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**George Mathews and John McKee:**

**Revolutionizing East Florida, Mobile, and  
Pensacola in 1812**

J. C. A. Stagg 269

**The Women of the Early Florida Audubon  
Society: Agents of History in the Fight to  
Save State Birds**

Leslie Kemp Poole 297

**Fish On: Pensacola's Red Snapper Fishery**

Jason T. Raupp 324

Book Reviews 342

End Notes 364

Cover Illustration: The cover illustration is a photograph of Katherine Bell Tippetts, "The Florida Bird Woman," who was founder and president (1909-1940) of the St. Petersburg Audubon Society and the first female president (1920) of the Florida Audubon Society. Photograph courtesy of the *Florida State Archives*.

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## Book Reviews

- Higginbotham, *Revolution in America: Considerations and Comparisons*, by Matthew R. Hale . . . . . 342
- Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*, by John David Smith . . . 345
- Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development*, by Sean Patrick Adams . . . . . 348
- Phillips and Glunt, eds., *Florida Plantation Records From the Papers of George Noble Jones* and  
Megginson, *African American Life in South Carolina's Upper Piedmont, 1780-1900*, by Mark R. Cheatham . . . . . 350
- Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America*, by George B. Crawford . . . . . 352
- Lau, *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865* and  
Grose, *South Carolina at the Brink: Robert McNair and the Politics of Civil Rights*, by Edward J. Robinson . . . . . 355
- Eidse, *Voices of the Apalachicola*, by Sean McMahon . . 359
- Fernández and Ingalls, *Sunshine in the Dark: Florida in the Movies*, by Spencer Downing . . . . . 361

## George Mathews and John McKee: Revolutionizing East Florida, Mobile, and Pensacola in 1812

By J.C.A. Stagg

It has become conventional to regard the East Florida revolution of 1812 as a singularly colorful and controversial episode in the history of the early republic. Its colorful aspects have lent themselves to the writing of fast-paced narratives that make for good reading because its organizers—United States government agents George Mathews and John McKee—brought to the performance of their duties roughly equal proportions of outright illegality, low intrigue, and not a little incompetence. The revolution they staged has always been controversial because it has been difficult to escape the conclusion that it embodied the desire of the administration of James Madison to enlarge the nation by actively subverting the Spanish regime in East Florida.<sup>1</sup> It is now reasonably clear that the actions of Mathews and McKee in Florida and on the Gulf Coast between 1810 and 1812 departed far more from the policies of the administration than they fairly reflected them.

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J.C.A. Stagg is a professor in the Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia and editor-in-chief of the Papers of James Madison. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following in the preparation of this article: Jean Bauer, Bob Cason, James G. Cusick, Kenneth A. Lockridge, and Sarah Marshall.

1. The classic study is Rembert W. Patrick's *Florida Fiasco: Rampant Rebels on the Georgia-Florida Border 1810-1815* (Athens, GA, 1954). It should be supplemented with James G. Cusick's *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Gainesville, FL, 2003). For a more popular and dramatic account, see Joseph B. Smith, *The Plot to Steal Florida: James Madison's Phony War* (New York, NY, 1983).

If that is the case, then how might historians explain why the president's agents behaved in ways for which they lacked authorization?<sup>2</sup> Were they simply carried away by an excess of zeal in their efforts to secure East Florida for the United States or were there other factors that influenced their conduct as well? And might those other factors have had some bearing on the decision of the administration to repudiate the revolution in April 1812? New light can be thrown on these questions by some hitherto neglected evidence, principally an unknown letter written by William Harris Crawford to Mathews and some previously unexamined correspondence between Mathews and McKee.<sup>3</sup> Considered together, these sources make it possible to present a very different picture of the East Florida revolution than the one with which we are now familiar.

The first step on the road to the revolution that started on Amelia Island in March 1812 occurred on 20 June 1810 when Secretary of State Robert Smith requested Crawford, the senior United States Senator from Georgia, to find an agent to go into East Florida for the purpose of gathering information on "the several parties in the Country" and to spread the administration's message that should the local settlers declare their independence from Spain, "their incorporation into our Union would coincide with the sentiments and policy of the United States."<sup>4</sup> Historians have always assumed that Crawford selected Mathews for this task without difficulty and that the agent then began to orchestrate a revolution in accordance with the instructions he received from the senator.<sup>5</sup> Crawford's hitherto unknown response to Smith's

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2. For an extended discussion of the relevant historiographical issues, see J.C.A. Stagg, "James Madison and George Mathews: The East Florida Revolution of 1812 Reconsidered," *Diplomatic History* 30 [2006]: 23-55.
  3. The letter by William Harris Crawford was one he wrote to Robert Smith on 27 July 1810 (Miscellaneous Mss, Robert Smith, Library of Congress). His identity as the author has remained unknown because Crawford omitted to sign the letter before sealing it. The letters between Mathews and McKee can be found in the John McKee Papers, Library of Congress. No study of the East Florida revolution has ever cited this collection, perhaps because its contents, having been badly damaged by fire, are very difficult to read and cannot, in all cases, be fully deciphered.
  4. Smith to Crawford, 20 June 1810, Domestic Letters of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives.
  5. See, for example, Patrick, *Florida Fiasco*, 3, 7; and Smith, *The Plot to Steal Florida*, 69-70, 78-79 where Smith remarks that "no document exists that tells what circumstances threw George Mathews into William Crawford's way, or explains specifically how it was that Mathews understood the president's view so well."

letter of 20 June tells a different story, however. The senator did not read the letter until 23 July and his first reaction was to report that he could think of no-one in the southeastern counties of Georgia who might be willing to undertake the assignment, and certainly not to risk their health in Florida "at this season of the year." And because the matter was of "so much importance and delicacy," Crawford believed that it was "absolutely necessary" for him "to see and converse with the man to be employed" before he could make a decision.

The senator's difficulties were not resolved until he received an unexpected visit from George Mathews, a former three-term governor of Georgia (1787-88 and 1793-96), who since that time had moved to Mississippi Territory where he led, as Crawford remarked, "an erratic life."<sup>6</sup> After Crawford had sounded him out, Mathews eagerly embraced the mission, not only because he agreed with the administration's view that East Florida should become part of the United States but also because he was bound for Florida anyway to purchase "a tract of country . . . in the vicinity of St Marks" from John Forbes and Company, the British firm of Indian traders whose agents had been operating in the borderlands under license from Spain since 1783.<sup>7</sup> Crawford did not provide the State Department with any additional details about Mathews's proposed purchase, but it is reasonable to assume that if the tract indeed was located near St. Marks that it would have been carved out of the grants of land the Lower Creeks and Seminole Indians had made to John Forbes personally between 1804 and 1810. Forbes had received these grants in return for the assistance he had rendered to the Indians in facilitating land sales to the United States that paid off their tribal debts. Forbes

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6. There is no biography of Mathews, but see G. Melvin Herndon, "George Mathews: Frontier Patriot," *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* 77 [1969]: 307-28. Mathews had harbored unsuccessful ambitions to become territorial governor of Mississippi, and throughout his life he was frequently involved in land speculation, including the Yazoo land frauds of the 1790s in Georgia when, as governor, "he outdid all of his predecessors in signing illegal land warrants" (see C. Peter Magrath, *Yazoo: Law and Politics in the New Republic: The Case of Fletcher v. Peck* [Providence, RI, 1966], 3, 6, 7).
  7. Crawford to Smith, 27 July 1810. For the history of John Forbes and Company, see Arthur P. Whitaker, *Documents relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas, with incidental reference to Louisiana* (Deland, FL, 1931) and William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola, FL, 1986).

intended to sell parts of his grants to speculators and to settle other portions of them with immigrants, some of whom were to be drawn from the Loyalist community in the Bahamas and others who were to come from Europe, including Forbes's homeland of Scotland. He may also have contemplated bringing in slaves as well.<sup>8</sup> To secure these grants, Forbes sought confirmation of his title from the Spanish authorities, who gave it subject to the proviso that he could not alienate land from them without their "express consent."<sup>9</sup>

How much progress Mathews made with John Forbes when he visited Florida in the late summer and fall of 1810 is difficult to determine. Neither the personal papers of Forbes nor the records of his company throw any light on that problem.<sup>10</sup> All that can be said is that Crawford informed Smith that Mathews would go first to Pensacola in West Florida—where he probably intended to sign a contract with the Forbes agent John Innerarity, Jr.—after which he would meet with the Spanish governor, Juan Vicente Folch, from whom he would "procure letters of recommendation to the governor, and principal men of East Florida" prior to seeking them out in St. Augustine some time after mid-September 1810.<sup>11</sup> It is also reasonable to assume that Mathews might have hoped to obtain the consent of the governor of East Florida, Enrique White, for any land transactions he was planning with Forbes. Events did not go according to plan, however. Mathews never reached Pensacola where his entry to the town was prevented "by the prevalence of a contagious fever."

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8. Forbes sketched out his vision for the future of Florida in his 1804 *Description of the Spanish Floridas* (William S. Coker, ed., Pensacola, FL, 1979), 19-34. For additional details, see Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 248-53, and also James F. Doster, *The Creek Indians and Their Florida Lands 1740-1823*, 2 vols. (New York, NY, 1974), 1: 275-96. On Forbes's attempts to settle his grants in 1810, see Alexander H. Gordon to John Innerarity, Jr., 1, 8 September 1810 in William S. Coker, comp., *The Papers of Panton, Leslie, and Company* (microfilm edition; 26 rolls, Woodbridge, CT, 1986), roll 18; and also John C. Upchurch, "Aspects of the Development and Exploration of the Forbes Purchase," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 48 [1969]: 120-21.
  9. See the documents printed in Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, comps., *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative, and Executive, of the Congress of the United States*, 38 vols. (Washington, DC, 1834-56), *Public Lands* 4: 163-66.
  10. The papers of John Forbes are deposited in the Mobile Public Library. For the company papers, see Coker, *The Papers of Panton, Leslie, and Company*.
  11. Crawford to Smith, 27 July 1810.



He did, nevertheless, meet with Folch in Mobile, only to learn that the governor had no interest in discussing schemes for the transfer of Florida to the United States.<sup>12</sup> That being the case, it is unlikely that Mathews obtained the letters of recommendation he desired. Even so, he pressed on to St. Augustine where he attempted to meet with White. He was dissuaded from doing so by Andrew Atkinson, the son of a prominent South Carolina planter and merchant residing on the St. Johns River, who told the agent that if he ever opened his mouth to White, he would “die in chains in the Moro Castle” (in Havana) and “all the devils in hell” would not be able to save him.<sup>13</sup> Despite that setback, Mathews, while he was in East Florida, implemented the instructions he had received from Crawford to the extent of holding conversations with some leading settlers he believed sympathetic to his mission.<sup>14</sup> He then traveled to Washington to report his findings.

Arriving in the nation’s capital in January 1811, Mathews met with John McKee, formerly a United States agent to the Choctaw Indians, who had just made an urgent trip from Mobile in December 1810 to deliver letters from Folch to the administration. The governor, who had earlier refused to discuss the future of Florida with Mathews, had changed his mind following the successful revolt of the American settlers at Baton Rouge in September 1810. He now feared that the remaining Spanish outposts in West Florida, Mobile and Pensacola, were about to be overwhelmed by filibusters and he offered to surrender those places to the United States, provided the administration would guarantee the integrity of the province as a whole against the encroachments of the rebels.<sup>15</sup> On learning of Folch’s offer, Smith proposed that Mathews be sent back to the Gulf Coast to negotiate with the governor and that McKee accompany him as his

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12. Crawford to Smith, 1 November 1810, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives.

13. See the testimony of George J. F. Clarke in *United States vs Francisco and Peter Pons*, Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts of the General Accounting Office, RG 217, claim no. 73, 347, National Archives.

14. Clarke to Enrique White, 7 January 1811, East Florida Papers, bundle 198C16 (microfilm edition), Library of Congress.

15. Folch’s letters to the State Department are printed in *American State Papers: Foreign Relations*, 3: 398-99. For a recent account of the West Florida rebellion, see David A. Bice, *The Original Lone Star Republic: Scoundrels, Statesmen & Schemers of the 1810 West Florida Rebellion* (Clanton, AL, 2004).

secretary.<sup>16</sup> The prudent provision for McKee's services may have resulted from Crawford's July 1810, warning to the State Department that the "orthography" of Mathews was "proverbial among us" and that to provide him with a personal secretary might have been the easiest way for the administration to obtain "a Key" to his forceful, but unorthodox, writing style.<sup>17</sup> McKee rejected this assignment. Reporting back to James Innerarity (brother of John) in Mobile, he penned a letter, dripping with sarcasm, that described how the "flattering" reception he had met with in the capital might have led a man "of more ambition & credulity" than himself "to expect great things" before he bluntly told his hosts that "money" was "the subject of [his] story." If he received "enough of that," he wrote, the administration could keep its "honors for those who are more ambitious of them."<sup>18</sup>

What might McKee have meant by such remarks? Aside from the fact that he disdained the role of a mere secretary, they suggest, at the very least, that his immediate priority was to obtain reimbursement for the sum of \$500 he had expended on the hire of horses and the protection of a soldier while traveling from the Gulf Coast to deliver Folch's letters to Washington.<sup>19</sup> In the longer run, though, McKee's goal was to regain some form of public employment, preferably as agent to the Choctaw Indians, from which position he had been removed by the Jefferson administration in 1802, possibly for suspected involvement in the Blount Conspiracy of 1797.<sup>20</sup> Since then, McKee had been engaged in a

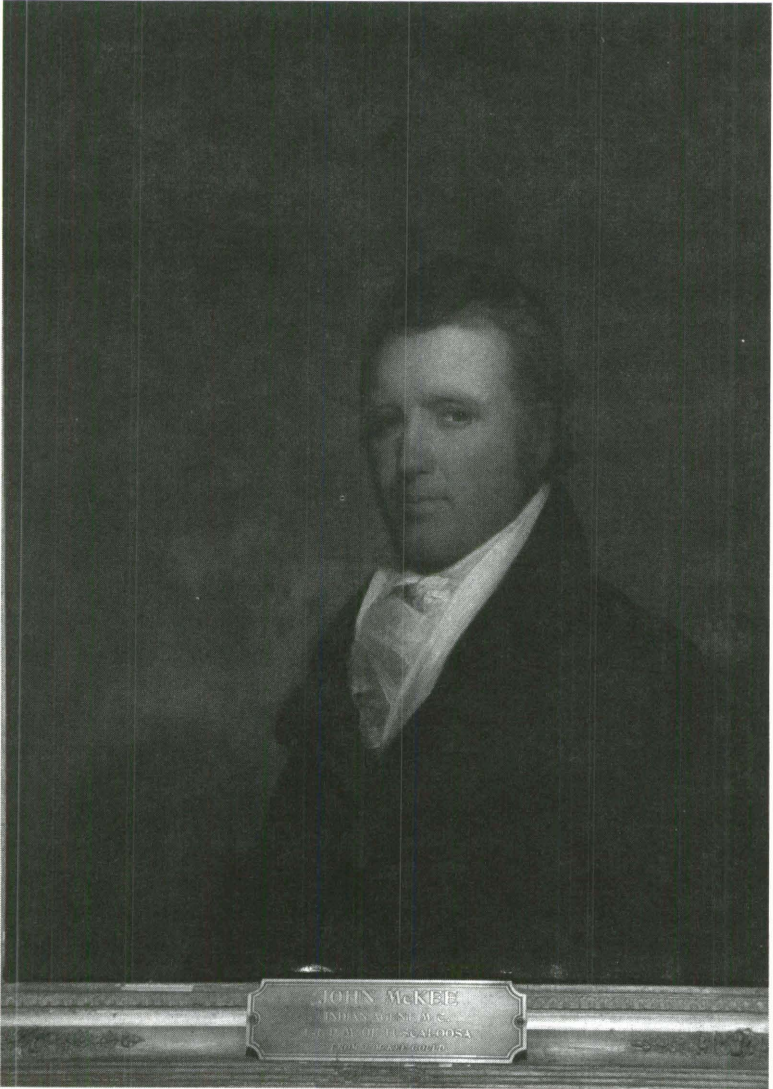
16. See Smith to James Madison, [17 January 1811], Robert A. Rutland et al, eds., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series*, 5 vols to date (Charlottesville, VA, 1984-2004), 3: 122-23.

17. Crawford to Smith, 27 July 1810. Ralph Isaacs was eventually appointed as a secretary for Mathews.

18. McKee to James Innerarity, 17 January 1811, printed in the *Florida Historical Quarterly* 16 [1937]: 130.

19. On 28 January 1811 McKee submitted a request to the State Department seeking reimbursement for \$500.00. The Secretary of State approved the payment (see McKee to Smith, 28 January 1811, Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts of the General Accounting Office, claim no. 26, 533).

20. For McKee's removal, see Henry Dearborn to John McKee, 21 May 180[2], McKee Papers. The standard authorities on the Blount conspiracy—William H. Masterson, *William Blount* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1954) and Buckner F. Melton, *The First Impeachment: The Constitution's Framers and the Case of Senator William Blount* (Macon, GA, 1998)—make no mention of McKee, but the contents of a surviving folder of his correspondence with Blount in the McKee Papers leaves no doubt that the agent was closely involved in every aspect of Blount's affairs.



Portrait of John McKee painted by William E. West. *Image courtesy of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.*

variety of enterprises, including acting at times as a representative of John Forbes and Company to the Choctaw Indians, and he had also contemplated forming partnerships with Forbes to purchase Indian lands on the Apalachicola River with the “special

permission & authority of the Spanish Government.”<sup>21</sup> For those reasons, it was not altogether surprising that McKee, after his arrival in Washington, informed James Innerarity that he had written to Forbes while en route to the capital and had received a reply from him, sent from Charleston. Forbes’s letter from Charleston has not been found, but it seems clear McKee hoped that Forbes would come on to Washington, presumably to discuss business matters of mutual interest with him and the administration.<sup>22</sup>

Further to that point, McKee also mentioned to James Innerarity that he had “a few skirmishes” with members of the administration about the supposed “Anglocism” of his “house” before he succeeded in placing it in “a proper point of view,” namely that John Forbes and Company should be regarded as “honest peaceable English merchants & men of Honor above being intriguers or spies for any Government—and without any strong prejudices against ours.”<sup>23</sup> Mathews, presumably, would not have disagreed with that claim—after all he had his own plans for business with the company—but the administration may have been less concerned about the “Anglocism” of John Forbes and Company than McKee had feared. Despite the fact that the company was staffed by Loyalists and under contract to Spain, the earlier experiences of the Jefferson administration in its dealings with the Southern Indians had demonstrated that their indebtedness to the company was not necessarily a very serious problem. The easiest way for the Indians to repay their debts to Forbes was to make land cessions to the United States, and John Forbes himself had, on occasion, rendered important services to the administration in its treaty negotiations with the Southern tribes. Viewed in that light,

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21. Robert S. Cotterill, *The Southern Indians: The Story of the Civilized Tribes before Removal* (Norman, OK, 1954), 119, 148. See also “Memorandum for Col. McKee,” dated 16 June 1809 at Pensacola (Coker, *The Papers of Panton, Leslie, and Company*, roll 17). For evidence that McKee’s interest in lands on the Apalachicola included partnerships with Forbes, see James Innerarity to McKee, 2 August 1811, McKee Papers. Other letters from Innerarity to McKee, dated 6 November, 8 and 23 December 1811, are further proof of a close business relationship between McKee and Forbes (*ibid.*).

22. McKee to James Innerarity, 17 January 1811. It should be remembered that the Choctaws, like the Lower Creek and Seminole Indians, owed substantial debts to both the United States and to John Forbes and Company and that some of McKee’s business affairs may well have remained inextricably entangled with those of the Choctaw Nation (see Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 227-28, 271).

23. McKee to James Innerarity, 17 January 1811.

the company had been a useful instrument for American policy makers, and it was by no means impossible that its agents, in the event of any future conflict with Spain, could continue to play a positive role by helping to ensure the neutrality of Indian tribes that were still numerous and powerful along the southwestern frontier.<sup>24</sup>

There is no evidence that Forbes came to Washington as McKee had hoped, but there is no doubt that the administration was well apprised of their concerns when it decided, on 26 January 1811, to entrust Mathews and McKee with a joint mission to Folch to negotiate the agreement the governor had proposed in December 1810. That decision was also taken to give effect to the "No Transfer Resolution" passed by Congress on 15 January 1811, under the terms of which it became American policy not to acquiesce in the transfer of any Spanish-American territory to another European power. In the event of any attempted occupation of the Gulf Coast by such a power, the resolution, supplemented by subsequent legislation, gave Mathews and McKee authorization to preempt it by employing the armed forces to "pre-occupy" the territory in question. Alternatively, should any of the "local" authorities in the region offer to deliver their territory to the United States, the agents were permitted to accept it on behalf of the administration. The primary purpose of this policy was to ensure that the United States could take peaceable possession of all of West Florida after Folch had agreed to deliver it, but the agents also had the discretion to apply it to East Florida, should the circumstances there warrant it.<sup>25</sup>

As far as East Florida was concerned, though, it was not the intention of the administration that Mathews and McKee should organize a revolution to create a new "local authority" to deliver the province to the United States. The information Mathews brought to Washington in January 1811 made it clear that the local

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24. Cotterill, "A Chapter of Panton, Leslie, and Company," *Journal of Southern History* 10 [1944]: 275-92. One of the earliest advocates of the idea that the Southern Indians could redeem their debts to John Forbes and Company by selling land to the United States was, in fact, John McKee (see Dearborn to W.C.C. Claiborne, 11 June 1802, Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 1801-1816* [6 vols.; Jackson, MS, 1917], 1: 158-59).

25. Smith to Mathews and McKee, 26 January 1811, Domestic Letters of the Department of State. For the "No Transfer Resolution," see John A. Logan, Jr., *No Transfer: An American Security Principle* (New Haven, CT, 1961), 111-22.

settlers themselves believed they could accomplish this task once they had learned that Cádiz had fallen to the French armies that had been besieging it since February 1810. That development, should it occur, promised not only to end the resistance in Spain to the French invasion and the usurpation of Joseph Bonaparte but also to sever the last remaining link between metropolitan Spain and its American colonies. As these expectations came to pass, the administration assumed that the duties of the agents, along with those of the American army and navy forces on the north side of the St. Marys River, would be either to offer the East Florida rebels moral support—as they seized the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine “by surprise” as the means of staging their own revolution—or to prevent a foreign occupation by either France or Great Britain. But no matter what the circumstances proved to be, neither the settlers nor Mathews expected any serious resistance from the local authorities after the fall of Spain itself. As the latter reported to the State Department, Governor White could command only “about two hundred and fifty soldiers” in the entire province and there was no Spanish naval force to speak of.<sup>26</sup>

No part of these highly contingent schemes could be carried into effect. Cádiz never fell to France, and Folch, after receiving orders from Havana to defend his province to the last, reneged on the offer he had made through McKee in December 1810. There was nothing the agents could do when they met with him in March 1811 to persuade him otherwise.<sup>27</sup> In response, McKee retired to the U.S. military post of Fort Stoddert, just above the boundary line on the 31<sup>st</sup> parallel. There he reported on developments in the vicinity of Mobile Bay to the State Department for the next twelve months. Mathews, on the other hand, remained for a while in West Florida where he tried to gain a better understanding of Folch’s erratic behavior in the belief that the governor would eventually have no choice but to relinquish the province to him.

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26. For further discussion and documentation on these matters, see Stagg, “James Madison and George Mathews,” 35-36.

27. Folch to McKee, 27 February 1811, enclosed in Thomas H. Cushing to William Eustis, 4 March 1811, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, C-396 (5), RG 107, National Archives. See also Mathews and McKee to Folch, 22 March 1811, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, legajo 1569, Archivo General de Indias (copy in the Library of Congress) and Folch to Lieut. Col. Richard Sparks, 22 March 1811, McKee Papers.

Mathews also made a reconnaissance of the region in case the United States should have to undertake military operations there. At the same time, he did a little business by pursuing a claim to some "negroes" in whom he had an interest, but there is no evidence he attempted to secure the land that he had been contemplating purchasing from Forbes.<sup>28</sup> And after learning that Enrique White had died in St. Augustine in April 1811, Mathews, on 19 May, set out for St. Marys on the Florida-Georgia border where he arrived on 9 June. For the next two weeks, he was immobilized by illness, but when he had recovered sufficiently to resume his mission he found that the situation in East Florida was not what he had anticipated.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, almost every circumstance he had reported to the State Department at the beginning of the year was now changed.

