

Henry W. Boyker



HENRY W. BOYKER (1878-1961) Mr. Boyker was born in Casco, Me., September 7, 1878, the son of William P. and Imogene Boyker. He was educated in the schools of Saco and graduated from Thornton Academy.

Mr. Boyker married Miss Gertrude Bailey and they have three daughters, Mrs. Raymond Holt, Mrs. Phillip Faudi and Miss Marilyn Boyker.

Mr. Boyker played on the All Maine Interscholastic football teams in 1895-6-7, and was a volunteer in the Spanish-American War in 1898. He served as a Private in Co G, 1st Regt of Maine Infantry.

For several years he was employed in hospital work and this experience renders him a valuable aid oftentimes in emergency illness among his friends and neighbors.

He came to Bethel in 1912 and was employed in various capacities. He worked in the stores of Irving L. Carver and L.W. Ramsdell. From 1922 to 1926 he was in the Bethel National Bank.

For four years he was chairman of the Board of Selectman of Bethel, and gave of his best in the service of the town.

He served the district two terms as representative to the Legislature and two terms as state senator. He was an unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1952.

Mr. Boyker became well known for his successful attempt to start the investigation of the October 1937 murder of Dr. James Littlefield in what became known as the Carroll-Dwyer murder case and his objections to Carroll's release from prison. (Carroll and Dwyer were both convicted of the crime.) In 1951 Senator Boyker led the opposition to granting compensation for his imprisonment to Carroll.

In legislature he was a supporter of "pay as we go" policies and an active opponent of the sales tax.

The Boykers had a summer home on Paradise Road called Camp Lookout.

Mr. Boyker had the reputation as clever gardener— his strawberries and raspberries were the earliest and best.

For 25 years, (1936 –1961), he and Mrs. Boyker owned and operated ***Bethaven Inn.***

Bethaven has perhaps the most interesting history of all the inn's in Bethel due to its connection with the Bethel Fair, and the history of its earlier owners.



BETHAVEN as it appeared in 1931. Note the automobiles parked in the vicinity of the flagpole. In 1931 Bethaven was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Clemens. Mr. Clemens' fame was as a "Puppetmaster". The Clemens called their inn "Bethhaven"

Henry Boyker and the Bethel Fair 1930-1934

Six years before the Boykers owned "Bethaven Inn", the former Mason homestead; Henry Boyker invested considerable money and energy in bringing the Bethel Fair and the fairgrounds into an operating reality.

Mrs. Yvonne Nowlin wrote about Henry Boyker's interest and investment in a three year effort to bring back into being a Bethel Fair of the kind known in the late 1890's and early 1900's.

In late 1930 Henry Boyker purchased the "fair grounds" property from Newell Godwin, but not the Mason farm buildings. Mr. Boyker had also become president of a newly organized Bethel Fair group.

The next spring, 1932, Henry Boyker had the "fair grounds" barn moved to its present (2012) location from a position just west of the (much enlarged) Mason house. This barn had originally been part of the Chapman Homestead farm in Gilead and had been moved to Bethel by William Rogers Chapman while he owned the Mason homestead and fair grounds property.



1982 photo

Former Chapman barn after being moved from Gilead to Bethel and then moved again

"Boyker also built a high board fence around the fairgrounds, constructed new bleachers and laid out an outdoor dance floor for the upcoming fair. While extra stalls were being built in the relocated barn (for the large number of horses entered in the track events), improvements were going on at the track itself, and a new baseball diamond was being developed. Indeed, Henry Boyker had major plans for "Old Riverside Park."

During this period of improvement to the fairgrounds, Paul Clemens owned the former Mason house and barn where he ran his "Marionette Theater" and other puppet related business. In a 1931 Special Edition of the Oxford County Citizen issued to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the 1781 Indian Raid at Bethel, Mr. and Mrs. Clemens were written up as operating "Bethaven" documenting use of the name "Bethaven" well before the Boykers bought the inn in 1936.

In 1932 fair association officers were elected to put plans for a fall fair into motion. They were president, Henry Boyker (the owner of the fairgrounds); vice-president, D. Grover Brooks; secretary, Clarence W. Hall; and treasurer, Tom I. Brown. This group decided to adopt the name "Riverside Park Association". In February 1933 Mr. Boyker lost the roof of his exhibit hall to heavy snow and had to rebuild. After other set-backs, the fair opened in September but only drew a small lack-luster crowd.

Mr. Boyker and his supporters organized a 1934 fair which was to open October 13th but a heavy snowstorm followed by rain ended the prospects of having a fair that year. It was the last time Henry Boyker attempted a fair on his grounds in Mayville.

The Bethel Agricultural Fair and Riverside Park by Yvonne Nowlin, 1984 and 1985, The Bethel Courier of the Bethel Historical Society

Henry Boyker was a member of the Masonic lodge, plus the Grange, fish and game association, and a charter member of the Bethel Lions Club.

In 1945 when a group of Bethel men expressed interest in developing an airport and formed the Bethel Airport Corporation, Henry Boyker and Fred L. Edwards together donated the 225 acres of land needed for the runway and service area.

In a 1951 Portland Press Herald article about debate about liquor sales in Maine Senator Boyker (R-Bethel) was quoted as saying "Maine is in the rum business and is inviting people to drink, but let's keep Sunday apart."

Henry Boyker died March 5, 1961. He was survived by his wife Gertrude Bailey Boyker who died August 9, 1974. Both are buried in Riverside Cemetery.

Postscript:

In 1952, Senator Boyker's daughter, Mrs. Muriel Faudi, moved to Bethel, Maine where she resided until her death in October 1999. Mrs. Faudi was actively involved in the Bethel United Methodist Church, acting as Lay Leader for two years, interim Pastor, Church Missions, Bible Study class for 17 years, Pastor Parish Relations Committee, President, Bethel United Methodist Women, eight years, Chair, Worship Committee, five years, Prayer and Self-denial Coordinator, two years and Friday Gift Shop Sales, 15 years. In 1994, Mrs. Faudi was recognized among outstanding church women. She helped institute the meal site in 1993 and was chair for the 100th Anniversary Celebration. Mrs. Faudi served as President for the Bethel Senior Citizens for 10 years, was Sunshine Chair for six years, member of the Bethel Historical Society, was Rotary Award Recipient for outstanding service to the community and was call-in for the Pine Tree Transit Bus for 15 years.

In December 1960, I was stationed in Cleveland after being in Germany for the previous three Christmases. My mother had been laid up with arthritis much of that winter. My father made arrangements with Gertrude Boyker to roast a turkey plus put together a platter of traditional Christmas dinner vegetables for us. I got time off and drove to Bethel . We had a wonderful feast together. In March Henry Boyker died and in July my father passed away. It turned out that we had had our last Christmas together. DGB

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