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Transcript

Ben Brotemarkle

Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society, is made possible in part by the Department of State Division of Historical Resources and the State of Florida. It's also made possible by the Jessie Ball du Pont fund and by the historic Rossiter House Museum and Gardens in Eau Gallie celebrating pioneer history, the natural environment and women's history available for weddings and events at rossiterhousemuseum.org. This is Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society, on the web at myfloridahistory.org. I'm Ben Brotemarkle and coming up on the program, historians are creating a more complete view of our states past by focusing on indigenous people.

James Hill

History has come a long way. It has come a long way in terms of acknowledging and recognizing the presence of indigenous peoples and the importance of indigenous peoples.

Ben Brotemarkle

We'll discuss the historic Hastings Public Library.

Connie Lester

The history of the library might also be viewed as the history of the community.

Ben Brotemarkle

And we'll talk about the Spanish mission system. All that ahead on Florida Frontiers.

(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

The 2021 Florida Historical Society Virtual Annual Meeting and symposium included a panel called Indigenous Florida. Each of the panelists wrote articles featured in a special issue of the Florida Historical Quarterly. Andrew Frank is a professor of history at Florida State University and is co-editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly special issue. Frank says that historians are rewriting Florida history with a new focus on indigenous people.

Andrew Frank

So once Upon a time, scholars of early Florida focused almost exclusively on those places where Spaniards and then Englishmen and sometimes Frenchmen lived. Early Florida and Saint Augustine were almost synonymous. Indigenous people hardly appeared at all in our stories until they entered a colonial town where a mission, or if they resisted European expansion or other ambitions. The same tale taught us that these indigenous people all died out. The victims of disease, war and slave raids. Florida would not be empty for long the tale goes as the Florida Seminoles replaced the ancient peoples who lived in the state. Their history, though, would play an important but really chronologically segregated place in the state's history, one that was almost exclusively confined to the era of the Long Seminole War. As

many of us know, similar fantasies have been told about the United States. For generations, scholars equated early America with the Puritans or even the pilgrims' stories. They hardly left New England at all, and when they did, they ventured all the way South to the Chesapeake, hugging the coast of a different English coastal colony. In these contexts, indigenous people remained remarkably rare, serving as the oppositional force to what was seen as the inevitability of westward expansion. There, too, indigenous people seem to disappear when white colonists and settlers arrived.

Ben Brotemarkle

Andrew Frank says that several generations of historians have been striving to create a more complete view of Florida history that includes an increased focus on native cultures, but that effort has not made its way into the public consciousness. Aubrey Laurersdorf is an assistant professor of history at Auburn University. Her article is called an *Apalachee Revolt Reconceptualizing Violence in 17th Century Appalachia* is part of a larger book project.

Aubrey Laurersdorf

Really what I'm trying to do here and in this larger project is sort of reexamine a part of Florida that has had some previous attention paid to it but has not really had the full indigenous history sort of brought out here. So, I'm looking at an incident called the Appalachia Revolt in 1647, and this is really an incident in which the Appalachians killed many of the Spaniards in their territory and pushed the rest of them out. They burned down the handful of missions that had been built there, and this is really understood as a rejection of Spanish dominance. It has been seen by scholars for a very long time as the Apalachee getting frustrated that the Spaniards have really seized power over them and trying to get rid of them. But what I really found looking at these sources on this is that there is a lot in the historical context of this incident to raise some questions about this interpretation. Really, when we look at Apalachee territory in this period, there's almost no Spaniards there. There are really fewer than 20 Spaniards in this entire territory that is sort of surrounding the area that is now Tallahassee. Of these Spaniards, there's almost no soldiers whatsoever, and we also find that in the aftermath of this incident, there is further conflict between the Appalachia Indians and the Tamaqua Indians, who are their immediate indigenous neighbors. So, sort of these two things happening around this so-called revolt really raised questions to me about whether this is truly a rejection of Spanish dominance in the territory. And I found that there is in fact something much more complicated going on here and this is much more part of a larger indigenous story.

Ben Brotemarkle

Stepping back from Spanish centered narratives and documents, Laurersdorf believes that the so-called Appalachia revolt against Spanish dominance was actually the result of internal struggles within Appalachia leadership. Jason Herbert is ethnographer for Seminole Heritage services. His article is called *We Have Always Been Cow People: Alachua Seminole Identity and Autonomy, 1750-1776*.