One problem was that White's interim successor, Juan José Estrada, was no improvement on White. Not only was he not disposed to discuss the future of his province but he had also persuaded some of the potential rebels with whom Mathews had met in 1810, notably John Houstoun McIntosh and Fernando de la Maza Arredondo, to promise they would remain loyal to Spain.<sup>30</sup> That Cádiz had not yet fallen—and seemed unlikely to do so any time in the near future after the newspapers throughout June and July 1811 had reported a string of defeats for the French army in Spain—undoubtedly made this task easier for the governor.<sup>31</sup> Worse, Mathews received reports that Estrada might reinforce St. Augustine with a regiment of black troops supplied by Great Britain from Jamaica, and the agent feared that their arrival would strengthen Spanish authority to the point that it would become difficult for the local settlers to overthrow it. An equally serious blow to Mathews's hopes was that the local economy, stimulated in no small part by British merchants using St. Marys as a base to

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28. McKee to Smith, 10 April and 1 May 1811, Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida, RG 59, National Archives.

29. Mathews to James Monroe, 28 June 1811, Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida; and Ralph Isaacs to McKee, 28 June 1811, McKee Papers.

30. See the testimony of James Hall in *United States vs Francisco Xavier Sánchez*, Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts of the General Accounting Office, claim no. 74, 969.

31. See the reports of the French defeats in Spain printed in the *Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger* on 23, 30 May, 1, 4, 27 June, and 11, 13, 16 and 20 July 1811.

smuggle goods into the United States, was booming and no-one seemed disposed to risk the status quo. Consequently, much of the sentiment in favor of a change in regime that Mathews had reported to Washington in January 1811 had now disappeared.<sup>32</sup>

Mathews fretted over these matters for the next several weeks. He went into East Florida to obtain further information but learned little that was reassuring. Even as he was able to discount the rumors about an "African" regiment from Jamaica, he was reinforced in his conclusion that the balance of forces inside the province was tilted against a successful local revolution. His response was to ask the administration to send him arms, swords, and artillery to Point Petre so that he now could assist the settlers in making that revolution "with a fair prospect of success" and without his appearing to commit the United States as its sponsor. That request, mailed to Washington by letter on 3 August 1811, never reached the capital, and Mathews, in desperation, made a hasty visit to Crawford in mid-October to give him another copy before the senator departed for the first session of the Twelfth Congress that Madison had summoned for the first week in November.<sup>33</sup> But while in East Florida, Mathews had received additional news about possible developments in the province that threatened to jeopardize both its future value to the United States as a part of the Union and to Mathews personally as a location for any business dealings he might have with John Forbes and Company.

32. Mathews to Monroe, 28 June 1811. For the argument that the loyalty of East Floridians to the Spanish regime was further reinforced by Estrada's ability to respond effectively to hurricane damage in the province, see Sherry Johnson, "The St. Augustine Hurricane of 1811: Disaster and the Question of Political Unrest on the Florida Frontier," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 84 [2005]: 28-56.

33. Mathews to Monroe, 3 August and 14 October 1811, Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida. For further discussion of these matters, see Stagg, "James Madison and George Mathews," 43-45.

34. Some of the details of Keene's career, which included his seduction of Luther Martin's fifteen-year old daughter as well as charges that he violated the Embargo and was guilty of treason against both Spain and the United States, can be found in his apologia *A Letter of Vindication to His Excellency Colonel Monroe, President of the United States*, by Richard Raynal Keene, *Colonel in the late Constitutional Service of Spain* (Philadelphia, 1824), 3-47, supplemented by *An Appendix, intended to illustrate the merits and objects of A Letter of Vindication, addressed to the President of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1825). His petition for a grant in East Florida was dated 4 August 1809 and its goal was to make an experiment in settling American families in the province to exploit its potential for growing cotton and developing a naval stores industry. These



At the center of these new developments was the rumor that the *Cortes* in Cádiz had recently conveyed "all the vacant & unlocated land in E. & W. Florida" to Richard Raynal Keene, the troubled (and troublesome) son-in-law of Luther Martin of Maryland, who, after failing to establish himself satisfactorily in the Orleans Territory, had become a Spanish subject and petitioned the Captain-General in Cuba for an extensive grant of land between the Bay of Tampa and San Marcos de Apalache.<sup>34</sup> That news, Mathews told the State Department, was causing much discontent in St. Augustine, and the agent also transmitted a document from a pseudonymous source claiming that if the petition were to succeed, the United States stood to lose land worth as much as \$20 million in the event of Keene retaining his properties after Florida had been taken into the Union.<sup>35</sup> What Mathews would have found personally alarming, though, was the news that Keene's petition sought all vacant land in Florida "whether ceded or unceded by the Indians." That meant—if the land Mathews sought from

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activities, Keene stressed, would be complementary to, and not in competition with, the economic interests of Cuba and West Florida (see the documents attached to Enrique White's 3 November 1809 letter to the *marqués de Someruelos*, *Papeles Procedentes de Cuba*, legajo 1567). Keene did not obtain approval for any land in East Florida, but in 1815 he petitioned, apparently successfully, for a grant in Texas "of a greater extent than [that] of the two largest states of [the] Union" to establish "an Irish Catholic colony in Spanish America" (see Keene's *Memoria presentada á S.M.C. el SeÑor Don Fernando VII, sobre el asunto de fomentar la poblacion y cultivo en los terreros baldíos en las provincias internas del reyno México* [Madrid, 1815] and *A Letter of Vindication*, 5).

35. Mathews's pseudonymous source signed himself as THEMISTOCLES AT MAGNESIA, and his communication, dated 21 September 1811, was enclosed in Mathews's 14 October 1811 letter to Monroe (Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida). According to Plutarch, the Athenian Themistocles, after his victories over the Persians, was banished to Magnesia where he lived out the remainder of his days, though not without being subjected to pressures from both the Greeks and the Persians that he should choose sides when they renewed their wars (see *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. John Dryden; [6 vols.; London, 1758], 1: 280-321). That might suggest that the identity of the Mathews's pseudonymous source was James Hall, an American doctor who had taken up residence in East Florida from where he had been expelled by the Spanish authorities in September 1810 for his seemingly divided loyalties (see Hall's testimony in *United States vs Francisco Xavier Sánchez*; also Mary M. DuPree and G. Dekle Taylor, "Dr. James Hall, 1760-1837," *Journal of the Florida Medical Association* 61 [1974]: 626-31). Hall was also reported as having met with Mathews on his first visit to East Florida in the fall of 1810 to plan how the province might become independent from Spain (see Clarke to White, 7 January 1811, as cited in n. 14).

Forbes was part of the land the latter had received from the Indians—that the agent’s prospective dealings with Forbes could now be at serious risk. It was, perhaps, always something of a gamble that the Captain-General in Cuba would have permitted Forbes to alienate any of his Indian grants to an American. He would have been even less inclined to do so after the 1810 revolt of the settlers in West Florida and almost certainly not to so prominent an American as Mathews, who was notoriously unsympathetic to Spain and whose presence at St. Marys in 1810 and 1811 only made sense to the Spanish authorities on the assumption that he had been sent there to provoke further rebellions.<sup>36</sup>

There was only one truly effective solution for this problem, and Mathews and his pseudonymous source did not hesitate to point it out. As the agent’s informant put it, if the people of East Florida proclaimed themselves to be an “independent sovereignty” and joined the United States, they might declare that “no grants should be valid, but such as were granted for Head rights to persons residing in the Country.” That would exclude Keene and his grants while leaving much of the remaining land in Florida available for the United States to receive as “a valuable property.” But, as Mathews’ source warned, unless he, as a commissioner for the United States, and the commanding officer of the American forces at Point Petre received “instructions to afford the friends of our Country at least an indirect aid, no change will take place in E. Florida.” Mathews reinforced this message by predicting that Spanish approval of Keene’s venture would help undermine confidence in its “weak & tottering” government and “produce sentiments highly favorable to our Government.” He also stressed the defects of the Spanish forces at St. Augustine, now said to be only 150 men strong and which might be easily subdued as they were “destitute of good ammunition.”<sup>37</sup> Of the consequences of a suc-

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36. While governor of Georgia between 1793 and 1796, Mathews had been slow to respond to Spanish requests for assistance on border problems, particularly those relating to dissidents and rebels against Spanish rule who had fled to the United States (see Richard K. Murdoch, *The Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1793-1796: Spanish Reaction to French Intrigue and American Designs* [Berkeley, CA, 1951], 1-11, 128, 136-40). For evidence of Spanish suspicions about Mathews’s activities in St. Marys, see William Craig to Juan José Estrada, 5 August 1811, East Florida Papers, bundle 147D12; and Luis de Onís to Eusibio de Bardaxi y Azura, 8 September 1811, Correspondence of the Spanish Legation in the United States, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Estado, legajo 5637 (microfilm copy, Library of Congress).

37. See n. 35.

cessful revolution for Mathews's personal business interests, the agent, perhaps not surprisingly, said nothing.

Yet there is little reason to doubt that Mathews remained interested in his venture with John Forbes, even as it continued to languish. In February 1812, Forbes sent McKee a letter from Nassau. Among other matters, its contents hinted that McKee might take a spell from his official duties to make a tour of some of the company's properties on the Gulf Coast and possibly even make a purchase from James Innerarity. Forbes admitted, however, that his own plans, including that of settling "a small Village on the Apalachicola" from the West Indies, had been delayed and that they would be "a work of time." He had applied to the governor of Cuba for the necessary permission but worried that "our friend" Juan Ventura Morales, the Intendant for the Spanish crown residing in Pensacola, would interpose his authority to deny it.<sup>38</sup> Forbes also feared that his plans to move settlers (i.e., slaves) from the West Indies to Florida could be prevented under "the late additions made to the Abolition Act."<sup>39</sup> Consequently, he confessed to being somewhat gloomy about his company's longer-term prospects under Spanish rule and stated that he would even "rejoice" at the possibility of seeing Florida pass under American control. He then told McKee that through a friend he had recently received assurances from Mathews that the company's "establishment in East

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38. As Intendant, it was Morales's task to protect the financial interests of the Spanish crown, but in the course of pursuing his duties he became the most unpopular Spanish official on the Gulf Coast (see Jared W. Bradley, ed., *Interim Appointment: W.C.C. Claiborne Letter Book, 1804-1805* [Baton Rouge, LA, 2002], 495-98). Forbes was right to worry that Morales might look into the matter of land grants to foreigners, which the Spanish authorities had been trying to restrict ever since the 1804 Kemper rebellion in West Florida (see Andrew McMichael, "The Kemper 'Rebellion': Filibustering and Resident Anglo-American Loyalty in Spanish West Florida," *Louisiana History* 63 [2002]: 161-62). Morales was also scrutinizing Keene's request for a grant—which almost certainly promised to conflict with the land claimed by Forbes—when he reminded the Captain-General in Havana of the relevant regulations in response to his request for an opinion on "the petition of Don Ricardo Raynal Keene, asking to buy lands" (see Morales to the marqués de Someruelos, 14 August 1811, Coker, *The Papers of Pantón, Leslie, and Company*, roll 18).

39. The 1811 Slave Trade Felony Act, passed by Parliament to supplement the 1807 law abolishing the slave trade within the British empire, made it a felony, punishable by transportation, for British subjects to trade in slaves anywhere (see *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates* [36 vols.; London, 1806-20], XIX [1811]: 233-40).

Florida would meet with every protection in the event of that Province being occupied" by the United States.<sup>40</sup>

This was no idle remark and McKee knew it. After requesting arms and ammunition from Washington in August 1811, Mathews had gone ahead with plans for a revolution in East Florida, despite the fact that the administration had neither sanctioned his scheme nor even bothered to acknowledge the letters in which he continued to advocate its merits.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, he also began to lay the groundwork for the overthrow of the Spanish authorities in both Mobile and Pensacola, realizing that it had become pointless to expect Folch to deliver the residue of West Florida to him once the governor had been summoned to Havana to account for his conduct in 1810.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, Mathews wrote to McKee in September 1811, urging him to attach two local Roman Catholic priests, Fathers James Coleman and Francis Lennon, "to our cause." The "holy Fathers" should be convinced, Mathews wrote, that the time had arrived for them to cease serving as "very able props to a tottering government." Mathews assumed that the priests could be persuaded to switch their loyalties from the Spanish regime once they understood "the superior advantages they would enjoy under a government conducted upon principles of rational liberty & calculated to ensure social happiness." If that prospect should not be sufficiently attractive, though, he suggested there were "other inviting allurements" that might be useful in getting the priests to see that they could make "God's word a sinecure" under American rule as well as they could under the

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40. Forbes to McKee, 28 February 1812, McKee Papers. McKee does not appear to have purchased any property at this time, but he did sell a "negro," Jim, to Robert Rudolph, the Forbes representative in Charleston. On the bill of sale, "McKee" and "Charleston" were deleted and "Innerarity" and "Pensacola" were added (see Coker, *The Papers of Panton, Leslie, and Company*, roll 18). Forbes and Company, however, was expanding its operations in East Florida and had recently sought a lot on which to build a warehouse in Fernandina (see William Lawrence to White, 13 February 1811 and Lawrence to Estrada, 20 November 1811 [ibid.]).

41. For the significance of the administration's failure, or refusal, to communicate with Mathews after January 1811, see Stagg, "James Madison and George Mathews," 46-47.

42. By March 1811, the governor of Cuba had reprimanded Folch for his dealings with the Americans and relieved him of his command. In the fall of 1811 Folch went to Havana to prepare for a court martial and he returned to Spain in January 1812 (see David H. White, *Vicente Folch: Governor in Spanish Florida, 1787-1811* [Washington, DC, 1981], 104-5).

Spanish regime. Exactly what Mathews had in mind here is unclear. He declined to go into further detail in case some "impertinent curiosity" might make off with his letter.<sup>43</sup>

Mathews, nevertheless, continued to keep McKee posted about his preparations in East Florida. These did not go smoothly, as historians have long known, and by November 1811 Mathews had again become so unwell that his secretary, Ralph Isaacs, told McKee that he feared for the life of "the old general."<sup>44</sup> But Mathews persevered and on 6 March 1812—eight days before he attacked Fernandina on Amelia Island with his hastily improvised Patriot Army—he wrote again to his fellow agent, stating that by the time he received this letter, a revolution would have taken place and East Florida would have become "an Independent nation." Among the first acts of that new nation would be the appointment and recruitment of men "for revolutionizing Pensacola & Mobile or reducing them by force." Mathews announced that he would accompany this army on a march "through the Creek nation of which they will be apprised but not of the Motives, but will suppose they are to protect our citizens on Mobile." In conjunction with that operation, McKee was directed to go into Pensacola to use his "influence with Fathers Coleman

43. Mathews to McKee, ca. 7 September 1811, McKee Papers. The dateline on this letter, as well as some of its contents, has been damaged by fire, but the surviving internal evidence is sufficient to establish both its approximate date as well as its purpose. Francis Lennon (or Francisco Lennán) had been a Roman Catholic priest in Francisville, West Florida, from where he had fled to Pensacola after the uprising at Baton Rouge in September 1810. He was still in Pensacola in the spring of 1811 when Mathews and McKee met with him and suggested to the State Department that it would be "sound policy as well as justice to invite him to return & to make a provision for his support." Exactly where Lennon's political loyalties lay is unclear—his behavior during the 1810 West Florida rebellion suggested they were with Spain—but Mathews and McKee, who claimed to have long known him, believed otherwise, remarking that the priest had "uniformly discovered a friendly disposition towards the United States" (see Mathews and McKee to Smith, 24 April 1811, Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida; also Bice, *The Original Lone Star Republic*, 139, 166, 188, 197).

44. The contents of these letters were often more general than they were specific about Mathews's activities in St. Marys over the fall and winter of 1811-1812 (see Mathews to McKee, [ca. 1 October 1811] and Ralph Isaacs to McKee, 14 November 1811, both in McKee Papers). There also survives in this collection a badly burned fragment, very likely dating after November 1811, in which Mathews informed McKee that affairs in East Florida remained in the state they were in when Isaacs last wrote to him. Matters were said to be "in a train for a <illegible> but the prospect not immediate. . . ." For secondary accounts of Mathews's difficulties in raising the Patriot Army for the revolution, see Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 83-143, and Patrick, *Florida Fiasco*, 70-113.

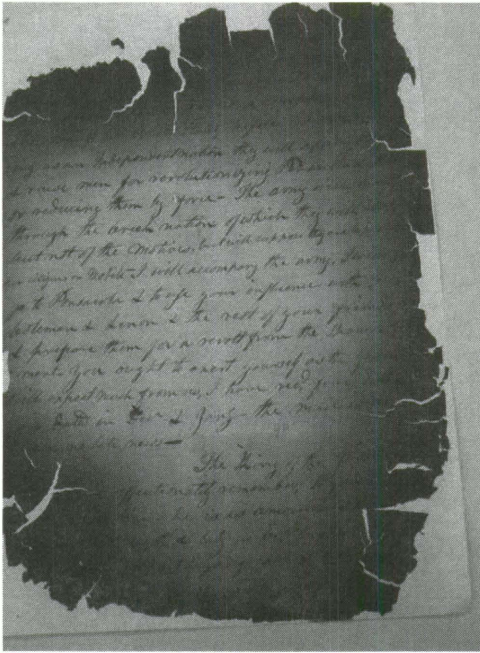


Image of the burned letter from Mathews to McKee dated 6 March 1812. *Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

& Lenon & the rest of [his] friends & prepare them for a revolt from the Spanish government.” He was, Mathews stressed, to “exert” himself “as the Government will expect much from us.”<sup>45</sup>

McKee did not receive this letter until 1 April 1812. For the next few weeks, he pursued a somewhat devious course. He went to Mobile where he found the inhabitants—mainly “Spaniards and French creoles”—“but little inclined to a change.” They continued to hope for receipt of the long promised supplies of men and money from Mexico and Cuba and should these arrive, there would be, McKee conceded, “new and great difficulties.”<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, McKee seriously doubted that Spain could rescue Florida by these

45. Mathews to McKee, [6 March 1812], McKee Papers. The dateline and the addressee of this letter have been burned, but it is in Mathew’s hand and is clearly the letter McKee acknowledged receiving from Mathews on 1 April 1812 (*ibid.*). Further evidence of Mathews’s intention to attack Pensacola after the fall of St. Augustine was provided by Andrew Ellicott, after he had visited Georgia, to Timothy Pickering on 17 May 1812 (Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society).

46. McKee to Mathews, 1 April 1812, McKee Papers.

means now, and provided that Mathews succeeded in his plans to "revolutionize" East Florida, he felt confident that he could contact his friends, including Perez Moro, the second-in-command of the garrison in Mobile, to bring about a change in government in the remaining Spanish portions of West Florida.<sup>47</sup> He then sent an artful letter to James Innerarity, mentioning reports that Amelia Island had been delivered to the United States and that an army of 600 men was marching on St. Augustine. "Where these things are to end," he wrote in mock surprise, "God knows." Pointing out that Spain could no longer defend Florida and appealing to Innerarity's humanitarian instincts, he asked him to use his influence with the Spanish authorities in Mobile to see if they would meet him "on the ground proposed by Governor Folch" in December 1810.<sup>48</sup>

In making that proposal to the Spanish, McKee declared his willingness to "consult their interests & honor as well as the interest of their Sovereign" and he was sure that he would "have the means of reconciling all with the security of the U.S."<sup>49</sup> Nothing came of these initiatives,<sup>50</sup> but the selective way in which McKee reported them to the State Department proved very interesting. Most of the communications he sent to Washington from Fort Stoddert after April 1811 either recounted rumors that were never to be substantiated or, more often, reported that there were no developments worth reporting at all.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, things did seem to be so calm in the region

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47. McKee to Mathews, 10 April 1812, *ibid.*

48. McKee to James Innerarity, 8 April 1812, *ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. James Innerarity's responses to McKee's overtures, dated 11, 20 and 30 April 1812 (McKee Papers), have survived, but they have been too badly burned for their contents to be fully deciphered. It would seem that Innerarity believed that the Spanish could not be dislodged from East Florida, at least not for as long as they were able to retain St. Augustine, and for that reason he was probably doubtful there could be any change at Pensacola and Mobile. When he did learn of the events of March 1812 in East Florida, the fragments of his letters suggest that he was highly indignant, and he denounced the "imbecility & duplicity" of the scheme as being worthy of the mind of Jefferson. How far he believed McKee had been implicated in the East Florida revolution is unclear.

51. McKee also sent similar reports to Mathews, as on 4 December 1811 when he wrote that "so barren is this place of incident of interest to you that I would not write were it not important to you that I am still waiting, anxiously waiting, for orders. The Dons are as silent as death and as poor as poverty, looking sometimes towards their own country, sometimes to Congress for their fate . . ." Those of them who had "property and connections to bind them to the soil," he added, "discover great anxiety & hope sincerely they will soon be relieved" (McKee Papers).

between Pensacola and Mobile that in January 1812, the Secretary of State sent McKee a letter terminating his mission to the Gulf Coast and directing him to notify the governor of Orleans Territory accordingly.<sup>52</sup> In March and April 1812, however, McKee informed the administration about possible discontent among the Creek Indians, sent an account of the impending arrival of a new Spanish governor to replace Folch, described how the local Spanish population was inclined to remain loyal to the mother country, and only in passing did he mention to the Secretary of State that he had made “another effort to renew negotiations with the Spanish authorities on the basis of Governor Folch’s letter to your predecessor (Decr. 1810).” “Should St. Augustine however be revolutionized,” he wrote, “these people may perhaps be brought to act.” Undoubtedly, McKee hoped that a change would take place, but entirely excluded from these letters any reference to the steps he and Mathews had been taking to “revolutionize” Mobile and Pensacola, as well as St. Augustine.<sup>53</sup>

On 25 March 1812, one week after Mathews had obtained the surrender of the Spanish garrison at Fernandina, he sent McKee a copy of the treaty he had negotiated on that occasion.<sup>54</sup> It was not a lengthy document and contained only six articles, among them being one that ceded East Florida to the United States which, in turn, promised to protect it as an “integral part” of the Union. The United States also undertook to guarantee all existing Spanish land titles and offered land to all participants in the revolution as well as pay and employment in the U. S. Army to those Spanish officers and soldiers who might wish to seek such benefits. More unusual was a clause in the fourth article stipulating that ports in East Florida were to remain open to Great Britain until at least May 1813.<sup>55</sup> That provision undoubtedly would have had its uses in rec-

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52. Monroe to McKee, 2 January 1812, Domestic Letters of the Department of State. McKee did not receive this letter until 14 May 1812 (see McKee to Monroe, 20 May 1812, McKee Papers).

53. McKee to Monroe, 25 March and 15 April 1812, Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida.

54. Mathews to McKee, 25 March 1812, McKee Papers. The enclosed draft treaty was docketed as “A contemplated Scheme of terms held and proposed by the U.S. to the inhabitants of E. Florida.” Mathews mailed another copy of this treaty to Monroe on 21 March 1812 (see Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State).

55. The draft treaty contained the date May 1813. In writing to Madison three weeks later, however, Mathews argued that the period should be extended for a further year, until May 1814 (see Mathews to Madison, 16 April 1812, *Madison Papers: Presidential Series*, 4: 327).



onciling the local merchants and planters, whose prosperity was heavily dependant on British trade, to the change in government. In light of the fact that throughout 1811 Mathews had urged the administration to sanction his desire to overthrow the Spanish regime in order to exclude British influence from East Florida, it was also somewhat anomalous.<sup>56</sup> One of its consequences would have been to have allowed John Forbes and Company to have continued their business activities in the province, and Mathews justified his decision here on the grounds that it would permit the Indians to receive "necessary supplies" from "the House of Panton & Forbes."<sup>57</sup> Mathews also told McKee that he had already taken steps to inform Forbes in Nassau of developments in East Florida, and more importantly, he drew McKee's attention to the fifth article, which committed the United States to the reduction of Mobile and Pensacola to ensure the security of East Florida. He then repeated his earlier directive that McKee "exert" himself to prepare for the events contemplated in that article and to leave "no means untried" for their accomplishment.<sup>58</sup>

The revolution Mathews launched in March 1812 failed, and it did so, in no small part, because of the eventual inability of the Patriots to capture St. Augustine and thereby destroy the ultimate source of Spanish authority in East Florida. What historians have not understood, however, is the role that Mathews's plans for the reduction of Mobile and Pensacola played in the decision of the Madison administration to disavow the revolution in April 1812. The events that led to that outcome were set in motion by Mathews himself when he sent his 6 March 1812 letter to McKee to the

56. For Mathews's wishes to this effect, see his letters to Monroe of 28 June, 3 August, and 14 October 1811 (Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida). The best study of the trade through Amelia Island is Christopher Ward, "The Commerce of East Florida During the Embargo, 1806-1812: The Role of Amelia Island," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 [1989]: 160-79.

