North Seacrest Boulevard to the west, and the FEC railroad tracks to the east.

Adams said he applied for the grant after spending a year meeting with the Rev. Bernard Wright, a descendant of Wells, and Victor Norfus, a local historian.

Wright and Adams first began talking about Wells over a year ago. It led them to documents that showed Wells in 1890 traveled from the Bahamas to what would become Boynton Beach to farm pineapples.

Wells became active in the community and helped start St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church — the city's oldest church and Boynton Colored School, now known as Poinciana Elementary.

Last year, former mayor Jerry Taylor named Feb. 7 as Robert E. Wells Day and noted him as "an original signatory of the documents to incorporate Boynton as a town," Taylor said.

"The Wells family name is well-known and respected throughout the Bahamas, and we're happy to have it associated with our city."

Commissioner Mack McCray said that he hopes other families come forward and document their piece of Boynton Beach history. "We have a lot of information that needs to be told," he said. "It's not just about one family, it's about all the families."

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