Jason Herbert

I really kind of want to go back to a conversation I had with contemporary tribal member Moses' jumper back in 2017. A hurricane had just come through and he and I are sitting on the front porch, and he says, you know, Herb, we've always been cow people. And a lot of my work kind of focuses on this idea that Seminal Indians have always been cow people. What does that mean? To these ideas that the first

Cowboys in North America were actually Indians, and here in Florida. And so, I kind of go back here and I'm looking at a few different situations here, to understand that you know kind of really stood at the very center of seminal struggles over place and identity in Florida in the 18th and early 19th centuries. And they were they were key to establishing Seminole communities, building those communities and ultimately defending those communities from outside engagement. In this place called alternately called Fushke Yagnik, Gon Fushki, Ichi Bolan or Florida as we know it today. I don't want to look at these interactions because animals' matter too, especially when we might look at contemporary issues over space and belonging here in Florida, the questions over who's got rights to do, what with what natural resources.

Ben Brotemarkle

Jason Herbert's article explores how Alachua communities work to keep the Lower Creek community, the British and American entrepreneurs from taking control of their cattle lands. James Hill is assistant professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh. His article is called the land we live is our own indigenous conceptions of space and 18th century Florida.

James Hill

Florida history has come a long way. It has come a long way in terms of acknowledging and recognizing the presence of indigenous peoples and the importance of indigenous peoples. But I think a lot of what happens, especially with public perceptions of Florida history and 17th century and in the 18th century, which is what I focus on, is that this is still predominantly a colonial history, that the terms that are often used to refer to this period of Florida history define it by its European occupants. We have terms like the first Spanish period, the British period, the second Spanish period, and this this framing still centers Europeans, which as our other presenters have alluded to and mentioned people who are very much a demographic minority and a geographic minority in Florida. What I want to do and what I have done in this article, is talk a little bit about the kinds of spaces that indigenous peoples created in 18th century Florida and the ways in which they truly kind of shape the landscape and truly were the people who determined what Florida is and what outsiders experienced Florida as.

Ben Brotemarkle

Hill points out that indigenous people created roads, grazing areas and hunting grounds that Europeans depended upon. He discusses how indigenous people made demands of European colonists and enhance their position among other indigenous communities through their relationships with European. Kristalyn Sheffelend is an assistant professor of history at the University of Southern Indiana. She looks at the idealized representation of indigenous people in Florida tourism. Here she talks about Waldo Sexton, who Co-created with Arthur McKee, the Jungle Garden attraction in Vero Beach.

Kristalyn Sheffelend

He was a man that had grown up and was very much influenced by the world's expositions, in particular the Saint Louis Exposition he had in his mind's eye a memory of that event, and he sought to recreate that event in the jungle garden that he created alongside Arthur McKee alongside U.S. 1 in Bureau. Back in the day, the Jungle Garden took up nearly the entirety of what is now South of Euro and was an elaborate garden that included a chickee and a seminal man by the name of Louis Tucker and part of

what I'm uncovering in my research is the role of the Seminole in creating this space at the McKee Garden and what Waldo is imagining when he's talking about old Florida.

Ben Brotemarkle

Shefelvend says that Sexton had a romantic vision of indigenous people and Florida's Spanish culture. Denise Bossy, assistant professor of history at the University of North Florida, is Coeditor of the Florida Historical Quarterly special issue. She hopes the journal will increase awareness among the public of the indigenous people of Florida.

Denise Bossy

We have an introduction to the Florida Historical Quarterly special issue where we begin to grapple with what we hope folks take away from the issue at large and the ways in which we hope to challenge how Florida history is taught and also how Florida historians go about conducting research on indigenous people. And part of our goal too is to really engage with the public. It's crucial to think about how we teach Florida history to 4th graders. It's crucial to think about how we represent Florida history in our state and national parks and our local museums and at our local historical societies. And this is work that we're very much engaged with.

Ben Brotemarkle

The Florida Historical Quarterly is available to members of the Florida Historical Society. Find out more at myfloridahistory.org. That's where you can also watch the complete panel discussion on Indigenous Florida. That was part of the 2021 Florida Historical Society Virtual Annual Meeting and symposium.

(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

This is Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society. I'm Ben Brotemarkle. Visit us anytime online at myfloridahistory.org to find discounted books on Florida history and culture. Watch our public television series Florida Frontiers and much more. That's myfloridahistory.org.

(Music Break)

Joining us now is Connie Lester, associate professor of history at the University of Central Florida, director of the RICHES Digital Archiving project and editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly, Connie, the teaching of history and the experience of history students has evolved significantly in recent decades.