57. Mathews to Monroe, 21 March 1812 (Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State).

58. Mathews to McKee, 25 March 1812, McKee Papers. The wording of the fifth article stipulated: "Whereas the Government at Pensacola and Mobile will probably be excited to great irritation in consequence of this revolution and as they border upon tribes of Indians who might be engaged in acts of hostility their revolution is rendered indispensable for the security of East Florida, and we inhabitants of East Florida having prior to this cession proceeded to raise an army and to appoint officers for the revolution of said places, and having rendered ourselves incompetent to it by yielding up our funds to the U States, the U States doth agree to carry the same into full effect unless in their wisdom it shall be deemed injurious to the province or to the U States."

Creek agency on the Flint River in Georgia to be forwarded to McKee at Fort Stoddert.<sup>59</sup> At that time, he also sent a personal letter to the Creek agent, Benjamin Hawkins, along with another from his secretary, Ralph Isaacs. Hawkins duly forwarded the letter for McKee on 18 March, but he also reported its contents to Washington when he mailed his next letter to the War Department on 23 March. Here Hawkins related the details of Mathews's plans to "revolutionize" East Florida and to follow that event with the reduction of Mobile and Pensacola by marching an army through the Creek country to "protect the white people on Mobile from any injury from the revolt of Florida." The Indians were to be told that "East Florida has pursued the example of the United States and declared themselves independent of Spain, and the Spanish officers will want them to take part against the people of East Florida." It was to be Hawkins's task to persuade the Creeks not "to engage in white people's quarrels in the same land" and thus save "the frontiers of Florida from their inroads." At this juncture, Hawkins assumed that Mathews would be acting in accordance with instructions he had received from Washington and he promised that he would "in all things cooperate with the General." He reminded the Secretary of War, though, that he had received no orders from him in relation to Mathews's mission.<sup>60</sup>

Hawkins's letter reached Washington on 4 April 1812. Its arrival was a critical factor in Madison's decision to repudiate Mathews and his revolution, as can be seen from the following cir-

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59. The cover of Mathews's 6 March 1812 letter, though damaged by fire, was docketed by Hawkins as being received at the Creek Agency on 18 March. It was then sent to McKee at Fort Stoddert.

60. Benjamin Hawkins to Eustis, 23 March 1812, docketed as received on 4 April 1812 with a clerk's endorsement: "states the substance of a Letter from Gnl. Mathews" (Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, H-185 [6]). When Hawkins wrote that he would co-operate with Mathews, he was assuming that the agent had not been responsible for organizing the seizure of Amelia Island. After learning of the extent of Mathews's role in the revolution, however, he changed his mind, writing to the agent to express his fear that he had "greatly exceeded [his] powers." Indeed, Hawkins continued, "it has been hinted to me that you have originated the whole movement of the Patriots and that you even attempted to aid them with a part of the troops of the United States in disguise." Furthermore, Hawkins protested, it is said that "an agent or spy of Mr. Forbes has been present and made acquainted with every occurrence. If this is true, I think the government will be greatly perplexed by the transaction" (Hawkins to Mathews, 12 April 1812, Charles L. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, 2 vols., [Savannah, GA, 1980], 2: 606-607).

cumstances. On 14 March 1812, as he was preparing to attack Fernandina, Mathews sent the State Department a rambling and incoherent letter in which he explained that he was about to exercise “as sound a discretion as [his] judgment was capable of” about “the intent & meaning” of his 26 January 1811 instructions. What Mathews did not make plain in this letter was his intention to overthrow the Spanish regimes in both East and West Florida by force. Instead, the letter implied that East Florida had already declared its independence and that Mathews had been engaged in a fruitless effort to obtain ammunition and troops from the U.S. Army commander at St. Marys, Maj. Jacint Laval, to “preoccupy defend & hold” the province “by force” against a foreign invasion. Mathews provided almost nothing in the way of hard evidence to substantiate these claims and the greater part of his letter was a catalogue of angry complaints against Laval, whose refusal to supply ammunition and men for the invading Patriot Army had, in effect, deprived him of the capacity to commence his revolution by seizing the Spanish fort at St. Augustine. Being unwilling to abandon his plans at that point, Mathews had decided to attack Fernandina instead.<sup>61</sup>

It cannot be determined exactly when Mathews’s 14 March letter arrived in Washington. Letters usually took from sixteen to twenty-one days to reach the capital from St. Marys, but it is unlikely that the State Department had received Mathews’s letter by 1 April.<sup>62</sup> Even if it had done so, any reader of its contents, in the

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61. See Mathews to Monroe, 14 March 1812, Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Florida. The letter alluded to an East Floridian declaration of independence, but it contained no copy of that document nor did it provide any account of how it had come into being. A report that a regiment of black troops from Jamaica was bound for East Florida came from Henly Wyly, a half-pay British officer, in conversations with Mathews and the leader of the Patriot Army, John Houstoun McIntosh. Wyly refused to put his claims in writing for the Americans, but in a 10 March 1812 letter to McIntosh—which Mathews enclosed to the State Department—he urged them “not to delay, *not for one day*, the accomplishment of their object.” Wyly’s story, which was no more substantial than a similar claim on which Mathews had declined to act in the summer of 1811, has all the hallmarks of an attempt to persuade Mathews to commence the revolution in East Florida before his preparations for it had been completed. If so, the ruse was successful.

62. Mathews’s 14 March letter has no docket date, though that is by no means an unusual circumstance as State Department clerks were far less consistent than their War Department counterparts in recording the receipt of their correspondence. For further discussion of this point, see Stagg, “James Madison and George Mathews,” 48-49.

absence of other supporting information, would have been hard pressed to grasp exactly what Mathews was about to do. That the administration remained in the dark about Mathews's intentions at the beginning of the month also seemed apparent when the British minister, Augustus J. Foster, called at the State Department on 2 April to present overwhelming evidence from his correspondents in East Florida that Mathews had unquestionably seized the fort at Fernandina. In response, the Secretary of State, James Monroe, explained at great length that Mathews had no authority for such activities, but he would not promise a disavowal of them before he had received letters from the agent himself confirming Foster's claims.<sup>63</sup> It seems most likely, therefore, that Mathews's 14 March letter did not arrive before 4 April and that it did so at the same time as Hawkins's letter of 23 March. Hawkins's news immediately clarified what Mathews had left unsaid on 14 March while also lending plausibility to the claims made by Foster. The administration promptly took action by repudiating Mathews and transferring his duties on the Florida border to the governor of Georgia, David B. Mitchell, both decisions also being made on 4 April.<sup>64</sup> In Madison's eyes, Hawkins's account would have been incontestable proof that Mathews and McKee had now departed very far from both the spirit and the letter of their January 1811 instructions. Even worse was the fact that administration was reading about the plans of their agents to overthrow the Spanish authorities in Mobile and Pensacola for the first time. Once a full awareness of the situation had sunk in, repudiation of the East Florida revolution was the only option left—if the administration wished to avoid a series of developments that formed no part of its policies, most notably a war with Spain accompanied by an Indian war on the southern frontier of the nation on the eve of an impending war with Great Britain.<sup>65</sup>

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63. Augustus J. Foster to Lord Richard Wellesley, 2 April 1812, Foreign Office, series 5, vol. 85, Public Record Office (microfilm copy).

64. Monroe to Mathews, 4 April 1812, Domestic Letters of the Department of State, in which the Secretary of State acknowledged the receipt of Mathews's 14 March letter; and also Monroe to David B. Mitchell, 4 April 1812, Keith Read Collection, University of Georgia. For further discussion of the significance of the dating of these letters, see Stagg, "James Madison and George Mathews," 51-52 and n. 91.

65. That the administration had no desire to risk war with Spain was made plain by Monroe when he wrote to John Quincy Adams, the American minister in Russia, about the U.S. declaration of war against Great Britain as follows: "It

In conclusion, therefore, the hitherto unknown 27 July 1810 letter of Crawford to Robert Smith, supplemented by the unexamined letters between Mathews, McKee, and John Forbes in McKee's surviving papers, provide sufficient evidence to suggest that Madison's two agents on the Gulf Coast departed from their instructions between 1810 and 1812 not merely because of an excess of enthusiasm for the cause of taking Florida into the Union but also because their decisions were shaped by personal concerns arising from their business interests. Both agents, but Mathews in particular, attempted to implement their instructions to try and bring both East Florida and the residue of Spanish West Florida into the Union in ways that were intended to protect the interests of John Forbes and Company. And while the evidence suggests that Mathews had conceived his scheme to overthrow the government of East Florida before he knew about the threat posed by the petition of Richard Raynal Keene to both his interests and those of John Forbes, the prospect that Mathews might not be able to realize his goal of purchasing land from Forbes would have provided him with a strong motive to persist with his plans for a revolt in East Florida, even after the administration had declined to sanction it. It was this blending of their private concerns with their official duties that led Mathews and McKee to plot unauthorized and unsuccessful rebellions against the colonial regimes in both East Florida and West Florida, and in the case of the former the result was a fiasco that was to lead the United States into a brutal guerilla war that could not be terminated until the American and Patriot forces were withdrawn from the province in May of 1813. In that context, the misconduct of its agents was to cause the administration nothing but difficulties and embarrassments, as Madison himself remarked to Jefferson when he complained that in East Florida Mathews had played out "a tragic-comedy in the face of common sense, as well as of his instructions. His extravagances place us in the most distressing dilemma."<sup>66</sup>

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is not distinctly known what effect this measure may have on the Spanish Regency at Cadiz and on the Government of Portugal, but it is hoped it will produce no change whatever. It is for their interest as well as for that of the United States that we should remain friends" (see Monroe to John Quincy Adams, 1 July 1812, *Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State: Instructions to Ministers*, RG 59, National Archives).

66. Madison to Jefferson, 24 April 1812, *Madison Papers: Presidential Series*, 4: 346.

For the agents, the results were more mixed. In Mathews's case, the East Florida revolution was a personal disaster. His repudiation at the hands of Madison so enraged and humiliated him that he threatened to return to Washington to embarrass the administration by exposing the underhanded aspects of his assignment. Fortunately for the president, he died in August 1812 before he could do so.<sup>67</sup> Nor did Mathews ever get to conclude his land transaction with John Forbes, though his failure to do so was hardly the first unsuccessful venture of this nature in his career. When his affairs were finally settled in the summer of 1813, the United States allowed his estate a balance of \$4,785.70 from the total costs of his mission with McKee, but by then that was cold comfort indeed.<sup>68</sup> McKee, on the other hand, did rather better. He went to Washington in the summer of 1812 to settle his and Mathews's accounts, from which he duly received the sum of \$2,483.72 in March 1813, in addition to the \$500.00 he had claimed in January 1811.<sup>69</sup> By August 1812, he had also been given "very strong assurances from high authority" that he would receive future employment in public service.<sup>70</sup> In April 1814 McKee was reappointed to the Choctaw agency, to replace the agent Silas Dinsmoor who had succeeded him in 1802. He was to serve in that capacity until 1821 when he resigned to take up new positions, first as the Register of the Land Office in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and then as an Alabama representative to the United States Congress.<sup>71</sup>

## Appendix

[William Harris Crawford] to Robert Smith  
Lexington 27<sup>th</sup> July 1810

Sir

Your letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> ult, with its enclosure reached this place on the 17<sup>th</sup> inst, but owing to my absence was not recd. until the 23d. Few men in this part of the State could be induced, at this sea-

67. Patrick, *Florida Fiasco*, 174-78.

68. For Mathews's accounts, see the claims numbered 26, 537 and 27, 051 in the Miscellaneous Treasury Accounts of the General Accounting Office.

69. For McKee's accounts, see claim no. 26, 544, *ibid.*

70. McKee to Edmund Pendleton Gaines, 14 October 1812, McKee Papers.

71. John Armstrong to McKee, 30 April 1814, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War: Letters Sent, Indian Affairs, RG 75, National Archives. For reasons that are unclear, however, the Senate was not to confirm the appointment until April 1818 (see *Senate Executive Proceedings*, 3: 139).

son of the year, to risk their health in that country. My acquaintance in the Southeastern counties is very limited, and in a case of so much importance and delicacy, it was absolutely necessary for me to see and converse with the man to be employed, before I could venture to fill the blank in the commission.

While endeavoring to select the man qualified to fulfil the expectations of the government, I recd a visit from Genl George Mathews formerly governor of this State, who for some years past has led an erratic life. Upon introducing the subject of the Floridas I discovered that his ideas perfectly coincided with those of the government, in relation to them, and the means proper to be employed in the present crisis. I learned from him, that he had been for some time, in treaty with the House of Panton & Forbes of Pensacola, for the purchase of a tract of country, owned by them in the vicinity of St Marks, and would shortly set out for the former place to close the contract. Upon sounding him, I found he would willingly undertake to execute the commission which the government had inclosed to me, but would not abandon his journey to Pensacola.

Notwithstanding the commission does not [con]template his visiting any part of West Florida until further instructions, the qualifications which he possesses for the execution of such an agency are so decidedly superior to those of any other man of my acquaintance, that I have ventured to fill the blank in the commission with his name.<sup>72</sup> The circumstance of his contemplated purchase; his acquaintance with many of the principal Spanish officers, and especially with governor Foulk [Folch], from whom he intends to procure letters of recommendation to the governor, and principal men of East Florida; his being wholly unconnected with the government for the last ten or fifteen years, will, in my apprehension, greatly facilitate the execution of the trust reposed in him. He attaches great importance to the acquisition of the Floridas, & will be ambitious to promote their annexation to the United States.

His ideas are that the U.S. ought to risk a war with either France or Great Britain should either of them attempt to seize those provinces. I have filled the second blank with the highest

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72. A copy of the instructions, dated 20 June 1810, which directed an agent to go into East Florida and West Florida as far as Pensacola but not into "the residue of West Florida" without further directions, may be found in Territorial Papers of the Department of State, Orleans Territory, RG 59, National Archives.

sum mentioned by you; Sensible indeed am I that that sum was no inducement with the Genl to enter into the views of the government.<sup>73</sup> The orthography of the Genl is proverbial among us, and his manuscripts some times require a Key, but when deciphered, are full of good sense, clear and forcible. He sets out for Pensacola in about a week, & will be at St. Augustin in six weeks from that time. If this arrangement should not meet with the approbation of the President, I can only regret, that he had not made the Selection himself.<sup>74</sup> The delay is the only difficulty in the case, & I feel confident the advantages which will flow from Genl. Mathews's appointment will abundantly compensate for that. I have just recd two letters from Fort St. Stephens which informs me that the people in that part of the territory are about to seize upon Mobile & Pensacola, and after they have taken them, intend to surrender them to the government.<sup>75</sup> The author of the letters, states, that he had prevailed on them, to postpone the enterprize, until he could obtain my opinion of its propriety. It would seem, that our citizens mean to supply the want of enterprize, so much complained of by some in the government. I answered the letters by the last mail, by saying, if the government meant, that those places should be forcibly taken, that it had the means in its own hands, & would not willingly be under obligations to a set of adventurers. I have the honor to be very respectfully Your most obt Servt

Library of Congress (Miscellaneous Mss, Robert Smith). Unsigned; in the hand of Crawford. Franked at Lexington, Georgia, on 30 July 1810 and in Washington, Georgia, on September 11. Docketed by John Graham as "Govr Mathews going into Florida."

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73. The sum mentioned by the secretary of state was "three four or five dollars pr. Day, according to the talent & standing in Society of the person" (see Smith to Crawford, 20 July 1810).
74. In acknowledging Crawford's 27 July 1810 letter, Smith stated that he had forwarded it to Madison, who expressed himself to be "perfectly satisfied" with Crawford's decision, adding that it was "indeed a most fortunate circumstance that threw in your way Genl. Mathews, who well understanding the views of the executive, cannot but be happy in promoting them" (see Smith to Crawford, 2 October 1810, *Domestic Letters of the Department of State*).
75. These letters were apparently written by Joseph Carson, a member of the Legislative Council for the Mississippi Territory, and Lewis Sewall, Register of the Land Office at St. Stephens in Mississippi Territory (see Harry Toulmin to Madison, 28 July 1810, *Madison Papers: Presidential Series*, 2: 449). Although they have long since been lost, there can be little doubt that their contents were intended to inform Crawford about the plans of the so-called Mobile Society, headed by Joseph Pulaski Kennedy, to take advantage of the anticipated demi-American *Historical Review*



## The Women of the Early Florida Audubon Society: Agents of History in the Fight to Save State Birds

By Leslie Kemp Poole

Reflecting back on the first 25 years of the Florida Audubon Society, President Hiram Byrd described its early founders as “a little group of people who had a vision for the future.” In particular, Byrd noted that Clara Dommerich, at whose home the first meeting was held in 1900, was “probably the leading spirit in the movement, but as so frequently happens in this world of affairs, the hand that presses the button is not seen.”<sup>1</sup>

In the course of Florida’s history, all too often the unseen hand was that of the women whose stories were ignored or relegated to short references or footnotes. The story of the Florida Audubon Society (FAS) appears to follow that same course. Its early presidents were well-educated and prestigious men who easily mixed with business and government officials in making pleas for greater protection of the state’s non-game birds.

However, their FAS successes were built upon the work of many progressive-minded women whose energy and club-woman connections were vital to the founding and early achievements of the organization. With passion and diligence, these women, many of them winter visitors, worked with year-round residents to gain

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1. Dr. Hiram Byrd, Unmarked Newspaper Clipping, n.d., in unnamed files of Florida Audubon Society, Maitland, Florida.

public support for the FAS mission, leading to bird protection laws, the creation and operation of bird preserves, and extensive school programs. In addition to helping launch FAS, women held long-term leadership positions, kept track of its finances, records, and correspondence, led meetings, wrote articles and pamphlets, and worked with people in other organizations to further the cause.

Their efforts reflected the growing American conservation movement that blossomed in the early 1900s during the reform-minded Progressive Era—a time during which many middle-class women stepped outside their homes to pursue activities that improved their communities in a gendered sphere historians commonly labeled as “municipal housekeeping.” “The idea that women as the center of home life were responsible for the moral tone of a community did not vanish, but increasingly it was said that such responsibility did not end with the four walls of a home, but extended to the neighborhood, the town, the city,” notes historian Anne Firor Scott.<sup>2</sup> Although they were unable to vote until 1920, reform-minded women often had the financial stability, aesthetic appreciation, leisure time, and desire to spread their wings in activities that ranged from creating parks to fighting for pure food to improving child welfare—efforts considered to be within the woman’s realm. In addition, historian Adam Rome asserts, the women of this period were “indispensable in every environmental cause in the United States.”<sup>3</sup>

Saving Florida’s birds from hunters who wanted their plumes for the millinery trade became a central environmental issue and the FAS women attacked it with zeal, carrying the organization into the national arena. Although conservation historians have largely ignored them, women were central to that cause, transforming “the crusade from an elite male enterprise into a widely based movement,” according to environmental historian Carolyn Merchant. In her groundbreaking 1984 article, Merchant describes how preservation of the environment became a rallying

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2. Anne Firor Scott. *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 141.
  3. Adam Rome. “‘Political Hermaphrodites’: Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America.” *Environmental History*, 11, No. 3. (July 2006), pp. 440-463. <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ch/11.3/rome.html> accessed November 16, 2006.



Clara Dommerich, a winter resident of Maitland in the early twentieth century and a guiding hand in the establishment of the Florida Audubon Society. *Photograph courtesy of the Maitland Historical Society.*

cause for Progressive women and specifically charts the Audubon movement. Although Merchant notes how women in many states were involved in organizing and publicizing the plume hunting problems, she fails to mention the integral work in Florida, ground

zero for much of the bird destruction, where FAS female members shaped the debate, pursued legislation, supported the national organization, and financially aided warden activities.<sup>4</sup> Women's FAS activities also reflected the shifting national consciousness which moved from the early nineteenth century focus on conservation—the science-based development and use of natural resources—into the modern environmental movement, which Samuel P. Hays described as “far more widespread and popular, involving public values that stressed the quality of human experiences and hence of the human environment.” The Audubon ladies wanted a world with beautiful, singing birds—an aesthetic value that would spur the future environmental movement.<sup>5</sup>

The feminine desire for hats adorned with long plumes and bright bird wings, heads, and bodies arose in the post-Civil War decades and, by the 1880s had accounted for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of birds. There was a great demand for Florida's exotic wading birds such as flamingos, herons, ibis, roseate spoonbills—some 42 species—that inhabited coastal areas, wetlands, and the Everglades. Hunters especially wanted “aigrettes,” the showy plumage that appeared on egrets during mating and nesting season. Nesting birds were easy targets for hunters because they roosted in large numbers, sometimes in the hundreds, in small areas called rookeries and refused to abandon their nests and young when danger appeared. After shooting into rookeries and removing feathers and skins from adult birds, hunters left their bodies and crying orphaned chicks to decay or become easy meals for crows, predators, and ants. The desirable feathers and bird parts were shipped to northern millinery markets for processing into large, showy hats that might contain everything from elegant plumes to the bodies of dead mockingbirds. One New York wholesaler was reported to have bought \$200,000 worth of plumes for fashions—part of the \$17-million-a-year New York millinery industry that employed 20,000 people. This was big business and it extended into international trade.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Carolyn Merchant, “Women of the Progressive Movement: 1900-1916,” *Environmental Review*, 8, no. 1 (Spring 1984), 57, 69-73.

5. Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13.

6. Merchant, “Women of the Progressive Movement,” 69; Mark Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise: A Chronicle of Man and the Land in Florida* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989), 136-40; Marjory Stoneman Douglas,

The results were nothing short of tragic. In *Some Kind of Paradise*, Mark Derr recounts tales of rookeries that were wiped out along the Florida west coast, from the Tampa area south to the Everglades:

White ibis, roseate spoonbills, pelicans, and herons and egrets of every hue and size were gone. Many hunters thought survivors had fled to rookeries inland or farther south. They couldn't conceive that the birds would not come back. A similar situation existed on the east coast above Lake Worth. So thorough was the destruction of plume birds that within several generations collective memory of the rookeries was as dead as the birds themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Early efforts to curb the plume business came in 1883 with the creation of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), founded by professionals who concerned themselves with bird studies and protection. An AOU committee, which included George Bird Grinnell, a hunter and editor of *Forest and Stream* magazine, created a "Model Law" in hopes of inspiring state legislatures to enact provisions to protect non-game birds and their eggs and nests. Grinnell attempted to end the destruction and change human attitudes when, in 1886, he founded the nation's first Audubon Society, named after John James Audubon, the famed painter of America's birds. Grinnell hoped that public opinion could be swayed to stop the bird deaths without the need for legislation. Based on early support for his views, Grinnell launched *The Audubon Magazine*, but it folded after its second issue in 1888 and with it the Audubon Society. Although the organization was short-lived, Grinnell continued to be an important player in conservation efforts, having a year earlier helped found the Boone and Crockett Club, an organization of 100 wealthy sportsmen that included the future U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt. The club worked to preserve large game in the United States, particularly in the west,

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*Everglades: River of Grass* (Sarasota, Fl.: Pineapple Press, Inc., 1947, 1988), 310; Jack E. Davis, "Alligators and Plume Birds: The Despoilation of Florida's Living Aesthetic," *Paradise Lost: The Environmental History of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 245; Alfred Jackson Hanna and Kathryn Abbey Hanna, *Lake Okeechobee: Wellspring of the Everglades* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobs-Merrill Co., 1948), 340-41.

7. Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise*, 136-37.

and promote natural history research. According to Daniel J. Philippon, the conservation idea moved from this masculine arena to capture “the hearts and minds of suburban women across the nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” and the reemergence of Audubon Societies was an important factor in the transformation.<sup>8</sup>

Simultaneous with the rise in concerns about plume birds, Americans witnessed the demise of native creatures they never expected to disappear—the bison and the passenger pigeon. North American bison, once estimated to have numbered from 40 million to 60 million and prized for their meat and hides, had been the staple of Native American life. By the end of the 1880s, however, commercial demands for hides led to huge slaughters and placed the bison on the brink of extinction. But perhaps no creature defined the Audubon supporters’ fears as much as the passenger pigeon, whose enormous traveling flocks once blackened the skies of North America for hours. Hunters easily captured or shot the birds and shipped them to food markets. Once numbering around 5 billion birds, passenger pigeon populations were decimated in the late nineteenth century. The last of the species died in 1914—an extinction that alarmed bird lovers and conservationists alike. “At the turn of the century, many species of birds, mammals, and fish carried a price tag,” notes Kurkpatrick Dorsey. And as species became scarcer, their value rose, driven by market forces; in the Florida wetlands, the slaughter of birds continued as the price for wading bird plumage rose.<sup>9</sup>

Americans worried about the waning numbers of bison, elk, game birds, and wading birds banded together to advocate for wildlife conservation, leading to the revival of the Audubon movement. Harriet Hemenway, a wealthy and well-connected Bostonian, was an early leader, who gathered influential women and male ornithologists to found the Massachusetts Audubon

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8. Frank Graham Jr., *The Audubon Ark: A History of the National Audubon Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 3-13; Daniel J. Philippon, *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 55-73.
  9. Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1991), 167-170; Kurkpatrick Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1998), 13.