Connie Lester

And one of the benefits of the technologically enhanced education of the 21st century is the ability to conduct meaningful scholarly research with students in a classroom setting. Access to primary source material in state and federal archives and the ability to present the research outcomes digitally to broader audiences moves the classroom experience from the format of reading, lecture, testing, and paper writing to one in which students at every level can make contributions to scholarship. I am aware of a number of projects that span the range of historical research, and the Florida Historical Quarterly has published the scholarship from several student-centered projects, but my favorite came from the

University of North Florida. The work was completed under the guidance of Nancy Levine, a professor in the Department of English. Students George V. Menton, Sandy A. Staten, Sharon Cleveland and Belinda Dezel conducted the research for an article on the Hastings, Florida Branch Library that was published in the Fall 2009 issue of the FHQ. The study of a branch library in a community the authors describe as a wide place in the road might seem unworthy for serious scholarship. What could be learned that would advance our understanding of the role of libraries in public life? What indeed? Libraries were seldom found in rural communities and the presence of a social library in Hastings, a farm community in St. John's County attracted the attention of the students and their professor.

Ben Brotemarkle

And I'm sure they were probably asking themselves why a farming community of less than 1000 people organized a library and maintained it for more than a century.

Connie Lester

Students and their professor recognized how unique the Hastings Library was. Their work sites, in 1948, American Library Association finding that 27% of the American population had no access to a library and of that number, 91% lived in rural towns and villages. So, Hastings really was unique. The St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church provided Hastings first library in 1906. In 1928, a group of 17 women formed the Hastings Home demonstration and Women's Club and took over the administration of the library. The name of the club tells us a lot about the structure of the organization and the philosophy behind it. Women's clubs of the period encompassed a range of civic, philanthropic and social activities, from literary clubs to temperance organizations, suffrage and voting activities, and health and education interests. Many local clubs were members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs which was organized in 1890, home demonstration clubs were rural organizations associated with the Home Extension Service. An agency of the US Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with state land grant colleges like the University of Florida and local county governments, the Home Extension Service was established through the federal Smith Lever Act in 1914. Home extension agents worked with farm women to improve home and health and to teach women how to monetize their production in things like jams, jellies, butter, eggs and chickens for sale to a discerning consumer market. Women's clubs across the country supported libraries, but the inclusion of the home demonstration clubs in the organizational name was different and unique. It suggested a level of cooperation between town and country that set Hastings apart from other libraries.

Ben Brotemarkle

Connie, how did the students document the role of the library in the community?

Connie Lester

They used oral histories, club records and newspaper accounts to document an extensive history of the library demonstrating the growth of its collections even in the midst of the Great Depression. The history of the library might also be viewed as the history of the community. In 1937, the library moved into the town's new Civic Center, constructed with WPA funding through the New Deal programs. During the Cold War, the library shared space with the civil defense bomb shelter. The authors of the Oracle characterized the library as an Oasis of racial accord during the civil rights era, especially compared to the county's history during the 1960s. Although blacks still did not have access to the

Hastings Library, and the authors offer accolades for black teachers: Lucy Carter, Jamie Fraser and Nurse Britton, who taught their students to love books and value education. These teachers created home book centers, hidden libraries, if you will, to provide learning enhancement for their students.

The Hastings Library became the local institution that was first integrated when Margaret Stevens became librarian in 1969. The Hastings Library came under the supervision of Saint John's County as a branch library in 1977. The growth of the library collection and the deterioration of the aging Civic Center prompted a search for new space. The library moved first to the old high school band Room and Concession stand, but while gaining additional space, the situation was far from ideal. Cold and winter hot in summer and with a leaky roof, the facility was termed a hardship post by those who work there. The next phase of the library's history proved to be a contentious one. Moving into the County Library system provided Hastings Library with opportunities to apply for funding for improved facilities, but application and funding proved miles apart. And evoked competing ideas regarding the best path forward. Friends of the library argued in favor of a free-standing new building, the Hastings High School Alumni Association, dedicated to saving the historic high school building, promoted a plan for reconstruction and renovation that included space for the library. Years of public meetings, fundraising and debates finally ended with the renovation of the old high school and the placement of the library in that building. The article ends on a high note pointing to the continued value of the library to the life of the community and the movement of the library into the digital age with the addition of public use computers. It's not hard to see the value of this project to the community of Hastings and to the students who gained research and writing skills, but who also learned to negotiate the history of conflict in ways that presented competing ideas fairly. Perhaps you will want to take a closer look at the history of your own town library as a source for understanding the history of your community's past.

Ben Brotemarkle

That's a great idea. Thanks, Connie. You're welcome. Connie Lester is an associate professor of history at the University of Central Florida. Director of the RICHES Archiving project and editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly.