Society in 1896. As Frank Graham Jr. explained in his history of the Audubon Society, its goals were to “discourage the buying and wearing, for ornamental purposes, of the feathers of any wild birds” and to further bird protection. Almost 1,300 adults and children were members at the end of the year, which also marked the beginning of a Pennsylvania society. In its early days, Massachusetts Audubon was a place where women leaders could shine—they held an equal number of posts as their male counterparts and 114 of the 118 local chapters were led by women. Recognized for her pioneering effort, Hemenway worked “mostly behind the scenes, providing financial support and advice,” but also hosted groups of up to sixty people in her home and arbitrated disagreements. In 1897, New York, New Hampshire, Illinois, Maine, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia formed Audubon societies, with six more added the next year. By 1900, five states had enacted laws based on the AOU Model Law. The Audubon movement was alive once again and growing, thanks in large part to its female membership.<sup>10</sup>

An important player on the national scene was Mabel Osgood Wright, a founder of the Connecticut group and a later leader in the national organization. Like many contemporary authors, Wright wrote extensively about nature to a receptive American audience. She also served as an associate editor of *Bird-Lore*, a national bird-lovers' magazine that later became *Audubon* magazine. Author Daniel Philippon argues that Wright's work, which appealed “to the patriotic sentiments and untapped energies of suburban women” spread the conservation message to a much larger audience—“from the disappearing frontier of the sportsman and into the backyard gardens of suburban America.” Her articles and books, which included an 1895 bird guide, were widely read and were lauded by her literary peers, including heralded naturalist John Burroughs, as well as other women writers and readers. Inspired by the urgency of conservation work, women, who considered the home and garden their realm, used it as a means to enter the public sphere with Audubon activities.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Hays, *Beauty Health, and Permanence*, 19. Graham, *The Audubon Ark*, 14-23; Mary Jo Breton, *Women Pioneers for the Environment* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 257.

11. Philippon, *Conserving Words*, 73-95.

Although Florida was the scene of much of the plume destruction, it was not until 1900 that a group of Central Floridians—several of them winter residents from northern states where Audubon activities were vibrant—created the Florida Audubon Society. Nine women and six men gathered informally on the afternoon of March 2, 1900, at Hiawatha Grove, a 210-acre estate and bird sanctuary located on the shores of Lake Minnehaha in Maitland, Florida. The large, spacious mansion suited the status of Louis Dommerich, a prosperous New York City silk importer and textile manufacturer, and his wife Clara. There the wintering family spotted wild birds such as cranes, owls, quail, doves, and turkey and indulged cardinals, blue jays, and juncos with feeding boxes on the porch. Louis Dommerich filled the feeding stations each morning and blew a whistle to summon his eager avian guests.<sup>12</sup>

The organizing group of fifteen was a who's who of the Maitland-Winter Park area, located north of Orlando. They included the Dommerichs; Dr. G. M. Ward, the president of nearby Rollins College, and his wife; Harriet Vanderpool, wife of a local citrus grower who was a Maitland founder; W. C. Comstock, a Winter Park businessman and civic leader; Lida Peck Bronson, wife of Sherman Bronson, a businessman and former Maitland mayor; and Laura Norcross Marrs and her husband, Kingsmill, a wealthy Massachusetts couple who wintered in Maitland. A small community, many of the FAS founders would be involved in other civic activities, from founding a public library to establishing a church to serving in various leadership capacities at Rollins College.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Lucy Worthington Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society: 1900-1935*, n.p., n.d., 1. "Flames In A Dwelling House." *New York Times* (1857-Current File): Nov. 26, 1885, ProQuest Historical Newspapers *New York Times* (1851-2002) 2 accessed November 26, 2005; Tracy Landfried, "The Early History of the Florida Audubon Society, 1900-1905," n.p., n.d. Maitland Historical Society files, Maitland, Florida; Mrs. Reinhard Siedenbug, "The Florida Audubon Society: Hiawatha Grove, Maitland." *The Florida Naturalist*, XXIII, no. 3 (April 1950), 62-63.
13. Vanderpool, Whipple, and Dommerich Files, Maitland Historical Society. RootsWeb.com Randall and Allied Families: Sherman Newton Bronson, <http://worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=wrandall&id=I1140> (accessed February 3, 2006). Richard N. Campen, *Winter Park Portrait: The Story of Winter Park and Rollins College* (Beachwood, Oh.: West Summit Press, 1987), 36-37. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 1.



At the initial meeting, Clara Dommerich made the case for founding the organization, noting the decimation of Florida birds and remarking on the work “done in other states in protecting our feathered friends.” According to FAS minutes, Dommerich, who was chosen to be the fledgling group’s secretary-treasurer that day, stated that “liberal subscriptions” already had been received to support a society. To get the organization underway, she made a successful motion to appoint a five-member committee to create a constitution and by-laws as well as a list of officers to govern FAS. In recounting the creation of FAS in *Bird-Lore*, the first FAS President, H. B. Whipple, Bishop of Minnesota, wrote that the society owed “a debt of gratitude” to Dommerich “for the interest which she has awakened for the protection of the birds of Florida. No state or territory in our country has been as richly endowed in plumage and song birds as this state.”<sup>14</sup>

As with other Audubon societies, the early founders were ardent bird lovers. Author Kurkpatrick Dorsey notes that humans have long held an affinity for birds because the two species have much in common, including the fact that they “build homes, raise young, and then head south to avoid the cold weather.” As renowned evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson writes, for centuries, “birds have been the most pursued and best known of all animals” perhaps owing to *biophilia*—a word he used to describe a phenomenon in which humans forge emotional bonds with certain life forms.<sup>15</sup>

The FAS founders shared an avian affection and made it their mission to disseminate information about the value of birds, publicize bird destruction in the state, and discourage the use or purchase of bird feathers. They also planned classes for the public schools and encouraged the establishment of local Audubon societies. Memberships were free for teachers; for everyone else memberships were \$1 per year, \$5 per year for sustaining members, and 25 cents for children. For a \$25 payment, members received the

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14. Florida Audubon Society Minutes 1900-1910, n.p., n.d. Florida Audubon Society, Maitland, Florida., which will hereafter be referred to as FAS Minutes. H. B. Whipple, *Bird Lore*, II, no. 3 (June 1900), 97.

15. Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy*, 168; Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 18, 134-143. Wilson has much to say about human affiliation with habitats as well as certain species. Certainly the non-threatening songbirds lauded by Audubon Societies would fit this category.

designation of patron. Whipple, an Episcopal Church bishop who wintered in Maitland, was named president and as honorary vice-presidents FAS selected Florida Governor William Bloxam, New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt (who became president the next year), and Kirk Munroe, a nationally known author of children's books who lived in Coconut Grove, Florida. Of the twenty-eight vice presidents, most of whom were Floridians, twenty-two were male, including journalists, clergy, presidents of nearby Rollins College and Stetson University, and Frank Chapman, of the American Museum of Natural History and editor of *Bird-Lore*. Six women, including Marrs, Evangeline Whipple, wife of the bishop, and Rose Cleveland, sister of the former president and a close friend of Evangeline Whipple, were named vice presidents. However, half the executive committee, which would be the guiding force of the organization during the next two decades, was female, including Marrs, Bronson, and Vanderpool.<sup>16</sup>

Before the year's end, the society received the sad news of the death of Clara Dommerich following a lingering illness. The 43-year-old, who died in New York City on November 8, 1900, was lauded in posthumous praises for her influence and leadership skills. In December, new FAS Secretary Vanderpool wrote: "This society owes its existence to her loving interest in our feathered friends. ... She had watched with righteous indignation the wanton destruction of the beautiful birds which . . . added so much to the charm and beauty of our Southland. It was this womanly love which led her to ask others to unite in the creation of a society whose object is the protection of birds in Florida. We cannot speak too highly of her wise thoughtfulness and earnestness in this blessed work." A memorial *Bird-Lore* article commented that "under her leadership" FAS "promised to be an organization of more than usual influence, and it is hoped that in its ranks there is some one who will carry on the work which Mrs. Dommerich so successfully inaugurated."<sup>17</sup>

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16. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 1-6. FAS Minutes. "Kingsmill Marrs Photographs," website of Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, [www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fab033](http://www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fab033) accessed November 26, 2005.

17. "Obituary 1 - No Title," *New York Times* (1857-Current File), Nov. 10, 1900, ProQuest Historical Newspapers *New York Times* (1851-2002) 7 accessed November 26, 2005; FAS Minutes; *Bird-Lore*, II, no. 6 (December 1900), 203.

As FAS began a new year, it worked diligently for the enactment of bird-protection laws. Florida had few legislative examples to serve as models for enacting protective policy. An 1877 statute (repealed after two years) protected mockingbirds during breeding season and forbade the destruction of the nests, eggs, and young of plume sea birds. In 1891, the state offered protection for wading birds, but it had little effect on the plume trade. In May 1900, the federal government, bowing to public pressure, adopted the Lacey Act, which prohibited interstate commerce in birds that had state protections. Florida only needed to adopt the AOU Model Law to be covered under the federal legislative umbrella. The state organization called on its most influential friends for help. William Dutcher, then chair of the AOU's committee on bird protection, came to Florida in May 1901 to fight alongside the state's Audubon leaders for the model law passage. Although the legislature approved a new statute, it excluded certain birds that FAS had hoped to protect, including robins, shore birds, meadow larks, and hawks. Nevertheless, the group was off to a strong start, having made a statewide impact in its first year.<sup>18</sup>

Although men would hold the title of president for the first two decades and receive public attention for their efforts, the FAS women carried much of the organizational workload, reflecting their passion for their mission and their work in municipal house-keeping. As group members divided up duties, women became prominent leaders. Lida Bronson was elected treasurer in 1901 and served in that role until 1915, gathering contributions and dues and disbursing funds for projects. After her 1926 death, she was remembered by Audubon leaders for her efficiency, devotion, and regular attendance. She "was one of a small group in Maitland whose constancy and faith kept the Audubon movement alive in Florida," according to an FAS resolution reported in *The Maitland News*.<sup>19</sup>

Vanderpool's contribution to the organization was invaluable. From 1901 to 1917 she served as the FAS secretary, managing the correspondence and record keeping for the organization. Her duties included maintaining hand-written minutes of annual and executive committee meetings and corresponding with the local Audubon

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18. Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise*, 137; Graham, *The Audubon Ark*, 22-23. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 7-8.

19. Author Unknown, "Memorialized by Audubon Society," *The Maitland News*, April 6, 1927, Maitland Historical Society files.

groups scattered around the state, gathering reports from each and reading them at executive committee meetings. In addition, Vanderpool tirelessly provided society updates to newspaper editors around the state, mailed thousands of leaflets to school boards to encourage school participation, gathered information about school programs, and oversaw the posting of bird regulations in all Florida post offices. Since many of the early FAS members had northern residences, she took charge of much of the business during the summer months. It was a multi-faceted job perfectly suited for Vanderpool, a community activist who came to Maitland in 1876 with her husband, Isaac. The couple homesteaded property on Lake Maitland, where they planted an orange grove. Isaac, who assisted in the planning of Maitland, served as its mayor in 1887 and helped establish the nearby African American community of Eatonville. Like her progressive sisters, Harriet Vanderpool was involved in many aspects of civic reform, assisting Bishop Whipple with the founding of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Maitland and working with Clara Dommerich to establish the Maitland Public Library. She also wrote the official song of Maitland and, at her death in 1937, was mourned as one of the city's founders.<sup>20</sup>

In a 1901 report on the founding of FAS, published in *Bird-Lore*, Vanderpool showed her passion for the cause. "It may be of interest to some of your readers to know that Florida, the land of sunshine, flowers and balmy breezes, has at last awakened to the fact that these combined are not *all* that make their state so attractive and so different," Vanderpool wrote. "They find (even the most unconcerned) that their rivers, lakes and woods are strangely silent, and that some of the old-time charm and beauty has gone." FAS founders, "to whom these feathered songsters are real friends, and who grieved to see them so wantonly destroyed," had started work, including distribution of "literature and leaflets," member numbers were growing, and "we trust in a few years our eyes and ears will be gladdened as of old. Sunshine, flowers and the happy song of our thousands of native birds, and Florida *is* Paradise indeed," she added.<sup>21</sup>

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20. FAS Minutes. Vanderpool files, Maitland Historical Society; "Florida Audubon Society" by Mrs. Kingsmill Marrs, *Bird-Lore*, III, no. 6 (Dec. 1, 1901), 220. William Fremont Blackman, *History of Orange County Florida: Narrative and Biographical. Part I* (Chuluota, Fl.: Mickler House, 1973), 200.

21. Mrs. I. Vanderpool, "Florida Society!" *Bird-Lore*, III, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1901), 183.

As integral to FAS success as Bronson and Vanderpool were, perhaps no woman—or, arguably, man—was as influential as MARRS, whose efforts shaped the direction of FAS as well as other national bird groups. MARRS, daughter of Otis Norcross, who was elected mayor of Boston in 1867, was a member of the Massachusetts Audubon when she became a founder of FAS and chairman of the executive committee—a position she held until her death in 1926. She and her husband, Kingsmill, a wealthy traveler and art collector, wintered at “Maitland Cottage,” in the same town as Evangeline Whipple, the wife of the bishop and sister to Kingsmill. With a background much like that of Harriet Hemenway at the Massachusetts Audubon, MARRS was as important to the Florida group, taking up an even stronger leadership role. According to a 1926 FAS resolution reported in *The Maitland News*, Laura MARRS “gave continuously and unstintedly of her time, sympathy, council [sic] and money to its [FAS] work as long as she lived” and at her death left \$25,000 to the National Association of Audubon Societies to promote bird study and protection. Although she spent only part of her year in Maitland, MARRS also was busy in other local community issues, leading a woman’s club and supporting the Hungerford School in the Eatonville community. In later years, the MARRSes traveled extensively in Europe and Egypt and later lived in Florence, Italy, where Kingsmill died in 1912.<sup>22</sup>

Unless she was traveling, MARRS led the executive committee meetings, often at her home, where the operations and structure of FAS were discussed. MARRS also wrote annual reports for *Bird-Lore* and traveled to national meetings to represent the group. In 1901, MARRS attended a conference of Audubon societies held in New York City at which delegates first discussed the establishment of a national organization. However, no action was taken until the next year when a National Committee of Audubon Societies was created. As an important Audubon member, MARRS was consulted personally by the AOU’s Dutcher and concurred with his desires to create a formal national group. That led to the 1905

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22. Author Unknown, “Memorialized by Audubon Society,” *The Maitland News*, April 6, 1927, Maitland Historical Society files. FAS minutes. “Kingsmill MARRS Photographs,” website of Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass., [www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fab033](http://www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fab033) accessed November 26, 2005.

incorporation of the National Association of Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals, the present-day National Audubon Society.<sup>23</sup>

Marrs was also instrumental in the hiring of Guy Bradley in an effort to stop plume hunters in south Florida. In 1902, Kirk Munroe, a FAS vice president, wrote to Marrs about the destruction of bird populations by plume hunters in the Florida Keys and along the southern coastline. Munroe suggested that Bradley would be the right person to serve as a game warden in the area, since he had grown up there and was a former plume hunter. Marrs sent the recommendation to New York to Dutcher, who previously had employed lighthouse keepers to protect rookeries. Dutcher hired Bradley, at a salary of \$35 per month, and placed him in charge of patrolling Florida Bay and the Everglades. It was a 140-mile area of wetland marshes, tiny islands, rookeries, where poachers who were willing to ignore state and federal laws found an opportunity to make money in the otherwise economically depressed area. Bradley worked hard, sending Dutcher lists of New York companies he believed acted illegally in the plume trade. In 1903, FAS raised money to purchase a boat (named *Audubon*) to assist Bradley in his work. Marrs worried that he might be in danger and advised Dutcher of this. She was right. On July 8, 1905, Bradley was ambushed and shot to death after responding to what he thought was poaching on an island near his home. Although a man was arrested, the local grand jury refused to indict him. Bradley had become America's first martyr in the plume wars and FAS erected a monument to his death. "The murder of Warden Guy M. Bradley fills not only our Society in Florida, but the people of the United States, with horror," wrote Marrs in *Bird-Lore*. "A brave man shot at his post, defending the helpless against brutality, and all for what? A feather, to adorn the head of some woman!!" Three years later, a Florida west coast warden also was killed.<sup>24</sup>

23. FAS minutes; "Florida Audubon Society," *Bird-Lore* III, no. 6 (Dec. 1, 1901), 220; Graham, *The Audubon Ark*, 46; Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 8-13; Philippon, *Conserving Words*, 95.

24. FAS minutes. Graham, *The Audubon Ark*, 48-59; Leslie Kemp Poole, "The Florida story begins with Audubon Wardens," *Florida Naturalist*, 73, no. 2 (Summer 2000), 6-8. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 17-18; Mrs. Kingsmill Marrs, "State Reports - Florida," *Bird-Lore*, VII, no. 6 (Dec. 1, 1905), 316.

With these deaths, the Audubon movement gained momentum. FAS reports from its early years showed growing membership and activities, much of it supplied by the female members. By 1901, the society had published seven leaflets for distribution throughout the state, of which five were written by women. Marrs wrote two: "John James Audubon" and "Katie's Pledge," the latter for children. Her sister-in-law, Evangeline Whipple, wrote one entitled "A Letter to the Boys and Girls of the Audubon Society" and her friend Rose Cleveland penned "The Rights of the Man Versus the Bird." The group also worked with Orange County school representatives who agreed to conduct weekly half-hour bird lectures in local classrooms. In coming years, the society sponsored essay contests for children in many areas of the state, offered prizes for contest winners, and provided educational materials about birds—all part of a national push to influence the adults of the next generation. FAS also paid for traveling lecturers and sent articles to local newspapers and national publications. Educating the Florida public was a slow process, Dutcher noted in a 1904 report in *The Auk*, the AOU journal. "Progress in this direction must be slow. Prejudices and instincts of generations must be overcome; all the signs, however, are encouraging," he wrote.<sup>25</sup>

In 1903, FAS lauded the creation of the first national bird refuge in the United States. On March 14, President Theodore Roosevelt, at the urging of FAS members, particularly George N. Chamberlin, an executive committee member from Daytona Beach, established by executive order the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge to protect a prime bird roosting and nesting islet on Florida's east coast Indian River. It was a momentous occasion—the first of fifty-three federal sanctuaries that Roosevelt created. However, there was no money for enforcement, and Dutcher had to ask FAS for financial help in order to maintain a warden there.<sup>26</sup>

Roosevelt's creation of the national wildlife refuge system represented federal acknowledgement of the plight of birds and served as an indication of the growing American conservation movement. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had become clear to

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25. Mrs. Kingsmill Marrs, "Florida Audubon Society," *Bird-Lore* III, no. 6 (Dec. 1, 1901), 220; FAS Minutes. Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy*, 181. William Dutcher, "Report of the Committee on Bird Protection," *The Auk* XXI (January 1904), 133.

26. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 15.

Americans that their much-loved natural resources were jeopardized in many ways. People were concerned about dwindling wildlife and the diminishing amount of timber and arable land caused by exploitative uses such as overgrazing, mining, and monoculture farming. In response, Americans embraced the conservation movement, which supported protection "right use" of natural resources to benefit humans. Advocating better use of resources and controls over the actions of business and exploitative individuals, the conservation movement melded well with the Progressive Era reform agenda.<sup>27</sup>

Although they were unable to vote and participate in the political process until 1920, Progressive women pursued their civic interests through indirect influence in volunteer and charitable groups. As female activists extended their domestic agenda to provide safe, proper homes for their families, they pressed for public sanitation, orphanages, and hospitals. They also proved to be very effective in tackling conservation issues around the country. The Florida Audubon women were part of this movement, exercising power in the civic arena through their activism in the organization—a blending of public and private life. According to historian Sara M. Evans, women of this era found in voluntary groups "a new kind of free space, which offered the possibility of action outside the domestic sphere but not in formal governmental arenas from which they were banned. They practiced the basic skills of public life—to speak and to listen, to analyze issues in relation to structures of power, and to develop agendas and strategies for action."<sup>28</sup>

Progressive women were so effective in their conservation work that like-minded men often felt the need to preserve their masculinity by distancing themselves from protection arguments considered to be "feminine," observed historian Adam Rome. "Though some men were comfortable arguing for environmental reform in the same terms as women, many were not," he writes,

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27. Benjamin Kline, *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U. S. Environmental Movement* (Lanham, Md.: Acada Books, 2000), 51-55; Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: A Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D. C.: Island Press, 1993), 20-25.

28. Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Movement," 57-58; Sara M. Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Toward a Feminist Approach to Public Life," *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebock (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 120-28.



noting that arguments for “beauty, health, [and] future generations” were seen as the “province of women.” The movement to save birds, culminating in the 1900 Lacey Act, stands out because it was achieved through a “cross-gender alliance” that many men were reluctant to enter in other conservation realms, Rome states.<sup>29</sup>

The Audubon movement also galvanized women because it was female fashion that drove the destructive plume hunting. In *Bird-Lore*, Chapman wondered, “Is there no appeal from fashion’s decree? Women alone can answer these questions and the case is so clear she cannot shirk the responsibility of replying.” Not only was it a question of conserving resources, but the issue had become a moral one that called into question the vanity and responsibility of women. This gender-driven argument hit home with the female populace, although it ignored the fact that men were hunting the birds and running the millinery trade that profited from the bloody slaughter. Both sexes were responsible for the plume trade, but women were assigned greater guilt. In a 2004 article for *Audubon* magazine, environmental scholar Jennifer Price notes: “At a time when many people were ready to embrace conservation as a moral issue, the glaring complicity of the distaff half, who were supposed to be the moral caretakers for all society, made this issue resonate at a higher moral volume than any other. Throughout the rancorous debate that raged in newspapers and legislative halls and clubhouses and hat shops across the country, outraged Audubon activists proclaimed reasons to save not only birds but also the moral guardianship that women were supposed to ensure.”<sup>30</sup>

In Florida, the battle between females could be fierce. In her history, *The Florida Audubon Society: 1900-1935*, Lucy Worthington Blackman tells of south Florida’s Mary Barr Munroe, wife of author Kirk Munroe, “probably our most militant power:”

Wheresoe’er Mrs. Munroe’s keen eye saw an aigrette waving, there she followed, and cornering the wearer—be it on the street, in the crowded hotel lobby, on the beach, at

29. Rome, “Political Hermaphrodites’: Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America.”

30. Merchant, “Women of the Progressive Movement,” 72; Jennifer Price, “Hats Off to Audubon,” *Audubon*, November-December 2004, <http://magazine.audubon.org/features0412/hats.htm> accessed November 26, 2005.

church or entertainment or party—there compelled her to listen to the story of cruelty and murder of which her vanity was the contributing cause. And Mrs. Munroe was eloquent. It was not unusual for women to be reduced to tears, whether of anger or humiliation or repentance, and several were known to have taken off their hats and destroyed their aigrettes as a result of their encounter with Mrs. Monroe [sic].<sup>31</sup>

Florida Audubon worked hard to garner female support. In 1908, FAS started a campaign against wearing plumage and distributed a pledge to women around the state, especially women's organizations, asking them to refuse to adorn themselves with bird products. Audubon members asked Miami authorities to enforce prohibitions on plume trade during tourist season, particularly that of "Indians who brought their spoils by the boat load from the interior of the Everglades, and spread a veritable bargain counter before the women at the hotels and boarding houses," according to Blackman. Audubon women "preached their holy war," she writes, until "after a time the tourist women became shy about wearing their aigrettes and plumage ornaments in Florida. But it did not prevent them from receiving Indian emissaries in their rooms, where they hid their bargain treasures until they went north."<sup>32</sup>

In an effort to garner grassroots support, FAS worked closely with the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, which early on had a subcommittee for the preservation of birds. From its beginning in 1895, the FFWC led conservation efforts such tree planting and bird protection and later turned its attention to endangered species and wetlands preservation. At the 1905 FFWC annual meeting, the chair of the bird preservation committee "urged clubs to encourage their members to put out food and water for birds and boxes for martins, bluebirds and wrens" and read a letter from FAS asking for support. By its second decade, FFWC members were attuned to the loss of birds, not just from plume hunting but also from sportsmen who traveled the state's waterways, particularly the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers. "They had killed not for good or even for the feathers of these birds but just to prove their marksmanship or for the fun of seeing live birds

31. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 20-21.

32. *Ibid.*, 20.

fall," Jesse Hamm Meyer writes, adding that although "there were not a great many environmentally minded people working in organizations during those years," the FFWC had a strong, effective response that resulted in campaigns to preserve birds as well as efforts to conserve forests and plant trees in urban areas. "Their efforts intensified as they witnessed the further degradation of Florida's natural beauty and resources," she adds.<sup>33</sup>

The addition of FFWC as a sustaining member of Florida Audubon was a strategic triumph, which increased the Audubon base around the state. The FFWC represented 1,600 women in 36 clubs by 1910 and grew to more than 9,000 women by 1917, making it one of Florida's largest and most influential groups. Among its accomplishments were the creation of Royal Palm State Park, which would be the nucleus of Everglades National Park, and the preservation of forest state reserves.<sup>34</sup>

Florida Audubon Society members also networked through local women's clubs to gain female attention and spread their message. In an article in the 1904 edition of *The Rosalind*, a publication distributed to members of the same-named Orlando women's club founded in 1894, Laura Marrs pleaded for support for FAS work, noting that of its 600 members, six were also members of The Rosalind Club:

For it is not from sentiment nor a mere personal delight in the song or beauty of our birds that we ask this of you, but that there may be a general expression of disapproval of the merciless slaughter of these innocent creatures, which not only lend a charm but are of economic importance to our land.<sup>35</sup>

FAS members also extended their appeals to the most influential of the Progressive Era women's groups—The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), whose members were two million strong by 1915. Created in 1890, this umbrella

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33. Jesse Hamm Meyer, *Leading the Way: A Century of Service. The Florida Federation of Women's Clubs 1895-1995* (Lakeland, FL: GFWC Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, Inc., 1994), xii, 45-58.

34. Linda D. Vance, *May Mann Jennings: Florida's Genteel Activist* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1985), 56, 100.

35. Marrs, "The Florida Audubon Society"; *The Rosalind*, Souvenir Edition, Feb. 25, 1904, p. 1, in file VF Associations & Clubs - Rosalind, "The Rosalind Club," Orange County Regional History Center, Orlando, FL.

group, composed of clubs of diverse interests and actions, galvanized America's women into a force with which to be reckoned. GFWC members formulated platforms that covered a wide range of issues, from conservation to public sewage to factory conditions to women's rights and suffrage. A number of their programs provided the foundation for state and federal government agencies, an outcome that "attests to clubwomen's creativity in both improving the public sphere and making themselves prominent within it," writes Karen J. Blair. At its 1910 biennial, the GFWC, which had established committees to study conservation issues such as forestry and the Hetch-Hetchy Valley dam proposal in California, adopted a resolution endorsing Audubon bird protection work.<sup>36</sup>

The late nineteenth century rise of the women's club movement followed several paths but generally started with literary and self-help groups tasked with providing information "rarely available to women in the South." Clubs then evolved to focus on community social concerns and became "a training school for women who wanted to serve in public life." They were so successful that when states looked for female participation in civic reform, they sought club women to fill the role. Members who attended GFWC conventions often returned with new ideas for community work developed through conversations with women from other areas.<sup>37</sup>

Many FAS women fit this club-woman mold and the progressive impulse to spread a vision of better homes and communities to others through the activities of local, state, and national organizations. Marrs, Vanderpool, Bronson, and Dommerich were wealthy women with political and civic ties powerful elites in their communities. They addressed their concerns about con-

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36. Doris Weatherford, *Real Women of Tampa & Hillsborough County from Prehistory to the Millennium* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2004), 170; Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Defined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 119; Mary I. Wood, *The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs for the First Twenty-Two Years of its Organization* (Farmingdale, N.Y.: Dabor Social Science Publications, 1978), 247-270.

37. Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 158-162. In this history Scott also discusses the confines of the "lady" role that southern women had were expected to fulfill in their municipal housekeeping activities and the racism found in many communities.

servation through FAS, which gave them opportunities to exercise their talents for leadership and grassroots organizing through public speaking, handling of finances, correspondence, and publications. Although state membership numbers were not available, national Audubon membership showed a strong female component. In 1909 males dominated leadership roles, but forty percent of National Audubon membership was female—a number that grew to more than fifty percent by 1915. In the Florida Audubon Society, men controlled the presidency for the first two decades, but women served on the executive committee and led local groups. Many were also GFWC members and leaders, including Mary Munroe, who helped found the Coconut Grove and then the Miami Audubon societies and later served on the FAS executive committee. Munroe also gave her attention to other issues, assisting in the establishment of the Housekeeper's Club, an early Dade County women's club, and serving as the first president of the Dade County Federation of Women's Clubs. Lucy Worthington Blackman wrote the early Audubon history and was active as a FAS vice president and member of the executive committee (where her husband was president). Blackman was a charter member of the Woman's Club of Winter Park, founded in 1915, and she established the first domestic science program at Rollins College which sought to improve women's cooking and sewing as part of their college education. In 1940 Blackman authored a two-volume work, *The Women of Florida* to pay homage to other activist females in the state and show "the part individual and organized women have played" in the state's history.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the best examples of Progressive women were politically connected May Mann Jennings, wife of a former governor

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38. Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Movement," 79-80; Oliver H. Orr Jr., *Saving American Birds: T. Gilbert Pearson and the Founding of the Audubon Movement* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1992), 204. Lucy Worthington Blackman, *The Women of Florida: Vol. II* (The Southern Historical Publishing Associates, 1940), 70, 89, 145; Blackman, *The Women of Florida: Vol. I* (The Southern Historical Publishing Associates, 1940), x. William Fremont Blackman, *History of Orange County Florida*, 186. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 25, 42; Marrs, "State Audubon Reports - Florida," *Bird-Lore*, XV, no. 6 (Dec. 1, 1913), 448; Author Unknown, "Audubon Society Notes," March 30, 1921 news article from unknown newspaper, FAS unnamed files. Emily Perry Dieterich, "Birds of Feather: The Coconut Grove Audubon Society, 1915-1917." *Tequesta*, No. XLV, 1985, 3-27.



May Mann Jennings was a Progressive reformer who was active in Florida women's club work and became known as the "Mother of Florida Forestry." *Photograph courtesy of State Archives of Florida.*

and a powerful conservationist who served on the FAS executive committee from 1919 to 1924, and Katherine Bell Tippetts, a community activist who founded the St. Petersburg Audubon Society (SPAS) in 1909 and served as its president until 1940—the longest

tenure of any SPAS president. Tippetts also was the first FAS female president.<sup>39</sup>

Jennings was born into the political life. Her father, Austin Shuey Mann, was a successful businessman and Florida politician, who helped to draft the state's 1885 constitution and served in the state senate. Her husband, William Sherman Jennings was Florida governor from 1901 to 1905, a period of Progressive activism that increased education funding and enacted laws that protected birds and timber, and regulated drugs and food. Governor Jennings also succeeded in gaining state control of Everglades lands and pressed for draining and reclaiming South Florida swampland—a step seen as good conservation stewardship at the time. Ironically, May Jennings would become a driving force in the efforts that eventually led to the establishment of the Everglades National Park. After her husband's gubernatorial term, Jennings became very active in club work, serving in a variety of leadership roles at local, state and national levels. She also served in the Florida Chamber of Commerce and worked on state forestry conservation initiatives, earning the title of "Mother of Florida Forestry." By age 42, with her unanimous election as president of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, Jennings "had become the most politically powerful woman in the state," according to her biographer, Linda D. Vance. One of her first acts in office was to use the organization's strength to press for state preservation of Royal Palm Hammock on Paradise Key, a hammock island in the Everglades, a cause Mary Munroe also advocated, Vance notes. Two years later, the hammock, now named Royal Palm Park became the nucleus of Everglades National Park. Dedicated in 1947, the national park stood as a testament to the tenacity of the women's clubs and Jennings. Along with a long list of credentials, Jennings also held several high level posts in the GFWC, worked extensively on World War I savings stamps efforts, and waged an unsuccessful fight for passage of the woman suffrage amendment in Florida. After the amendment was approved nationally, Jennings wrote to Tippetts, a fellow clubwoman and expressed her hopes that women's votes and the strength of FFWC would make a

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39. Blackman, *The Women of Florida: Vol. II* (The Southern Historical Publishing Associates, 1940), 70, 92-7; Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 25, 42. "Presidents of the St. Petersburg Audubon Society." Author Unknown, in St. Petersburg Audubon Society Archives, St. Petersburg, Fl.

difference in the group's agenda for state improvement: "I believe the State Federation is one of the strongest factors for reforms of all kinds in the State, and I believe it is to wield a stronger influence now that women have the ballot than ever before."<sup>40</sup>

From the outset, Tippetts was a strong leader in the local conservation movement—a role that eventually would influence state and national drives to save the nation's wildlife. Well-educated and the widow of a foreign correspondent, Tippetts was a business woman who had the time and energy to be involved in many aspects of her community. In 1909, the same year her husband died, Tippetts took over his business interests and followed one of her own, founding the St. Petersburg Audubon Society (SPAS), which followed the FAS example of working to distribute information about imperiled bird populations. According to SPAS archives, the group emphasized the economic value of birds "to agriculture and to the welfare of man generally." SPAS started Junior Audubon classes in local schools and offered annual prizes to children who participated in the programs. Tippetts, an essayist and novelist who was dubbed "The Florida Bird Woman," used her skills and connections to win local and state protections, including bird sanctuaries and the passage of a 1913 law to establish the Florida Fish and Game Commission. That same year, SPAS secured passage of a city ordinance requiring licensing of cats, considered a scourge to bird populations. In 1920, Tippetts became the first female FAS president. Two years later she became the second woman in Florida to run for a seat in the state legislature (she was unsuccessful, but the race was so close it forced a recount)—

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40. Vance, *May Mann Jennings*, 1-8, 30-39, 78-79, 129-132. Vance's work on Jennings is a thorough look at a Florida progressive whose influence as a woman was unprecedented in the state. Although little has been written about Florida women progressives, Nancy Hewitt's *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, 1880-1920s* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001) is a significant contribution highlighting not just the female activism of the era but also the multicultural populace of Tampa which created an atmosphere found in few other southern cities. Hewitt provides little information about conservation activities there. Blackman, *The Women of Florida, Vol. II*, 92-97. Dave Nelson, "Improving' Paradise: The Civilian Conservation Corps and Environmental Change in Florida," *Paradise Lost: The Environmental History of Florida*, ed. Jack E. Davis and Raymond Arsenault (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 95-96. May Jennings to Katherine Tippetts 18 February 1921. May Mann Jennings Papers, Box 17, Correspondence File: 1921: February-April. Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.



an indication of her political interests, accomplishments, and support base. Like many women of her era, Tippetts was involved in a host of other groups, including the National Park Association, the Boy Scouts of America, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, local and state women's clubs (she served as FFWC president from 1926-28), and the General Federation of Women's Clubs where she served as Bird Chairman. She successfully championed the legislation to name the mockingbird as the official Florida state bird, encouraged similar bird campaigns in other states, and worked to have the wild rose named the national flower.<sup>41</sup>

In its second decade, Florida Audubon continued to pursue its original objectives—education, public awareness, and increased protection. By 1911 almost every state in the U. S. had adopted the AOU model law and had established an Audubon society. Florida had passed new legislation that outlawed target shooting of live birds. A New York state law forbade plume sales, an act that hurt the millinery trade in illegal plumes. In 1913 two federal laws—a migratory bird law and a non-importation law—went into effect and expanded efforts to end the bird extermination business. Marrs worked three months to secure the non-importation law, which drew some 200,000 letters and telegrams to Congressional leaders. When it passed, the price of plumes, bird skins, and feathers in London and Berlin dropped dramatically, although sales did not cease. That same year, Florida passed legislation creating a state fish and game commission and used law enforcement officers

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41. Ray Arsenaault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 123. Unknown Author, "Report of the St. Petersburg Audubon Society 1925," in St. Petersburg Audubon Society Archives, St. Petersburg, Fl. Katherine Tippetts, "Notes on the founding and current status of St. Petersburg Audubon Society, Inc.," in St. Petersburg Audubon Society Archives, St. Petersburg, Fl. Susan Eastman, "'Bird Woman' took wing ahead of time," *St. Petersburg Times*, June 18, 1997, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sptimes/access/12550349.html?dids=12550349:12550349&F<T=FT&FMTS=CITE:FT&date=Jun+18%2C+1997&author=SUSAN+EASTMAN&pup=St.+Petersburg+Times&edition=&startpage=15&desc=%60Bird+Woman%27+took+wing+ahead+of+time>, accessed Aug. 13, 2006. Scott Taylor Hartzell, "'Everything she did was her way of being good,'" *St. Petersburg Times*, Mar. 17, 1999. <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sptimes/access/39804287.html?dids=39804287:39804287&FMT=FT&FMTS=ABS:FT&date=Mar+17%2C+1999&author=SCOTT+TAYLOR+HARTZELL&pub=St.+Petersburg+Times&edition=&startpage=5&desc=%27Everything+she+did+was+her+way+of+being+good%27&pf=1>, accessed Aug. 13, 2006. Lucy Worthington Blackman, *The Women of Florida, Vol. II*, 70.

as ex-officio game wardens. The state also passed safeguards for the robin, which had been left out of the 1901 law. Unfortunately, both laws were repealed two years later and the legislature decided that game and bird enforcement was county business. "There followed an orgy of lawless hunting and fishing and shooting under the system of county wardens appointed all too largely for political favors, which made the most optimistic Audubonist to lose heart and hope," according to Blackman's FAS history. "This is the sort of legislation under which and against which the Audubon Society had to work for the next decade." That all the birds were not "annihilated" was due to changing public attitudes that FAS had molded, she noted.<sup>42</sup>

The FAS leaders labored on, determined to continue the battle against persistent, although illegal, plume hunting. Dr. William F. Blackman, FAS president and president of Rollins College (and Lucy Blackman's husband), traveled around the state lecturing on the Audubon efforts to stop the plume-related deaths. However, tragedy struck in 1916 with the destruction of southwest Florida's Alligator Bay Rookery, then the largest egret rookery in the state. Poachers shot an estimated eight hundred birds and set fire to the rookery to force the colony to move to more accessible grounds—an act of destruction made possible because there were not enough funds to pay for patrolling wardens to guard the nesting area. Not all state birds were lost, however, thanks in part to FAS efforts that had increased rookery numbers. By 1920 there would be ten federal bird refuges in Florida coastal nesting areas, and the National Association of Audubon Societies had preserved an additional island in Alachua County as a reservation. It was the first state refuge to be maintained by the national group. With a change in fashion—by 1917 prostitutes were using plumes in their hats, leading many women to stop wearing them—the demand for feathers diminished, although many species remained in peril.<sup>43</sup>

The American involvement in World War I sapped some of the FAS strength, but the group remained active, developing a four-

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42. Orr, *Saving American Birds*, 3. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 26-30. Marrs, "State Audubon Reports - Florida," *Bird-Lore*, XII, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1911), 367.

43. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 21, 30-31, 44. Derr, *Some Kind of Paradise*, 138-139.

page publication for quarterly mailings to all FAS members. The end of the war and the election of Tippetts as FAS president in 1920—the same year women won the right to vote and moved into a broader political arena—signaled a new start for FAS and acknowledged the powerful role that women had come to hold in the organization. “She brought to the new office enthusiasm, knowledge of bird life and experience not alone in Audubon work, but in the Woman’s Club interests,” Blackman wrote, adding that Tippetts, who had led the effort to create eleven bird sanctuaries in Pinellas County, would emphasize the sanctuary movement in coming years. By the third anniversary of Tippetts’s presidency, Florida had thirty new sanctuaries and Volusia County had become the first county in the country to be designated a sanctuary by a state legislature.<sup>44</sup>

It had been a remarkable twenty years for the Florida Audubon Society. From a founding group of fifteen, the gathering inspired by Clara Dommerich had grown into an organization with a membership of more than one hundred times that amount, pressing for legislation, education, and public awareness. Although it took two decades before a female became its elected leader, FAS had many women in critical leadership roles. They used their talents to handle the finances, keep records, communicate with many likeminded groups, write brochures, and lead meetings. They traveled to meetings with national leaders and kept the emphasis on educating the public about the needless destruction that women’s fashions and plume hunting were bringing to the state’s aesthetics and resources. They also brought with them invaluable connections to other organizations, particularly women’s clubs, where they rallied grassroots support from other progressive women for FAS initiatives at the local, state and national levels. In short, FAS gave women the opportunity to shine as grassroots organizers and civic leaders. In return, the women breathed life into the Florida Audubon Society and made it a force with which to be reckoned from its infancy into its adolescent years. Although it was largely unseen, the tireless work of these community-minded women would be felt into the next century.

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44. Blackman, *The Florida Audubon Society*, 30-31.

## Fish On: Pensacola's Red Snapper Fishery

By Jason T. Raupp

In an article he wrote in 1942 for *The American Neptune* Fred Hunt remembered fishing the Campeche Bank of the northern coast of the Yucatan in the "late 'teens" when the Pensacola red snapper fleet was "the only big American deep-sea fishing fleet using all-sail vessels exclusively." Though he admitted the fleet was perhaps not as picturesque as it seemed to him at his "meeting salt water for the first time," the Alabama native penned a colorful tale of the men who plied the waters of the Gulf and drank away their pay in the bars and saloons of Pensacola. In the course of his narrative, as he described the transition from sails to diesel-powered engines, he also unwittingly provided a chronicle of the effect of technology and the impact of a modern consumer economy on the fishing industry.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Fred Hunt, "Compeche Days," in *Thirty Years of The American Neptune*, edited by Ernest S. Dodge (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 253-266. Quote found on page 253.

The emergence of Pensacola in the period 1880-1930 as the self-proclaimed "Red Snapper Capital of the World" intersected with national economic, technological, and social transformations that propelled the fishing industry into modern business and labor relations. As technology expanded the range and length of fishing trips and ensured the freshness of deep sea catches, consumers from the nation's interior demanded access to the ocean's products; the resulting threats to established fisheries mimicked environmental and conservation concerns elsewhere. The presence of the Pensacola red snapper industry shaped the local economy and intersected with national and international trends in business, technology, labor, and trade relations. By the 1960s, a similar confluence of environmental, economic, and technological factors led to the decline of the red snapper industry.

The fisheries of Florida's northern Gulf Coast are among the least studied aspects of the state's rich maritime heritage. The first attempts to document the origins of the regions fisheries appeared in the bulletins and reports of the agents of the United States Fish Commission. In the early years of the twentieth century magazines, such as *Bliss Quarterly*, the *Bliss Magazine Guide to Pensacola and Western Florida*, *Common Sense: Devoted to Better Social and Industrial Conditions*, and *The Pensacolian*, committed to the promotion of Pensacola's economy and potential for growth, highlighted local fisheries in articles and essays. Occasionally, national fishery publications, such as *American Neptune*, *True: Fishing Yearbook*, *American Fisherman*, or *Roving Fisherman*, devoted space to Pensacola's red snapper fishery. More recently, environmental historians have analyzed the confluence of nature, law and economic development in pathbreaking studies such as Arthur F. McEvoy's monograph on California fisheries. However, except for an occasional graduate thesis, tomes on the emergence of the New South, and treatises on conservation and environmental issues fail to include the Pensacola red snapper fishery.<sup>2</sup> This article fills that gap by arguing that during its peak years (1880-1930) the

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2. Arthur F. McEvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fishers, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). For examples of graduate work, see Charles Robert McNeil, "The Red Snapper Industry of Pensacola, 1845-1965: An Historical Perspective," (M.A. Thesis, University of West Florida, 1977), and David R. Baumer, "Fishing Vessels of the Northern Gulf Coast Red Snapper Fishery," (MS thesis, East Carolina University, 1991).

Pensacola red snapper industry provides a window for understanding the transformation of Gulf Coast fishing from a local business to a modern industry with all the technological, economic, and global implications that accompany such change.

Several factors explain the development of the fishing industry in Pensacola. First, Pensacola Bay is unsurpassed on the Gulf in expanse of anchorage area.<sup>3</sup> Second, deep water extends all the way to shore, making it easy to load and unload vessels.<sup>4</sup> Third, this excellent natural harbor was improved by completion of railroad lines that connected Pensacola to the interior rail networks. Finally, Dr. John Gorrie's crucial development of a process for producing ice cheaply revolutionized food storage.<sup>5</sup> The combination of these factors provided the necessary ingredients to make the city perfectly suited for the emerging red snapper industry.

As with other activities along the coast, fishing was an important means of procuring food. Early naturalists and travelers recorded the importance of fishing to meeting the food needs of indigenous people. Later white settlers also relied on fish as an important source of protein. Noted naturalist and co-owner of the Warren Fish Company, Silas Stearns explained that, "For a long time the fishing in Florida was done by the farmers and settlers for home consumption, while with the growth of the larger towns and fishing industries arose simply to supply the immediate neighborhoods."<sup>6</sup> In time, however, the discovery of a new fish species transformed the local fishery into a booming economy.

In the 1840s, the crews of Pensacola pilot boats first noticed the red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) as they drifted offshore in deep water. While awaiting ships in need of their services, crews aboard these boats often fished to pass the time. Frequently fishers hooked into the fish, which they referred to as red snapper. The name derives from the fishes' vivid red color and their habit of biting at almost anything when hungry—a tendency that made

3. "Pinnacle of Prosperity is Pensacola's Prospect," *The Pensacolian*, I, no.11 (1911): 25.
4. "Pensacola Harbor," *Common Sense: Devoted to Better Social and Industrial Conditions*, I, no. VII (August 2, 1902): 3.
5. Raymond B. Becker, *John Gorrie, M.D.: Father of Air Conditioning and Mechanical Refrigeration* (New York: Carlton Press, 1972), 15.
6. Silas Stearns, "Some of the Fisheries of Western Florida." *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission For 1887* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), 465.

fishing enjoyable. As Silas Stearns explained, "When the fish are hungry they bite as fast as the lines are lowered to them and even raise near the surface of the sea in their eagerness, biting at bare hooks or anything that is offered. From this habit they have gained the name of snappers."<sup>7</sup>

It did not take long for pilots to realize the snapper's potential as a food source and markets slowly developed to supply an increasing local demand for fresh fish. Though the Civil War disrupted the development of the snapper trade for a brief time, a taste for the red snapper continued to grow and a post-war regional market centering on New Orleans emerged. During the post war period New Orleans proved important to the development of regional fish markets because it was a place where people could be found who had ". . . purses filled by the depreciated currency of the day [and] who could afford the luxury of a baked or boiled snapper."<sup>8</sup> Soon considered one of the finest edible fishes, the demand for red snapper in the Gulf Coast markets greatly increased.<sup>9</sup>

The first commercial efforts to market red snapper in Pensacola began in 1871 when S.C. Cobb and Major John C. Ruse established the Pensacola Ice Company. The company owned only one fishing vessel and therefore contracted with experienced deep-water fishers from New England to fish for red snapper.<sup>10</sup> These fishers were happy to accept the work; winters spent working the warm waters of the south allowed them to avoid the potentially devastating storms of the North Atlantic. The vessels employed were northern-built and ideal for the fishery because of they had the necessary equipment to keep the catch alive until the boat returned to port. Fishers had known for some time that fresh fish, when packed in ice, shipped well, and remained in good condition for a long period of time. Importing ice cut from frozen

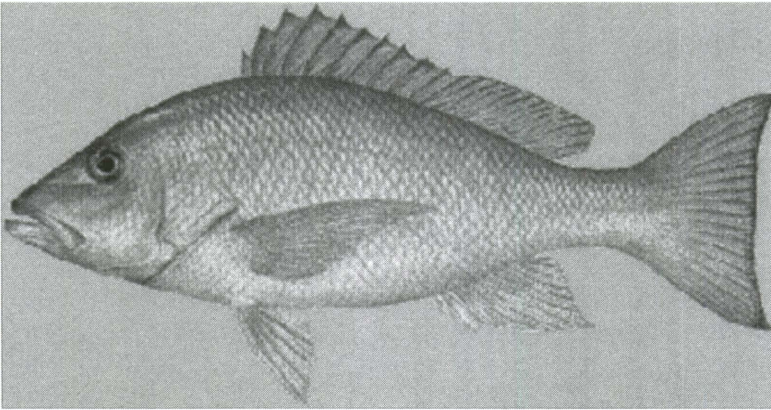
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7. Silas Stearns, "Notes on the Red Snapper," *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission For 1885* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 94.

8. Andrew F. Warren, "The Red Snapper Fisheries: Their Past, Present, and Future," *Proceedings and Papers of the National Fisheries Congress*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 331.

9. "History of the Red Snapper Fishery," *Report of the Commissioner For 1885, Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 82.

10. *Ibid.*, 80.



Goode, *The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States* (Government Printing Office: 1884), 395.

Gulf Red Snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*).

lakes in the North, however, was too expensive for use on ships working in the Gulf.<sup>11</sup> The “well-smacks” of southern New England origin, which allowed the fishers to keep the catch alive for days through the use of free-flooding live wells, proved more suitable for the Pensacola fishery. These sailing vessels averaged from 20 to 45 tons and 40 to 65 feet in length and required a crew of six to ten men. The lifespan of the fish in the wells was quite short and fish caught deeper than twenty fathoms usually died because of the temperature difference. Trips to the snapper grounds only lasted a few days, limiting the size of the catch, and in turn, limiting the growth potential of the market. Due to increasing popularity and demand for red snapper, these ships could not keep up with the market.

When the industry began to use ice for preservation in the 1880’s, fish company owners realized that vessels equipped with large iceboxes rather than live wells were much more efficient and cost effective. They could store more fish and remain at sea for much longer periods of time. Originating in northern New

11. A. Howard Clark, “Notes on the History of Preparing Fish for Market by Freezing,” *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission For 1887* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), 466. In the US, ice was first used in the preservation of fish about 1842, and in 1845 fishing vessels began to take ice to preserve their catch.



England and known as "tight-bottomed" schooners, these schooners proved the ideal transitional vessels.<sup>12</sup>

Known locally as smacks, these ships had sleek, deep hulls and employed a fore and aft rig design that provided faster speeds and easily covered greater distances.<sup>13</sup> Loaded with 20 to 30 tons of ice, smacks measured 70 to 100 feet in length, had an average displacement between 25 to 60 tons, required a crew of eight to ten men, and allowed for catches ranging from 15 to 30 tons.<sup>14</sup> The increase in vessel size and design, as well as the practice of using ice for preserving catches, allowed the fishers to make longer trips to more distant grounds. Soon such schooners revolutionized the red snapper fishery.

Once the Pensacola Ice Company demonstrated the economic potential of supplying ice to the local fishing industry, several additional ice houses opened, and the red snapper fishery flourished. The two most notable of these were the Warren & Company, which began operations in 1880 when A.F. Warren left the Pensacola Fish Company, and E.E. Saunders and Company, started in 1882 by Saunders and Captain T.E. Welles (formerly a smack captain of the Pensacola Fish Company fleet.)<sup>15</sup> At least a half dozen other fish houses opened over the years, but none could compete with the hold on the industry that the Warren and Saunders houses enjoyed due to the size of their respective operations. Both of these companies proved integral to the success of the industry and in time became important commercial endeavors in Pensacola.<sup>16</sup>

Icehouse entrepreneurs utilized the integrated national transportation network and systematized their business practices to maximize their profits and move fish effectively from the ocean to interior customers. The two principal fish companies

12. "Vessels and Boats," *Report of the Commissioner For 1885, Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 67; David R. Baumer, "Fishing Vessels of the Northern Gulf Coast Red Snapper Industry," (M.A. Thesis, East Carolina University, 1991).
13. McNeil, "Red Snapper Industry of Pensacola," 21. The term smack derives from the sound of water smacking around in the live wells of well smacks. By the turn of the century, all vessels employed in the snapper fishery were referred to as smacks.
14. Bliss, *Bliss Magazine Guide to Pensacola* (January 1899): 78.
15. "Snapper Fishery," 80. Major Ruse died shortly after the company opened, and A.F. Warren purchased interest in the company and became a partner.
16. H. Clay Armstrong, ed., *History of Escambia County, Florida*, (St. Augustine: The Record Company, Printers, 1930), 148.

maintained their own wharves for unloading the catches of their smacks. Saunders & Co. owned the Palafox wharf and the Warren Fish Co. owned the Baylen wharf. Both were centrally located along Pensacola's waterfront and each of these structures was sturdily built and included railroad spurs that connected them to the recently developed local rail lines. By 1897 the Louisville & Nashville and the Pensacola & Atlantic connected the city to larger lines in Alabama that led to major cities in the interior of the United States. The Pensacola fish houses shipped thousands of tons of red snapper in refrigerator cars to branch houses throughout the country, from New York City to Omaha, Nebraska; these branch houses then distributed the fish by express to local markets.<sup>17</sup>

Turn-of-the century Americans, increasingly aware of the health benefits of certain foods, clamored for fresh seafood. Pensacola's fish houses took advantage of low-cost print technology and aggressively marketed red snapper to an eager market. Advertisements in magazines across the country touted the health benefits of the fish. Red snapper was portrayed as a health giving food that stimulated and formed the muscles and renewed the brain—a claim that led to editorial debates on the merits of eating fish and prompted one exasperated writer to remind everyone that “fish could only assist, [it] could not create brains.”<sup>18</sup>

Like their counterparts in other industries, fish houses and ice houses also operated a number of ancillary businesses that improved their profits. In addition to supplying their own fishing fleet needs, icehouses sold to individual fishing smacks as well as meeting the refrigeration needs of local merchants and citizens. Fishmeal plants generated extra revenue through the use of the parts of red snapper and other fish usually discarded after cleaning. These plants produced millions of pounds of fishmeal monthly and fish houses profited greatly from their products which were used in making cooking sauces and feed for animals.

Throughout the 1880's, Pensacola's red snapper industry grew at a steady rate, and, as was the case for other extractive industries, a noticeable depletion in the numbers of fish on the local grounds

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17. Chas. H. Bliss, “Railroads,” *Bliss' Quarterly: Pensacola of To-day*, III, no.3 (January 1897): 37.

18. Chas. H. Bliss, “E.E. Saunders & Co.,” *The Bliss Magazine Guide to Pensacola and Western Florida*. (January 1899): 80.

was observed.<sup>19</sup> The declining fishery alarmed state officials, as well as members of the United States Fish Commission; who sought new grounds to supply the demand for the fish, as well as secure the future of the species.<sup>20</sup> Fortunately, in the winter of 1885, the research vessel *Albatross* discovered new snapper grounds ranging south of Tampa to the Dry Tortugas. While these banks helped infuse the market with a fresh supply of red snapper, the discovery of fishing grounds off islands in the Bay of Campeche, around the Yucatan Peninsula, initiated the greatest period of productivity that the industry had yet seen. The Campeche Banks were located 450 to 700 miles south and southeast of Pensacola on the far side of the Gulf of Mexico. The seemingly inexhaustible quantities of fish obtained from both of these areas and the availability of larger smacks equipped for longer voyages led to regular winter trips, lasting between two and four weeks.<sup>21</sup>

By 1910, the main body of the Pensacola fleet fished the Campeche banks year round, although some fishers continued working the nearshore grounds (30 to 150 miles offshore of Pensacola) and provided the local markets with fresh fish. Local fishers employed small sailing vessels known as "Chingamarings" or simply "Chings," which were ideally suited for this activity.<sup>22</sup> Though much smaller in size, generally displacing less than 20 tons, chings were similar in construction to the schooner smacks. Ching crews numbered between three and seven men, the length

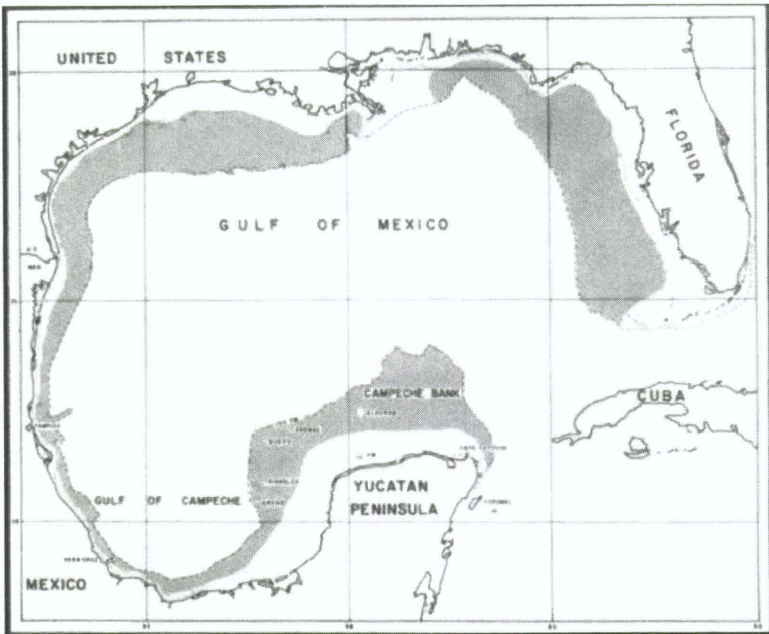
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19. Silas Stearns, "Fluctuations in the Fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico and the Proposed Investigations of Them." *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission For 1883* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), 467.

20. Very early in the history of the red snapper fishery, the state of Florida made some effort to begin protecting Gulf fishes. A summary of the 1879 law is found in a personal notebook kept by Silas Stearns (in the Silas Stearns Manuscript Collection, John C. Pace Library, Special Collections). Beginning "Legislature of Florida passed an act to protect food fishes," he cites the first four sections of the law and states, "Sec. 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> provide the enforcement of this act (*sic*)."

21. Baumer, "Fishing Vessels of the Northern Gulf Coast Red Snapper Fishery," 126. Baumer explains the vestigial usage of the term smack in relation to larger vessels. "Technically the use of live well smacks ended in the 1880s, commercial red snapper fishermen continued to apply the term 'fishing smack' to a majority of the larger vessels used in the industry until the 1940s - indicating the strength and the persistence of the southern New England influence on the Gulf of Mexico snapper and grouper fishery."

22. Fred Hunt, "Campeche Days - After Snapper from Pensacola," in *Thirty Years of the American Neptune*, ed. Ernest S. Dodge (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972): 253.



Carpenter, *A Review of the Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Fishery* (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Circular 208: 1965).

Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishing grounds.

of an average trip was three to six days, and the catch ranged from 500 to 3000 pounds of red snapper.<sup>23</sup>

The basic methods employed to capture the red snapper remained the same from the beginnings of the fishery through the 1950s. A.F. Warren, an expert on the subject of snapper fishing and owner of the Warren Fish Company, provided an excellent summary of this method in a paper presented to the National Fishery Congress held at Tampa, Florida in January, 1898:

The fish are found by the continual throwing of a lead line, carrying a baited hook. A man standing on the weather rail, supporting himself by a hold on the main shroud, swings the line, to which is attached a 9-pound lead; he releases it as he swings it under and forward, and

23. Norman D. Jarvis, *Fishery for Red Snappers and Groupers in the Gulf of Mexico*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Fisheries, Investigational Report No. 26 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935), 7.

lets it swing to the bottom, and 40 fathoms depth is reached as the hand of the leadsman comes over the lead, although the vessel may be moving forward 3 or 4 knots per hour. If the fish are present and hungry, they snatch the hook, and one is brought to the surface. As soon as a bite is announced, a dory, with one man, provided with fishing gear, is at once launched, and if the fish bite well the smack is brought back to the spot and either anchored or permitted to drift broadside across the ground. When she drifts away from the fish, she is again worked to windward, and the same process is completed. This process of sounding is sometimes followed all day without success; and again, the fish are quickly found. Sometimes six men will catch a thousand fish in a few hours, and other times two or three hundred fish will be the limit of a day's hard sounding and patient fishing.<sup>24</sup>

To catch the fish, the fishers used tarred-cotton hand lines of one hundred fathoms in length, rigged with three hooks and a single lead weight of three to six pounds and baited with small salted baitfish. Fishers knew that red snapper fed on certain kinds of formations known as "banks" and were always found around Mexico where snapper banks were known, as well as all over the northern Gulf of Mexico.<sup>25</sup> Rock coral or gravel formations called "lumps" provided ideal feeding grounds for red snappers. Snapper feed on crustaceans and various small fish, which were more abundant on these spots than in surrounding areas.<sup>26</sup> Because of the uneven nature of the snapper grounds other methods of fishing such as trawling with a net were not considered practical, and snapper had to be caught by hook and line.<sup>27</sup>

The men who comprised the crews of the smacks plying the trade were diverse in origin and generally rough in character. Early in the history of the fishery "Yankee fishers" who arrived aboard New England well smacks dominated the trade. However,

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24. Warren, "The Red Snapper Fisheries," 333.

25. Chas. H. Bliss, "The Fish Industry," *Bliss' Magazine: Guide to Pensacola... Facts for Tourists, Pleasure Seekers, Sportsmen, Home Seekers, and Investors*, VI, no.1 (April 1900): 99.

26. Jarvis, *Fishery for Red Snappers*, 5.

27. Silas Stearns "Notes on the Fisheries of Pensacola, FLA." *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission For 1887* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), 76.

as the fishery expanded into a Pensacola-based operation, most of the New England fishers returned home and polyglot crews consisting of Italians, Scandinavians, Minorcans, French, Spanish, Greeks, and others, became involved in the business.<sup>28</sup> Most of these men arrived in Pensacola aboard larger transoceanic ships and had either been paid off or jumped ship and decided to base themselves in Pensacola.<sup>29</sup> Interest in the kinds of men employed in the fishery appeared very early in its history. In a letter addressed to Silas Stearns, dated August 5, 1879, an official of the United States Fish Commission explained the need for reliable statistics about the value of the Gulf fisheries for the year 1880, and predicted that, "Next in importance will be the study of the fishermen and social and physical condition."<sup>30</sup>

Known as "motley crews" of nomads, usually with no domestic ties, it was not long before sailors and fishers developed a reputation around the city as "ne'er-do-wells" when at port.<sup>31</sup> Local stories depicted the men as spending most of their shore time drinking in the bars along Palafox Street and frequenting the brothels of Liberty Street. Though alcohol abuse was viewed as a scourge among these men, like natural catastrophes, it also was considered an occupational hazard. As one captain put it, "The cheap wine they sell in those Palafox bars is a bigger menace to the snapper industry than any hurricane."<sup>32</sup> It was not uncommon for fishers to spend their entire "lay," or wages received as their share of the catch, within the first night or two at port.<sup>33</sup>

Due to the perceived unreliability of the fishers as employees, a captain could never count on the same crew to return for the

28. "The Fishermen," *Report of the Commissioner For 1885*, 66-67.

29. No record of females working aboard snapper fishing vessels was found during archival research.

30. Letter from an unknown United States Fish Commission official to Silas Stearns, dated August 5<sup>th</sup> 1879. Silas Stearns Manuscript Collection, John C. Pace Library, Special Collections.

31. "Pensacola," *Harper's Weekly*, 18 October 1884, 692.

32. Wyatt Blassingame, "They Sail From Hangover Harbor," *True: Fishing Yearbook*, 1958, 54.

33. Stearns, "Examination of the Fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico." *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission For 1885* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 285. The lay refers to the share of the catch, which was traditionally the way that the men were paid for their services. An average fisherman could expect to earn between twenty-five and seventy dollars per trip, unless it resulted in a "broker" (no fish caught), and then they received one large snapper that they might sell for a dollar in Pensacola.

next trip. In general, as soon as the fishers received their lay, they left the smacks retaining no allegiance. For this reason smack captains resorted to whatever means necessary to secure a crew. Common practices included coaxing the men into a trip with free alcohol the night before heading out, a custom known as shanghaiing.<sup>34</sup> The latter practice involved getting fishers drunk enough to pass out aboard the smack; when the fisher awoke at sea he had no choice but to make the trip. "Hangover harbor" was soon a common nickname for Pensacola.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the life of fishers was best summed up by Silas Stearns who observed that, "Storms, adverse winds, and currents affect the business of the fishers very much, and at best theirs is a hard, disagreeable life."<sup>36</sup>

Over time the combined problems of declining fish populations, lack of dependable crews, and natural catastrophes took their toll on the red snapper industry. Several noteworthy events occurred in the early twentieth century that slowly drained the life out of the fishery. One major problem that damaged the industry was the Mexican government's claim to ownership of the Campeche Banks. Mexico contended that the accepted three-mile rule for international waters included the islands in the Bay of Campeche. Despite warnings, American fishers continued to work these waters. Some defended the practice, as one Mobile-based captain did by claiming that he had at no time received warning from the Mexican government as to alleged poaching and that the boats of his company had not encroached upon Mexican waters unless that government was justified in a claim of jurisdiction over all waters inside a line drawn from the Rio Grande and the Yucatan Peninsula.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless the Mexican gunboat *Vera Cruz* confiscated the fishing smacks *Silas Stearns* of Pensacola and *D.L. Taft* of Mobile, Alabama, off Aloranez reef (northwest of Yucatan). Charging the crews with illegal fishing in Mexican waters, officials held them at Progreso, Mexico, with-

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34. Graham Blackburn, *The Overlook Illustrated Dictionary of Nautical Terms*. Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1981), 278. Blackburn provides an adequate definition for this practice. "A term which originated in America in the nineteenth century, and which refers to the practice of taking a sailor to sea against his will. This was usually done by rendering him insensible with alcohol and carrying him aboard a ship in need of extra crew."

35. Hunt, *Campeche Days*, 11-12.

36. Stearns, "Notes on the Red Snapper," 94.

37. "Consul Reports," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 3 May 1906, 4.

out communication while the government confiscated the vessels and fish in the ice bins.<sup>38</sup>

When word of the seizures reached Pensacola, the Warren Fish Co., owners of the *Silas Stearns*, obtained the assistance of Senator Stephen Mallory, Secretary of State, Eilihu Root and the Consul General at Progreso, Mexico. Through the combined diplomatic efforts of these men, the Mexican government released all of the crews to the Consul General's custody but required them to remain in the country until the trial.<sup>39</sup> The company finally resolved the issue by proving that the red snapper is a deep water fish that was not caught inside the line of the keys, which the Mexican government considered sovereign property.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, the American commercial fisheries retained the right to continue fishing the banks; in exchange the Warren Fish Co. left the *Silas Stearns* in the custody of the Mexican government.

Like other Progressive-era industries, the red snapper business experienced widespread worker discontent that occasionally produced strikes against owners of fish and ice houses. Local fish workers established an independent fishermen's organization to address their contention that the prices paid in Pensacola did not meet prevailing standards elsewhere in the Gulf fish markets.<sup>41</sup> Newspaper reports suggest that the fishermen's union and the strikes they endorsed were disorganized; with no official notification to the fish houses, firms often had to draw their own conclusions about strike activity based only on the failure of fishers to report for work. Lively debates sometimes occurred in the local newspapers where representatives of each side of the issue provided statistics and information in support of their respective positions.<sup>42</sup>

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38. "Seizure of Smacks," *The Pensacola Daily News*, 11 May 1906, 1.

39. "The Crew Released," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 5 May 1906, 1. A telegram message reported in the local newspaper reads, "This is taken to mean that the crew has been given liberty for the present and will remain under the protection of the of the American representative until the authorities of the country can decide upon the matter of boundaries."

40. "Owners Talk Over Seizure of Smacks," *The Pensacola Daily News*, 15 May 1906, 1.

41. "Fishermen Peacefully Proceed with Strike," *The Pensacola Journal*, 17 September 1919, 2.

42. Such a dispute was carried on in *The Daily News* (Pensacola) from 26 December 1901 through 30 December 1901.



For the most part, fishing crewmen supported their union, although strike breakers occasionally attempted to outfit smacks for trips to the snapper banks. In one such occurrence a crew of men attempted to ice a smack for a trip before the strike had been settled, and a "free-for-all on Baylen wharf" ensued, resulting in the arrests of several of the men involved. The captain and crew of the smack stated that they, "had no desire to antagonize the organization, but it seemed as if no settlement would ever be made and he decided to sail," because he was in need of a livelihood.<sup>43</sup>

The effects of strikes were often paradoxical. The longer these strikes remained in effect, the greater the financial losses for the fish houses, an outcome that limited their ability to raise the wages of the fishers.<sup>44</sup> The fishers, however, thought that because the fish houses were under contract to produce fish for distant markets, striking would surely achieve their goals. A stipulation included in the contracts made by the Pensacola fish houses with buyers in other cities, however, stated that strikes did not constitute a breach of contract.<sup>45</sup> Therefore the outcome of strikes often depended on which group held out the longest. When bargaining groups finally resolved the strikes, the men quickly returned to the docks to prepare the smacks for trips to the banks; the news caused general rejoicing throughout the city.<sup>46</sup>

While on strike, fishers sought work in other professions. Several contemporary newspaper accounts of the strikes describe examples of men finding employment in other trades. For example, one account related that the striking fishers easily found work on the railroad docks, earning wages equal to or better than those aboard the smacks. In a 1901 strike, "...from 50 to 100 are daily employed at the railroad docks in which work most of them are proficient. Just at this time there is reported a great scarcity of skilled cotton screwmen (*sic*) on the docks, and as a great many fishermen are peculiarly fitted for this line of work." Apparently, the men were well suited for this type of

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43. "Fishermen are Belligerent," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 14 January 1902, 4.

44. "Fishermen on a Strike," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 27 November 1901, 4.

45. "Smacks Put in Anchorage," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 30 November 1901, 1.

46. "Fishermen's Strike is Off," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 16 January 1902, 4.

labor and were thus often indifferent to the resolution of the strike.<sup>47</sup>

Fish houses commonly made use of the extended periods of time that the smacks spent at port to haul the vessels out of the water and perform maintenance and repairs. Furthermore, in order to protect the vessels from damage sustained from toredo worms, or shipworms (*teredo navalis*), fish houses sent many fishing vessels to "sweet" water (fresh or brackish), such as the Escambia and Blackwater Rivers, soon after the labor strikes began.<sup>48</sup> Ships were moored or anchored at various locations not considered hazardous to navigation. Sometimes this decision proved misguided. Shirley Brown, a ninety-year-old Pensacola resident and longtime owner of Brown's Marine noted that unexpected damage to the vessels sustained by "salbugs" was often irreparable and some ships were abandoned. The salbug, an insect that thrives only in brackish water, attacked the hull timbers of the vessels, quickly damaging them more than would the shipworm.<sup>49</sup>

In 1914, decreased demand for red snapper and other expensive food fish forced the fish houses and the Fishermen's Union to agree to limit the catches on each smack. Laborers and owners reached this agreement only after the fish houses proposed to reduce the price paid for the fish from four cents per pound to three. While this proposal was an attempt to stabilize the shaky market, the fishers did not find the reduction in price acceptable since their share of the profit for the trip depended on the higher market prices. Fishers feared that when the demand returned, the price paid to them would not increase. The union and management reached a compromise that limited the catch to two thousand pounds of snappers and five hundred pounds of groupers for each man aboard.<sup>50</sup> Although the imposition of limits on the catch marked a definite decline in the industry, the new situation

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47. "Striking Fishermen Seek Work in Other Lines," *The Daily News* (Pensacola), 18 December 1901, 4.

48. "Fishermen Win in Strike Here," *The Pensacola Journal*, 13 December 1919, 3.

49. Shirley Brown, interviewed by the author, Pensacola, FL, 14 October 2002. Brown is the owner of a Pensacola shipyard in operation for over 50 years. His experience in various commercial maritime activities is a result of lifetime of involvement.

50. "Limit Catches Red Snappers and Groupers," *The Pensacola Journal*, 17 November 1914, 4.

did not deter the fish houses and local media from continuing to advertise the success of the fishery.<sup>51</sup>

Economic fluctuations were not the only problems Pensacola fishers faced; occasionally the city's location on the northern Gulf Coast caused trouble for the red snapper fishery. Natural forces, especially hurricanes that commonly developed in the Gulf of Mexico, were always a threat at the end of each summer. Unfortunately for the snapper industry, hurricanes occurred with some frequency during the period 1906 to 1926; each of the major storms devastated the city both physically and economically. The storms caused disruptions in the red snapper fishery through the destruction of the wharves and smacks, decreases in demand after the catastrophes, the loss of fishing grounds, and a general decline in the snapper populations.

Manmade crises also affected the viability of the snapper industry. Two world wars proved especially harmful to the industry, although the beginning of World War I temporarily increased the demand for red snapper.<sup>52</sup> This initial boom reverberated through the nation's economy due to increased demands for goods to support the war effort. But many fishers soon left the snapper industry to join the military or to earn the higher wages paid by the merchant marine. Ultimately, the draining of the labor force for the war effort created a depression that resulted in further declines within the fish industry.

After World War I, the markets stabilized and demand for snapper returned. While some noticeable revitalization in the industry occurred throughout the 1920s, the regrowth was short lived. During the post-war years internal combustion engines, commonly known on the Gulf of Mexico as builgines, were introduced to the fleets, and the industry was no longer solely dependent on sail power. Like many such transitions, the disappearance of the sailing ships was not viewed positively by many fishers. As Fred Hunt recalled, "In the early twenties the chugging builgines began to befoul the Campeche horizon with

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51. "A Visit to Pensacola," *Pensacolian*, January 1915: 25. This article begins with a discussion of Pensacola's finer points, one of these being the snapper fishery, which reportedly paid out over \$1,000,000 each year to those who navigate the fishing schooners.

52. McNeil, "Red Snapper Industry in Pensacola." Due to the lack of information available pertaining to the later years of the red snapper fishery, McNeil's work provided most of the information about the years 1920-1950.

its scrawling black trails; and by the end of the decade there were but few Pensacolamen left whose in'ards (*sic*) were not retching with greasy power plants."<sup>53</sup> Still, there were those who pointed to increased efficiency afforded by the motor power and viewed the noticeable increase in the catch as cause for hope that there would be a return to the prosperous days of an earlier era. Unfortunately for the fish houses, the Great Depression soon followed, which caused the bottom to drop out of the fishery.

World War II also contributed to the decline of the industry. As with World War I, the fishery suffered due to the loss of labor to the war effort. However, the effects of the war combined with several other factors to doom the industry. In the early years of the twentieth fish houses benefited from technological and business innovations, but in the post-WWII era, these businesses now appeared as out-of-step as new competitors emerged. The old business mechanism that centered on rail-based purchasing and distribution now proved too costly. Trucks replaced rails, and fish peddlers bypassed the need for fish houses to deal with consumers directly. As one analyst explained "the trucker is independent of express rates and train schedules, acting as buyer, distributor, and retailer, which results in a considerable savings in cost." Moreover, one technological innovation initially had a depressing effect on the fish market: consumers refused to buy frozen fish. The prejudice against frozen fish was "thought to have originated in former years when partly spoiled or improperly frozen fish were put on the market."<sup>54</sup> All of these issues contributed to the demise of the red snapper industry.<sup>55</sup>

By the early 1960s, the red snapper industry that gained such fame for Pensacola had all but collapsed. Despite repeated attempts to revitalize the fishery, the downward trend proved irreversible. Inventions such as hand-cranked and mechanical reels (used for hauling fish to the surface), depth recorders, diesel engines, and radios might have helped the industry if introduced a few decades earlier, but increases in the number of vessels from other Gulf Coast ports plying the trade and further

53. Hunt, *Campeche Days*, 253.

54. Jarvis, *Fishery for Red Snappers*, 23.

55. McNeil, "Red Snapper Industry in Pensacola," 41.

declines in red snapper populations brought to an end Pensacola's dominance of the red snapper.<sup>56</sup> As control of the markets shifted from Pensacola, new fleets were built in coastal communities which had until this time been subsidiary to Pensacola, such as Pascagoula, Mississippi, and Mobile, Alabama, as well as Destin and Panama City, Florida. The "Snapper Capital of the World" returned to its humble origins when a few vessels fished to supply a small, local market.

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56. James C. Cato and Donald E. Sweat, "Fishing: Florida's First Industry." 34. *Conference on Florida's Maritime Heritage*, (Gainesville, Florida: Florida State Museum, 1980), 34.

## Book Reviews

*Revolution in America: Considerations and Comparisons.* By Don Higginbotham. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005). Acknowledgments, index. Pp xi, 230. \$49.50 cloth, \$19.50 paper.)

Readers of early American history will most likely be quite familiar with the work of Don Higginbotham. In a career spanning more than forty years, Higginbotham has written important books on George Washington, Daniel Morgan, the American military tradition, the American Revolution, and comparative revolution. He has also edited the papers of North Carolina Supreme Court Justice James Iredell. Now comes *Revolution in America: Considerations and Comparisons*, a collection of essays—most of which have been previously published—that demonstrates, once again, Higginbotham’s formidable, albeit sometimes problematic, interpretive skills.

The book contains eight essays, which are subdivided into three sections, “Statesman in War and Peace,” “War and National Institutions,” and “Martial Spirit and Revolution: North and South.” The third essay of the book, “George Washington and Three Women,” provides a good example of Higginbotham’s interest in biography. Although the extant evidence is rather scant, the author nonetheless provides a compelling portrait of Washington’s relationships with his mother (Mary Ball Washington), wife (Martha Dandridge Custis Washington), and a friend and neighbor (Sally Cary Fairfax). According to Higginbotham, Mary Ball Washington was not the selfish, overbearing figure that some historians have made her out to be. Instead, she was a capable woman who provided a sufficiently nurturing environment for the future leader of the

United States. Martha Washington, likewise, was far more than a “Plain Jane” spouse (57, 67). Using skills she acquired during her childhood on a Virginia planter’s estate and during her first marriage to Daniel Parke Custis, Martha Washington enhanced her second husband’s reputation by lending support to the establishment of the Ladies Association, by assuaging the fears of disgruntled Quaker women, and by co-hosting presidential receptions. Higginbotham convincingly refutes, finally, the notion that George Washington engaged in illicit relations with Sally Fairfax. Yes, the epistolary language between these two individuals was at times improperly flirtatious, but there is still no reason to believe that Washington and Fairfax were romantically involved. Rather, “Washington’s love affair was with the entire Fairfax family,” which patronized him at critical moments in his career (67).

Overall, the strength of this essay is the detailed detective work of the author. Refusing to take at face value commonly accepted opinions about Washington’s circle, Higginbotham points readers to specific primary sources, and the resulting biographical sketches are remarkably suggestive. Martha Washington, in particular, emerges as an astute political operator along the lines of the women described in Catherine Allgor’s *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (2000). Whether or not Higginbotham would agree with that type of extrapolative conclusion, his analysis makes clear that the females he discusses were “complex individuals whose ties to Washington were multidimensional” (57).

Higginbotham’s biographical emphasis is less effective when it is placed in the service of an unnecessarily jaundiced view of recent historiography. In the first essay, “Washington’s Remarkable Generation,” the author asserts that among academics today the “pursuit of great white men is at best irrelevant,” despite the fact that a diverse and rather large cohort of respected scholars continues to pour forth articles and books about the Founding Fathers (26). To be sure, new studies of Washington and associated figures often reflect current interest in race, language, culture, gender, and class, but “political and constitutional approaches” to these mythic individuals have never “been shunted to the rear” (26). Indeed, while Higginbotham believes that some proponents of the “new histories . . . are quite combative,” his casual assessment—if not

outright dismissal—of a large body of recent scholarship is itself rather argumentative (26).

Unreflective praise of the Founding Fathers also undercuts the force of Higginbotham's biographical work. In the third essay, "Virginia's Trinity of Immortals," the author observes that, "It tells us worlds about the American Revolution to recall that our famous Revolutionaries did not die at the end of a rope or on a guillotine" (49). Coming at the end of a judicious treatment of the interaction between George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, this seemingly innocuous statement raises troublesome, unexplored implications. For one thing, it diminishes the degree of political and personal violence that nearly ripped apart the early American republic. More importantly, it begs the question *why exactly* the political strife of the new United States did not descend into the same type of anarchy so integral to the French Revolution. Does Higginbotham want to suggest that American political leaders stood apart from their French counterparts because they were genuinely nice guys who agreed to disagree? If so, he needs to explore that theme in depth. If not, he needs to explain those factors beyond (or in addition to) individual personalities that account for the differences between revolutionary developments in the United States and France.

That Higginbotham is capable of sweeping analyses that move beyond investigation of individual personalities is abundantly clear in the fourth and seventh essays of the book, "War and State Formation in Revolutionary America" and "The Martial Spirit in the Antebellum South." Combining a review of Anglo-American military conflict with knowledge of the historical literature on European state expansion, the fourth essay shrewdly demonstrates that even though the "War of Independence did not bring a European-style absolutist state," it nevertheless played a seminal role in the formation of an American national state (91). In the seventh essay, Higginbotham disrupts conventional portraits of a martial South by comparing it to military thought and behavior in New England. According to the author, the venerable martial ethos of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine compels us to revisit "the elusive question of whether there existed separate northern and southern civilizations" (180).

All in all, this book should be useful to students of early American history because it brings together eight essays by a dis-



tinguished historian. Readers will probably not agree with all of the interpretations put forth by Higginbotham. But they will agree that studying his work is a profitable endeavor.

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***Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South.***

By Marie Jenkins Schwartz. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006. Acknowledgments, editorial note, notes, index. Pp. ix, 401. \$29.95 cloth.)

With her important *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*, Marie Jenkins Schwartz joins a small but distinguished group of historians, including Richard H. Shryock, William Dosite Postell, Todd L. Savitt, and Steven M. Stowe, of African American slave medicine. Unlike earlier scholars, however, Schwartz focuses closely and carefully on the subject of enslaved women's reproductive health. Historians will find Schwartz's book a treasure trove of original information on slavery, bondswomen and freedwomen, the history of traditional and folk medicine, the history of gynecology, the history of nineteenth century science, and antebellum and Reconstruction-era social history. Regrettably she virtually ignores the Civil War years in her analysis.

Schwartz begins her tightly-argued but occasionally repetitive book with chapters on procreation in the slave quarters and then on the healers, white physicians and black folk doctors, who attended female slaves. Schwartz next examines the topics of slave fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, postnatal complications, gynecological surgery, cancer and other tumors, and freedwomen's health. For sources Schwartz draws principally on nineteenth century southern medical journals, private correspondence and plantation records, the records of the Freedmen's Bureau, and oral history interviews conducted among former slaves by representatives of the Works Progress Administration.

Two main constructs inform both the structure and arguments of *Birthing a Slave*. First, influenced by the early work of historian Deborah Gray White, Schwartz identifies and analyzes "a community of enslaved women based on their shared experiences" (321 n. 1). Second, Schwartz expands upon Savitt's paradigm of "dual" systems of health care under slavery, whereby "both black women

and white men sought to enhance women's reproductive health in different ways and for different reasons" (3).

Schwartz explains how during the late antebellum decades southern white physicians increasingly intervened in slave birthing and healing. As a result "enslaved women were forced to keep secret certain of their own customs for ensuring women's health. The situation," she adds, "helped create a shared intimacy among women—a sense of community that at times extended to male slaves" (3). Refusing their masters' demands that they bear as many children as possible, African American women "attempted to regulate childbearing to accord with their own notions of the proper timing and frequency of motherhood" (31).

Not surprisingly, slave women generally distrusted the white male doctors slave masters employed to protect and expand their investment in chattel property. "Subjected to invasive procedures, inexperienced doctors, and experimental intervention . . . black women were wary of a white doctor's services" (312). These physicians reflected the racial and class biases of their day and "strove to fit observations about bodily functions into preconceived ideas about black and white sexuality and morality" (115). Southern white doctors tended to reject the slaves' indigenous medicine, preferring their diagnoses of physiological problems and their therapeutic cures. "Only rarely," Schwartz writes, "did doctors examine critically the social circumstances in which the women lived and in which they practiced medicine. Instead, they operated within the context of slave society to ensure that a black woman's reproductive behavior satisfied her owner—in other words, that she gave birth to children. When doctors joined with slaveholders to exercise control over enslaved women's health, medical practice became entwined with the cause of slavery's continuance. Simultaneously, slavery helped to further the medicalization of childbirth and the professionalization of medicine" (3-4).

Schwartz, like Savitt before her, notes that white physicians, at the behest of slave masters, used black women as subjects for gynecological experimentation and research. "This approach . . . fostered a certain recklessness that did not make for responsible medicine. The common assumption was that black enslaved women existed for the benefit of a white ruling class. Doctors were concerned for their patients, but their concern was constrained by their support for slavery and their belief that a black woman's destiny was to serve her owner" (228).

Having said this, Schwartz nevertheless credits southern white medical practitioners with “attempting to alleviate misery” and with developing corrective procedures for vesico- and recto-vaginal fistula. Schwartz insists, however, that most slave women “proved an unruly force and had ideas of their own about whether to cooperate [with white doctors] and under what conditions” (256). Left to their own devices, slave grannies and midwives prescribed home cures inspired by African and Amerindian influences. Folk remedies for “female trouble” included herbal and root teas derived from sassafras, mullein, birthroot, squaw weed, horsemint, and cotton. “Even today,” Schwartz reminds readers, “such herbal remedies remain popular and are sometimes incorporated into nurse-midwifery practice” (317). Slave and freedwomen also relied upon informal conjure medicine—such magical cures as nutmeg worn on a string around the head to relieve headaches and a dime strung around an ankle to prevent leg cramps.

As these and other examples suggest, African American women, despite their status as slaves, sought to retain as much control over their familial, sexual, and reproductive lives as possible under the “peculiar institution.” Schwartz maintains, for instance, that rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, few masters tried to breed slaves by forced couplings. “Given the predisposition of slaves to become parents,” she explains, “they were needless” (25). “Enslaved couples had their own ideas of whom they wished to marry, and they generally did not yield readily to the dictates of owners in this facet of life” (26). Schwartz also disputes assertions that “numerous enslaved women carried out infanticide” (368 n. 47). She argues that slave women, like women across time and place, “valued motherhood. They cherished children for reasons of their own” (11).

Schwartz’s *Birthing a Slave* provides a vital gendered analysis of slavery as a social system and its intersection with the development of nineteenth century American and regional gynecology. “In resisting the dominion of white men” in family planning and in childbearing, “black women cast themselves as central actors in the unfolding drama that constituted slave life and culture in the antebellum South” (31). Her book is an especially significant contribution to southern historiography.

*Slavery and American Economic Development.* By Gavin Wright. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. Pp. x, 162 pp. Preface, appendices, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.)

Placing slavery within the context of nineteenth-century American history can be tricky. On the one hand, the significance of the “peculiar institution” in the colonial and antebellum periods is obvious, as is its role in triggering the American Civil War. But on the other hand, historians often depict slavery as an abnormality outside of the mainstream political, economic, and social development of the United States. Do we emphasize the “peculiar” or the “institution” in assessing slavery? Eminent economist Gavin Wright tackles this thorny problem in his new book, *Slavery and American Economic Development* by breaking the more general idea of “slavery” down into three distinct components. The first looks at the institution as a labor relations system, the second approach considers property rights, and the final one analyzes the political impact of slavery. The first and last of these approaches receive the lion’s share of attention among American historians; the view of slavery as a set of property rights less so. In order to rectify this imbalance, Wright analyzes slave economies as “systems of property rights” (12) and tracks the impact of these systems upon economic development from the colonial period through the rise of the Old South. The end result is a broad-ranging, well-evidenced, and insightful recasting of slavery’s role in the early American economy.

Wright’s book draws from a series of lectures he delivered at Louisiana State University in 1997, thus making the prose accessible to a wider audience than economic historians usually afford. It is a compact (162 pp.) volume that nonetheless takes on some of the biggest questions for historians of slavery. One of these, for example, is the Williams thesis, which links Britain’s industrialization to profits drawn from its participation in the eighteenth-century international slave trade and views the antislavery movement as a backlash made possible by slavery’s contribution to the wealth of the British Empire. Wright does not resuscitate this argument in full, as few historians find it completely persuasive these days, but emphasizes that antislavery sentiments did rise at the same time that a new “mode of economic progress” shifted capital into the “high-technology production of manufactured goods” and made the slave-based sugar islands “seem remote and irrelevant to the

important things in economic life.” (39) Economic forces thus made slavery seem less essential to the welfare of the Empire and empowered antislavery forces to dismantle the institution.

Wright’s model for exploring the American relationship with chattel slavery employs one great struggle as a metaphor for an earlier one. “I propose that we view the antebellum era as a kind of cold war on the North American continent,” he writes, “in which two different economic systems set out to generate wealth through territorial expansion” (49). Because slaveowners held property rights in labor, they could bring new land into cultivation for cash crops rapidly and expand their labor force via the internal slave trade. The ability to allocate labor became a key advantage in this system. Female slaves, for example, could be used as “swing” labor on large plantations during a time of need. Free labor systems, in contrast, depended upon voluntary migration and land improvements as a growth strategy. Slaveholding ultimately made the South into a wealthy region, but investments in industrial ventures, internal improvements, and urban growth all suffered from a myopic approach to property rights. But in the short term, at least, being a “laborlord” enjoyed economic advantages to being a landlord. Wright argues that “the antebellum slave South was not a ‘cheap labor’ economy; it was a society whose economy and polity revolved around the scarcity and high price of slave labor” (71). The institutional intransigence of slavery, not necessarily its economic efficiencies or comparative advantages, played a key role in antebellum regional divergence. Although the set of property rights available to slaveholders enriched them in the short run, Wright finds that the top-heavy ownership structure of slavery hampered long-range prospects for the South. For example, he argues that “the persistence of a bifurcated society in which economic elites did not identify with or internalize the well-being of the majority of the population” (126) was the most durable legacy of slavery.

*Slavery and American Economic Development* offers insights for historians at many levels and serves as a welcome reflection from one of the economic history’s leading scholars. Wright expertly weaves recent scholarship on slavery into clear and concise prose and is able to speak to a variety of audiences. As with many lectures-turned-books, it provides several broad lines of inquiry that should provoke future studies, and yet remains well grounded in the existing historiography.

***Florida Plantation Records From the Papers of George Noble Jones.*** By Ulrich B. Phillips and James David Glunt, eds. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. Introduction, map, glossary, index. Pp. xl, 596. \$55.00 cloth.)

***African American Life in South Carolina's Upper Piedmont, 1780-1900.*** By W. J. Megginson. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006. Acknowledgements, charts, illustrations, notes, index. Pp. xvii, 547. \$59.95 cloth.)

Studies of slavery in the American South tend to focus on certain areas: tidewater Virginia, coastal South Carolina and Georgia, and the delta region along the Mississippi River. Rarely do they pay much attention, at least in the antebellum period, to regions untouched by "King Cotton," uninfluenced by the intensive labor practices required on sugar plantations, or unaffected by a racial imbalance in favor of African Americans. Examining areas outside of the customary historical interest, however, helps bring perspective to the study of antebellum slavery and provides added depth to the understanding of the institution.

Florida is one such region at which historians have begun to take another look. Larry Eugene Rivers provided a survey of slavery throughout the state in his book, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (2000), while Edward E. Baptist presented a more focused study in his *Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (2002). One source upon which these and other historians of antebellum Florida have relied is the papers of George Noble Jones, a Florida planter who died in 1876. The new edition by the University Press of Florida includes an introduction by John David Smith, an appropriate choice given Smith's expertise in analyzing the Lost Cause sentiments of historians such as Ulrich B. Phillips, the original editor of the Jones papers.

The process by which the Jones papers came to be published makes for an interesting story, which Smith explains in detail. The papers, which record life on Jones' El Destino and Chemonie plantations located near Tallahassee, were discovered in 1924 at the former location. By the time a local historian, James O. Knauss, ascertained their historical value, the majority of the papers had been sold, eventually coming into the possession of the Missouri Historical Society, which asked noted southern historian Ulrich B. Phillips to edit them for publication. After some wrangling over the papers' ownership with Jones' grandson, Phillips and his grad-

uate student, James David Glunt, a University of Florida history professor, began editing the papers. The Missouri Historical Society published them in 1927.

The Jones papers reveal much about his plantations, slaves, and overseers but, surprisingly, not much about Jones himself. Both plantations grew primarily cotton, on El Destino's 6,683 acres and Chemonie's 1,880 acres. At their peaks, the two plantations employed 143 and eighty-five slaves, respectively. Jones was an absentee owner, spending his time primarily in Georgia, Rhode Island, and various places in Europe. Overseers performed the everyday supervisory tasks on his Florida plantations and, as other historians have shown about this class of plantation managers, their duties were varied and challenging.

Despite their obvious and contemporary racist views, Phillips and Glunt made an important contribution to Florida history by preserving these records for use by scholars interested not only in Jones' life, but also in southern slavery in a state usually ignored. One can understand why past historians found this collection informative and why current scholars would welcome the introduction by Smith that explains the papers' provenance and the original editors' biases.

Another overlooked region in studies of antebellum slavery is northwestern South Carolina. In his prodigiously researched look at African Americans between 1780 and 1900, W. J. Megginson treats three counties in the Pendleton District: Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens. Megginson sees value in studying this tri-county region, which he believes was more representative of the majority of the antebellum South, "where slaveholdings were small, no major cash crop was produced, and, presumably, white and black lived and worked in close proximity" (6). He examines virtually every aspect of African American life, both slave and free, including work environments, religious lives, legal proceedings, family relationships, wartime experiences, political activism, educational backgrounds, and many others.

Despite the depth of Megginson's research, his findings are insightful, but not new. He contends that African Americans experienced racism and oppression, often foisted upon them by circumstances over which they had little control. In response to this mistreatment, they formed a strong subculture and community, centered on the family. He concludes that African Americans in northwestern South Carolina encountered more continuities than

discontinuities in their historical experiences before and after the Civil War.

Students of South Carolina's history owe a debt to Megginson. He has seemingly combed through every available resource to unearth the records of African Americans in the Pendleton District. There is little that he does not cover. His quantitative tables, footnotes, and bibliography are a treasure trove for those interested in using these three counties in northwestern South Carolina to supplement or enhance their own examination of African Americans in the antebellum, Civil War, and Jim Crow periods.

Those historians interested in examining geographic areas not usually addressed in studies of the antebellum South would do well to acquaint themselves with both of these books. *Florida Plantation Records* offers the opportunity to contrast the plantation experience in the Sunshine State with those more commonly addressed in the historical literature. It also illuminates the practices of overseers, an often-forgotten link the slaveholding hierarchy. Through its depth of research and length of chronological coverage, *African American Life in South Carolina's Upper Piedmont* allows scholars to expand their understanding of the African American experience and enhance their appreciation of the struggle that slaves and their descendants faced.

Mark R. Cheatham

*Southern New Hampshire University*

***A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America.*** By Saul Cornell. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Preface, notes, index. Pp. xvi, 270. \$30 cloth.)

The Second Amendment has confounded its interpreters from the founding generation to our own. Congressional framers who drafted the right inscribed a preamble that asserts the need for a well-regulated militia, followed with a declaration that citizens hold a right to keep and bear arms. The inclusion of a preamble made the Second Amendment unique among the Bill of Rights adopted in 1791 and has prompted lively debates over its meaning ever since.

Does the Amendment require an application that emphasizes the pairing of private firearms ownership with militia service? Or,



does it stipulate a personal right? Given that the United States Supreme Court has never rendered a definitive formulation of the Amendment, the quest for a reliable interpretation has been left to attorneys, scholars and citizens at large. Extremists have enjoyed much attention in public deliberations over these issues, without enriching either general or scholarly understanding.

Saul Cornell argues that the citizen's right to bear arms, as stipulated by the Amendment, originated from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century notion of civic duty. Able-bodied freemen were obligated to train and serve in a militia so that British North American colonies and later, states, would possess a volunteer military force capable of collective defense when necessary. This duty was understood as a citizen's responsibility to the larger community. Militia service also enabled elite members of the community to exercise their influence through military discipline, a process that reinforced deference to social superiors.

Cornell emphasizes that the language of the Second Amendment reflects a usage that the founding generation could readily identify as a common practice. Civic duty was closely associated with the much-cherished concept of the virtuous freeman, upon whose shoulders the destiny of the new nation depended. This "dominant model" of firearms ownership emerged by the 1770's during the first experiments at state Constitution writing and retained its preeminence throughout the following decade.

A proper interpretation of the Second Amendment, he argues, should distinguish between a Constitutional right to bear arms and a common law right to carry arms for self-defense. Fundamental law never empowered the citizen to become equipped with firearms for personal protection. He finds that most judges and legal commentators in the young nation accepted this premise.

The adoption of the Constitution of 1787 raised an unanticipated issue associated with militia service: federalism. Cornell points out that the militia remained largely an institution of the states and, in some instances, of the local community. Despite the republican notion that freemen possess a right to rebel against oppressive government, in practice most militia units recoiled from leading uprisings of local citizens against policies adopted by federal officials. Deference to elites as well as patriotism restrained militia opposition to elected national authority in the early national period. Moreover, even groups such as the Whiskey Rebels employed the language of civic obligation when proclaiming their

right to armed opposition against the central government, not individual rights.

What Cornell considers to be a profound social transformation reshuffled the poles of the debate over the Amendment in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. During this period ordinary citizens increasingly began arming themselves for personal self-defense. Meanwhile, the social restraints of the founding era withered in the midst of a rising tide of individualism. Appalling incidents of interpersonal violence led to the first gun control movement in the nation and, in turn, sparked an opposing claim on behalf of a Constitutional right of self-defense. By the 1840's the two theories of interpretation—civic duty and individual right—routinely competed for public endorsement as various states revised their respective Constitutions.

The Civil War eliminated the possibility that a state militia could act under the auspices of the Second Amendment to oppose the national government by arms. But subsequent events would prove that disputes over whether the right empowered an individual liberty or a collective duty remained as heated as ever. In the midst of these controversies, Cornell concludes, the notion of bearing arms for civic responsibility was lost as a common assumption by 1900. Congress acknowledged this reality by adopting legislation that formed the National Guard, thereby placing volunteer military forces under the control of the federal government.

According to Cornell, the individual-versus-collective-right claims employed in contemporary debates have been inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Both emphasize only part of the Amendment's text. He calls for a reading that includes all of it. The resultant "civic rights interpretation," he proposes, can be a guide for a new paradigm, providing a meaning that endorses the citizen's obligation to the government and the need for regulation. In other words, the individualist interpretation rests upon a faulty historical analysis.

Some readers will doubtless focus on the brief attention Cornell gives to major issues of contention associated with the subject. He quickly passes through the founding era to chronicle debates over the meaning of the Second Amendment from the 1790's to the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, leaving little detailed consideration of primary evidence—especially contradictory material. This feature of the book may be the product of editorial advisors, for the author surely knows far more than he is able to display here.

Cornell deserves much praise for attempting to present a non-polemical mode of discourse. That is, he has sought a language designed to engage his readers in a comprehensive, rational discussion, free of emotionally charged distortions of responsible arguments, regardless of their viewpoints. In doing so he has accomplished the scholar's first duty and should earn an acknowledgment for it from his harshest critics. Cornell's old-fashioned, narrative style is a welcome relief from ordinary academic prose, as is his willingness to tackle an unwieldy topic. One can only hope that he will apply his good talents to the Second Amendment in the future.

George B. Crawford

*University of Florida*

***Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865.*** By Peter F. Lau. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006. Acknowledgments, notes, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. Pp. ix, 334. \$ 40 cloth.)

***South Carolina at the Brink: Robert McNair and the Politics of Civil Rights.*** By Philip G. Grose. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006. Illustrations, preface, chronology, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xiii, 360. \$39.95 cloth.)

Combing through a mixture of primary and secondary sources, including a plethora of interviews and oral histories, Peter F. Lau effectively makes the case that in South Carolina the fight for racial equality and civil rights grew from the ground up and not the top down. Lau's exploration of the history of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) regionally and nationally informs his contention that South Carolina's local NAACP branches linked their own local struggles for racial equity and social justice with larger and broader national concerns and international currents. More than an adumbration of the NAACP's history, Lau's *Democracy Rising* develops a wealth of biographical, social, and political information that challenges conventional wisdom concerning the origins and evolution of the civil rights movement. Dissenting from V. O. Key's widely endorsed assertion that black southerners served as mere puppets on the stage of southern political history, Lau insists that African Americans in South Carolina successfully "pursued ways to make their voices and concerns" heard and known (13).

Beginning with 1865, Lau deftly chronicles the formidable difficulties African Americans encountered during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. The Hamburg Massacre of 1876, the "Eight Box Law" of 1882, the rewriting of the South Carolina Constitution in 1895, and the Phoenix Riot of 1898—all combined to strip black Carolinians of Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment protection, reducing them to second-class citizenship. But South Carolina's resilient blacks vigorously fought white supremacy from any purchase they could secure.

The NAACP, established in 1909-1910 in the wake of a Springfield, Illinois, race riot, advanced as a northern-born and white-dominated organization. In the early 1920s, however, as the institution grew into a black-dominated entity, it spread across the South, even into the Palmetto State. As early as 1915, blacks in South Carolina such as Columbia attorney, Butler W. Nance, expressed interest in "attaching" themselves to the NAACP (26). More significantly, Nance and other African Americans in South Carolina, after establishing the civil rights organization in their state, worked quickly to align it with the national entity.

Evolving national and international events connected blacks in South Carolina with the rest of the world. World War I and the first Great Migration drew blacks beyond the South and put them in contact with their black brethren in the North. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, 175,000 African Americans exited South Carolina seeking better opportunities and better treatment in the North. Their departure helped transform the Palmetto State's population from a black majority to a white one. "But what was new about the 1920s," Lau asserts, "was that a critical mass of black southerners had established themselves in the urban North by the close of World War I, connecting black people to the world outside of the South in a way they had not been connected before" (61).

The Great Depression's economic distress led to a decline in the NAACP's membership rolls, and also forced black leaders to alter the organization's focus from solely racial and social concerns to economic issues. In the 1930s, W. E. B. Du Bois, Abram L. Harris, and Ralph J. Bunche urged fellow African Americans to work toward establishing black-white labor alliances. But Lau insists that such substantial shifts emanated not "from the national office, but rather from its branches" (85).

In the 1940s, the membership of the NAACP in South Carolina grew enormously. The establishment of the State Conference of the NAACP Branches in South Carolina, coupled with the aftermath of World War II to mark a major turning point as the organization transitioned from emphasizing racial uplift to stressing racial protest, shifting from local and individual participation to national and collective involvement. This adjustment manifested itself variously as black South Carolinians began pushing to end white primaries, to secure equal pay for teachers, to promote civic needs, adequate playgrounds and housing, to end police brutality, and to emphasize health issues. The *Briggs v. Elliott* (1950) case, one of five cases included in the *Brown* decision which struck down "separate but equal" in public education, vividly illustrates that the NAACP branches in South Carolina linked their fight for equality to broader national and international struggles. In short, the *Brown* ruling was a "culmination" of a long quest for racial and social equity that gained its initial impulses from blacks in South Carolina (212).

*Democracy Rising* highlights a long list of black men and women often overshadowed by the towering civil rights giants such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and Mary McCleod Bethune. Most scholars of southern politics and the African-American past exhibit little or no knowledge of the contributions of I. S. Leevy (mortician), N. J. Frederick (educator, lawyer, and newspaper editor), John McFall (pharmacist), Richard and Edward Mickey (morticians), Edwin A. Harleston (funeral home director), Levi G. Byrd (plumber and social activist), James M. Hinton (preacher and president of the NAACP in Columbia, South Carolina), Susan Dart Butler (a founder of SCFCWC: South Carolina Federation of Colored Women's Clubs), Jeannette Cox (an organizer of the Phyllis Wheatley Literary Club), and many others. All "ordinary" people, they made extraordinary sacrifices to improve life for African Americans in South Carolina and beyond. Professor Lau appropriately rescues these unsung heroes and heroines from undeserved obscurity. Well-researched, well-written, and well-argued, *Democracy Rising* must stand as an essential element in the historiography of both South Carolina and the Civil Rights era.

In *South Carolina at the Brink*, seasoned journalist Philip G. Grose explores South Carolina in the post-*Brown* era to understand the state's relative calm in an era troubled by racial strife and social upheaval. Grose explains who and what shaped Carolina singular

experience, by proffering a social and political history of South Carolina through the life of Robert McNair. Born in Berkeley County, South Carolina, in 1923, McNair grew up in a complex environment, a world that clung tenaciously to the social mores of the Old South while desperately reaching for the promises of industrialization and modernization energized by the New Deal and World War II.

Inspired by his politically-active father Daniel McNair, schooled by adept political leaders such as Solomon Blatt and Edgar Brown, and endowed with a "friendly and easy disposition" (10), young Bob McNair rose gradually, albeit somewhat controversially, to political prominence in the Palmetto State. After soldiering nearly two years in World War II, McNair served in South Carolina's House of Representatives in the early 1950s before being elected lieutenant governor and then "surprise" governor in the 1960s.

Grose points out World War II's impact on South Carolina. Just six years after that conflict, the South Carolina House counted fifty-five out of 123 legislators as veterans. These freshmen legislators, quickly dubbed "infighters," "social crusaders," and "economy builders" (3), brought fresh perspectives to their state along with a desire to address three key issues: public education, economic diversification, and the racial environment. The aftermath of World War II saw the abolition of all-white primaries across the South in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), even as President Harry Truman's "To Secure These Rights" chiseled away at southern statutes upon which white supremacy stood.

Most white leaders, however, refused to embrace the social and political changes engendered by the New Deal, World War II, and the policies of the national Democratic Party. Strom Thurmond led the Dixiecrat revolt in 1948 before transitioning into the Republican Party sixteen years later. Governor Robert McNair, insists Grose, occupied ambivalent ground. While standing in a long line of prominent race-baiting South Carolina politicians, such as John C. Calhoun, James F. Byrnes, and Thurmond, McNair played a critical role in preventing the Palmetto State from erupting into violence and bloodshed during the civil rights era.

Like many of his political contemporaries, McNair worked diligently to stave off "court-ordered desegregation" (69), but in contrast to most of his gubernatorial forerunners, McNair recognized that economic growth and educational improvement must march shoulder-to-shoulder with racial equity and social justice. Extending civil rights to African Americans, he argued, "would

raise the economy of the whole state" (80). Guided by this insight, McNair pushed for both a diverse economy and improved race relations, frequently couching his social and educational recommendations in terms of economic enhancement. Because of his willingness to compromise, his cordial disposition, and his ability to work effectively with African Americans, McNair helped diffuse a potentially explosive environment in South Carolina.

But McNair did not accomplish this alone. He singled out such men as Isaiah DeQuincey Newman, a black preacher and leader of the NAACP, for being able "to represent the position and represent the movement but at the same time to be able to sit down and talk rationally and reasonably about the problems that we were all confronted with...The thing that brought us through that period [civil rights] was the communication...and the leadership from the black community" (183). Beyond this, white college administrations, alarmed by the chaos and violence erupting on southern campuses such as Ole Miss in Oxford, Mississippi, determined "to do the right thing" by admitting the first black student to Clemson College, Harvey Gantt.

Within its wealth of information and fascinating narrative, Grose's book contains but a few minor errors. But for those wishing to comprehend the complexity of southern political history, for students seeking to learn how the Republican Party captured South Carolina and its southern neighbors, and for scholars interested in understanding how an adroit politician successfully thwarted a racial and social volcano from exploding in violence across South Carolina, this study of Robert McNair provides indispensable and engaging reading.

Edward J. Robinson

*Abilene Christian University*

*Voices of the Apalachicola.* Compiled and edited by Faith Eide. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006. List of maps, list of figures, series forward, preface, acknowledgements, introduction, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Pp. xvii, 328. (\$29.95 cloth.)

The Apalachicola River basin, in the Florida panhandle, is one of the most diverse ecosystems on earth. Home to approximately 300 species of birds, one thousand vascular plants, hundreds of

fish, and dozens of mammals, the area has seen tremendous changes over the last several centuries. Native American settlements gradually gave way to white residents who have altered the landscape over the last 150 years. The interviewees in Eidse's fine collection respond to these developments in accessible and heart-felt narratives.

A clear theme of the book is the fragility of the area's natural assets. What emerges in this work is a sense of loss of human resources as well. Many of the people interviewed for the book are the last of their generation. Tom Corley, for example, is the last river pilot of the Apalachicola River. Like Mark Twain, Corley knows every bend and obstacle between Columbus, Georgia, and the mouth of the river in the port town of Apalachicola. "That's 256 miles, isn't it?" Corley asks of the return trip. "I've been on every foot of it" (56). The route used to be thick with commercial barges, fishing vessels, and carriers of passengers or mail. Corley and his son know that river piloting is a lost art but they have great stories to tell.

The river traffic, as well as the flora and fauna of the region, is threatened by human engineering decisions over the last century. The construction of dams and the recent implementation of the fishing net ban weigh heavily throughout these narratives. Dredging is another concern to river residents. The unnatural buildup of sand along the river banks narrows the river and produces a much lower fish count. At the northern end of the Apalachicola / Chattahoochee River are millions of Atlanta area residents who need fresh water, while commercial fishermen fill hotels and restaurants in the Apalachicola area. Between these ends flows the "spinal cord" of the area (32), named by one long-time resident, which now runs lower and slower as a result of human intervention.

Eidse provides brief, informative introductions to the eight sections in the book. In just a few pages decades of development are explained, with narratives linked by topics such as "wood," "fishing," or the commercial development of the town of Apalachicola. The book provides a few maps but more would be welcomed, and the precious few photographs herein deserved a separate color spread. In her introductory remarks, Eidse might have provided more specific details to supplement the interviews. The dates of construction of each of the four dams on the river south of Columbus, Georgia would provide greater context for



these events. A fuller explanation of the Net ban or the Bob Sikes Cut into Apalachicola Bay – two events which have galvanized many rural residents against outside development – also would help to ground the reader in the facts before plunging into the interviews.

Eidse has assembled a lively, opinionated group that will entertain as well as inform. Occasionally an interview detracts from the flow of the book. A bizarre series of legal trials involving the removal of logs on federal property yielded an intense, emotional and unnecessarily long interview by Don Ingram. These cases paled in significance to some of the other events in the collection. Although Eidse does not attempt balance on sensitive issues, the book is not all negative. Several interviewees praised the successful restoration of the Tate's Hell Swamp, which offers hope for the rest of the region. The rebirth of the Gibson Inn and the town of Apalachicola are a boon for the area although the town, of course, is utilized by tourists and sport fishermen who use the Sikes cut so loathed by longtime locals. This section, placed at the end of the book — perhaps symbolically as the port town resides at the end of the river — feels incomplete and oddly out of place. The contrast of the town to river basin surely would generate enough interesting voices to fill another book.

With all questions of format or topic choice aside, Eidse served as a masterful interviewer. The interviewees never seem as if they are simply answering questions. Each one tells a story, sometimes with other characters joining in and voicing distinct opinions. Eidse asked interesting, relevant questions and then stepped back to let her subjects talk. The book is a celebration, an environmental and human history, a cause for concern and a pause for reflection. It is an engaging and valuable collection.

Sean McMahon

*Lake City Community College*

***Sunshine in the Dark: Florida in the Movies.*** By Susan J. Fernández and Robert P. Ingalls. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. Pp.320. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

History professors Susan J. Fernández and Robert P. Ingalls set themselves the daunting task of examining over a century's worth of filmed portrayals of Florida. Neither is a film scholar, and they

are not attempting to write about film theory, audience reception, or structural analysis. Instead, they set out to show how filmmakers have portrayed Florida and its people. The book is divided into three major sections they designate, appropriately enough, settings, plots and characters. The first examines presentation of the Florida's landscape, both natural and manmade. The second suggests that films about or set in Florida can be grouped into three broad categories. They include stories of re-creation, in which characters come to the sunshine state to remake themselves; other stories focus on tourism in its many varieties; and, finally, many Florida-based films tell crime stories. The third category analyzes how films have portrayed the people one finds in the state. Separate chapters look at Native Americans, ethnic groups (particularly African-Americans and Latinos), gender-defined roles (i.e., women and homosexuals), working class people and retirees, and the military. The book wraps up with a list of over three hundred "Florida" films dating back to the silent era.

For scholars of Florida, the book provides a broad introduction to the wide variety of ways the state has been represented on screen. Although the authors stayed away from made-for-TV and X-rated films, the scope of titles is impressive. Most of these will be familiar, but some will likely be brand new. For example, the authors give significant attention to the 1914 production, *A Florida Enchantment*, filmed in St. Augustine that tells the story of men and women who transform into the opposite sex by eating magic beans. It is but one of dozens of films identified here that readers may easily greet with, "Who knew they made a film about that?" Not all Florida historians may know of *Cabeza de Vaca's* tale of a conquistador rescued and briefly enslaved by native Floridians. Others may look forward to watching three separate films set in the sponge fishing community of Tarpon Springs (*Down Under the Sea*, *Sixteen Fathoms Deep* and *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*).

The authors are careful in treating "Florida" films. *Creature from the Black Lagoon* may have been filmed in Silver Springs, but only its sequel, *Revenge of the Creature*, was set in Florida. By the same token, readers may recall that Florida figures into films in ways one might easily overlook. *Midnight Cowboy*, for instance, has always registered in my mind as "about" New York, but the authors point out that it is one of the many films in which the vision of Florida's sun-drenched opportunity drives much of the plot. Florida is so identifiable that producers evoke it without bothering

to film here. Although the state appears overtly in films, such as in features shot at Cypress Garden or in Miami, viewers watching films such as *Some Like It Hot* will see California hills in the background of their "Miami Beach."

The authors are at their best when they place films into historical contexts, especially when they explain how film representations misstate historical facts. A section dealing with a spate of 1950s films centering on the Seminole wars begins with a brief but worthy description of the events the movies ostensibly dramatized. Likewise, the authors remind readers that Cuban immigration, and Cuban-Floridians, are not as they are portrayed in Brian De Palma's *Scarface*.

Ironically, the book's strength may also be its weakness. Because the authors strive to be comprehensive, the sheer amount of material threatens to overwhelm the analysis. The decision to work within themes rather than individual films makes sense, but makes for some rough spots. On the one hand, the book deals with notable films such as *Sunshine State* in several separate places, and the arguments become simultaneously diluted and repetitive. It would have been nice to see sustained analysis of a few remarkable films after a more succinct discussion of the authors' conceptual frameworks. By the same token, the vast undifferentiated array of films treated here leads to some often strange bedfellows. In order to make points about, say, alligators, the analysis threatens to conflate films as diverse as *Adaptation* and *Police Academy 5*. The book's point is not to make claims of either taste or popularity (and the writers explicitly eschew reception theory), more explicit awareness of the differences between blockbusters or critically-acclaimed films and little-noted sequels and straight-to-video releases would make the analysis even more persuasive. For students of Florida history, *Sunshine in the Dark* presents a comprehensive treatment of films about the state that should stand the test of time.

Spencer Downing

*University of Central Florida*

## End Notes

### FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

GLOBAL FLORIDA will be the theme of the Annual Meeting of the Florida Historical Society to be held in Clearwater, Florida, May 24-26, 2007 at the Belleview Biltmore Hotel. Through a variety of topics ranging from industry, architecture, agribusiness, immigration, urbanization, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, the environment, technology, tourism, and popular culture, the meeting will explore Florida's development from a cowboy, cattle and cracker frontier to a state whose politics, economy, and society affect the world.

### CALL FOR PAPERS FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF HISTORIANS

The 46<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Florida Conference of Historians will be held in Orlando, March 15-18, 2007. The keynote speaker for the conference will be Jack E. Davis, Associate Professor of Florida and Environmental History at the University of Florida. He is the author of *Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez since 1930* (2001, 2004) and co-editor with Raymond Arsenault of *Paradise Lost? The Environmental History of Florida* (2005).

The conference will be held at Walt Disney World Grosvenor Resort. Registration fees for the conference are as follows:

**Late Registration (after January 22, 2007)**

Full time employed professionals \$110

Graduate students and adjuncts	50
Undergraduate students	40

Please send checks made out to Florida Conference of Historians to:

Dr. Steven MacIsaac  
 FCH Treasurer  
 Division of Social Sciences  
 2800 University Blvd. N.  
 Jacksonville University  
 Jacksonville, FL 32211

### **CALL FOR PAPERS FROM H-FLORIDA**

The editors of H-FLORIDA and the Florida Historical Quarterly invite paper proposals for the 2nd On-Line Symposium to be held over a three-week period in October 2007. The theme for this year's symposium is "Women and Florida History." This unique, web-based forum will highlight significant historiographic trends and foster discussion about the past and future study of women in Florida's history in local and international contexts. Participants will take part in an interactive process of discussion and critique involving experts in the field and interested members of the H-FLORIDA community. Overviews of papers included in the symposium will be published in the Florida Historical Quarterly. Proposals of 1-2 pages should be sent to Robert Cassanello at [rcassane@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:rcassane@mail.ucf.edu) by April 1, 2007.

FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY  
**FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**SATURDAY LECTURE SERIES**  
 Lectures are presented at the Library of the  
 Florida Historical Society, 435 Brevard Avenue  
 Cocoa, FL, at 2:00 pm

**March**

Mosquito Beaters Panel Discussion  
 Chris Monaco, *Moses Levy*

**WINTER PARK HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**PROGRAMS AND EXHIBITIONS**

**March 14, 2007**    2:30                      Woman's Club of Winter Park  
 419 S. Interlachen Avenue

Bob Morris, author and humorist, will talk about his life growing up in Florida and his latest book in his island series.

**April 21, 2007**                              Annual Historical Garden Tour

Tickets for the garden tour go on sale in March at several locations.

**NEWS FROM OTHER JOURNALS**

*TEQUESTA*

The 2006 issue of *Tequesta*, the Journal of the Historical Association of Southern Florida includes the following articles:

“The Cuban Insurgent Colony of Key West, 1868-1895”  
 Consuelo E. Stebbins

“Interracial Activism and the Civil Rights Movement in Postwar Miami”  
 Raymond A. Mohl

“Dr. James Alpheus Butler: An African American Pioneer of Miami Medicine”  
 Canter Brown, Jr.

The *Florida Historical Quarterly* is pleased to announce the return of an old friend, the journal *Tampa Bay History*. The journal returns with a strong partnership between the Florida Studies Center and the Tampa Bay History Center and an impressive staff and editorial board. Congratulations and good publishing!

### **TAMPA BAY HISTORY**

The Florida Studies Center and its program partners at the Tampa Bay History Center are pleased to announce the launch of a new history journal with a familiar name—*Tampa Bay History*.

Rodney Kite-Powell, the Tampa Bay History Center's Saunders Foundation Curator of History, will head the journal's new staff. Florida Studies Center Director Mark I. Greenberg will serve as the book review editor, and Andrew Huse, assistant librarian with USF's Special Collections and Florida Studies Center, will take on the role of assistant editor. The editorial board consists of twelve scholars: Gary Mormino, Paul Dosal, Aaron Smith and Cheryl Rodriguez (USF), James M. Denham (Florida Southern College), Robert Kerstein (University of Tampa), Jack Davis (University of Florida), Jerald Milanich (Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida), Maxine Jones (Florida State University), Joe Knetsch and Susan Parker (State of Florida), and Doris Weatherford (University of South Florida and Florida Southern College).

Articles in the *Tampa Bay History* will cover a wide range of topics, including social, political and environmental history, archaeology, anthropology, and geography. The focus will be on the Tampa Bay area, but the journal will also publish articles that extend into "historic" Hillsborough County—the roughly twenty-county area included within the original boundaries of Hillsborough County when it was created in 1834.

The journal's editors seek submissions that appeal to a wide reading audience. They plan to follow the guidelines first established in 1979: that "academics write so that nonprofessionals [can] read and enjoy their work and that nonacademic historians [or experts in other fields] meet scholarly standards for documentation."

Anyone interested in submitting an article for publication should contact Rodney Kite-Powell at (813) 228-0097 or [rkp@tampabayhistorycenter.org](mailto:rkp@tampabayhistorycenter.org). To suggest books for review or to offer assistance as a book reviewer, please contact Mark I. Greenberg at [mgreenge@lib.usf.edu](mailto:mgreenge@lib.usf.edu) or call (813) 974-1198.

**GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE  
FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY**

The *Florida Historical Quarterly* is a peer refereed journal and accepts for consideration manuscripts on the history of Florida, its people, and its historical relationships to the United States, the Atlantic World, the Caribbean, or Latin America. All submissions are expected to reflect substantial research, a dedication to writing, and the scholarly rigor demanded of professionally produced historical work. Work submitted for consideration should not have been previously published, soon to be published, or under consideration by another journal or press.

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Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced (excluding footnotes, block quotes, or tabular matter)

The first page should be headed by the title without the author's name. Author identification should be avoided throughout the manuscript. On a separate sheet of paper, please provide the author's institutional title or connection, or place of residence, and acknowledgments, if any.

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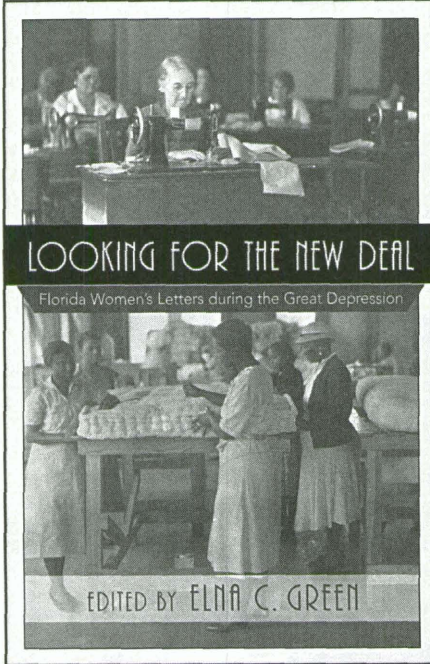
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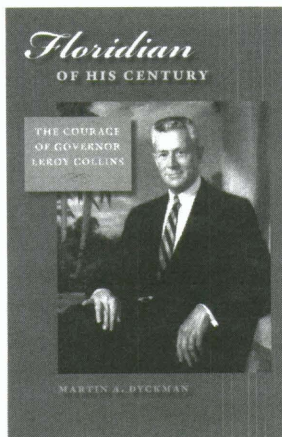


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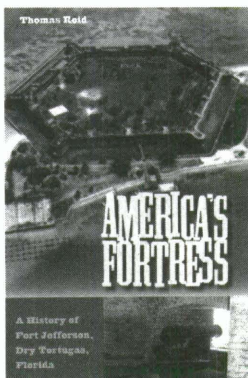
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The Society's official headquarters and the Field Library of Florida History are located in Cocoa's historic United States Post Office, built in 1939. The Society's research library houses over eight hundred rare maps, six thousand volumes of Floridiana, and an extensive collection of documents relating to Florida history and genealogy. Further information about the Florida Historical Society may be found on the internet at (<http://www.florida-historical-soc.org>).