(Music Break)

This is Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society. Holly Baker has this look at the Spanish mission system in Florida.

Holly Baker

In the second half of the 16th century, the Kingdom of Spain, Philip the second authorized Pedro Menendez to establish missions throughout the Floridas to convert indigenous people to Christianity. By the 17th century, there were dozens of Spanish missions in North Florida and the Panhandle. Doctor Daniel Murphy is an associate professor of history at the University of Central Florida. He is also the author of several articles and books, including the book constructing Floridians, Natives and Europeans, and the Colonial Floridas 1513 to 1783. Dr. Murphree recently talked to me about the mission system that developed in the Floridas between 1566 and 1675.

Daniel Murphree

Missionaries had been part of the Florida colonization venture on behalf of the Spanish and French from the very beginning. You know there are almost always religious figures, if not a missionary, a priest or someone like that on most of the expeditions the de Soto expeditions things you hear of. It really intensified after 1565, when the French were kind of ousted from Atlantic Coastal Florida by the Spanish. And then you had kind of the first real settlement regime come in under Pedro Menendez. He was the first governor. And he thought missionary work is going to be very valuable for Spain in terms of not just colonizing Florida, but forming relationships, positive relationships with native peoples.

This was also a part of kind of the General Spanish approach to North American colonization, whereas they didn't have a whole lot of colonists coming over so they needed some way to defend it, and they believed that creating a viable mission system in the Northern tier of Florida would be a good way to kind of almost set up a populated boundary, even if it wasn't necessarily of colonists war of armies.

Holly Baker

The mission system in Florida was a network of more than a dozen Spanish missions that stretched from Saint Augustine to the Panhandle region near the Panama City area. These missions became the principal mode of Spanish colonization in Florida. There were also places where Native Americans and Europeans interacted on a daily basis at the church in the village square or while trading with one another.

Daniel Murphree

Typically, there weren't large numbers, so you could have maybe one to two priors, or one to two priests administering to the entire mission. Very rarely would you have more than that. But you probably have dozens, or perhaps hundreds of natives that either lived in the immediate vicinity of the mission itself, sometimes living in the mission or kind of right. Outside of it. But you almost always had some type of garrison created there, too, by the Spanish soldiers. Again, usually it wasn't large in numbers, but the idea was the mission needed to be protected. Where it needed to show the military might of Spain, and the idea was it, it would promise that there was a greater Spanish military capability. Behind it, the missions were almost always set up near pre-existing native villages, and that was the idea. The idea was to take the mission to the natives. So, you had kind of a vibrant native culture surrounding the missions itself. So, in addition to maybe getting spiritual salvation, they could also get material wealth as well in all of the missions.

Holly Baker

The Spanish mission system was in place for more than 100 years. Almost all of the Spanish missions were gone by 1708. Doctor Murphree told me more about what led to the end of the Spanish mission system in Florida.

Daniel Murphree

Disease played a massive role in depopulating Florida of its native peoples; we have numbers as high as the hundreds of thousands of natives living in Peninsula Florida before colonization. By the time the mission system really falls apart in the early 1700s, this hundred, possible hundreds of thousands of natives were gone, and you only had really, maybe a dozen or 12,000 natives and even that's a high number and it's also for the entire peninsula. So, these 12,000 Indians have been highly dispersed and

even though the missions were places where some natives went for protection. They couldn't be protected from the diseases. And the fact, of course, because of the way that mission functioned, it was one of the worst places to be if you're trying to avoid disease because new people were coming all the time, which potentially brought more.

Holly Baker

Today, only two Spanish mission sites are open to the public in Florida. The Nombreda Dios mission in Saint Augustine and Mission St. Louis near Tallahassee. The only restored mission in Florida. As Doctor Murphree explains, the brief existence of the Spanish mission system can be seen as a symbol of Spanish colonization in Florida.

Daniel Murphree

The system as a whole was really significant and unique because it was really the main presence of the Spanish and Florida for 100 years at least. If you think of Spanish, Florida, if you're thinking of what they brought that's what they brought. It was the missions. And the fact that they had so much trouble with them and that they ultimately fell apart really is kind of a, you know, sub narrative to the Spanish and Florida anyway or overall, in the sense that if you track the mission system, it kind of shows you the greatest extent of Spanish influence in Florida. But it also shows you how it's declining. And so, by 1700 or the beginning of the 1700s when the mission system is collapsing, the Spanish presence in Florida is negligible. It's Spanish Florida name only. The Spanish are controlling it, and of course the English know this, the French know it, and ultimately the US knows it, and that's why it was very easy to subsequently ouster the Spanish. Remember, the Spanish were pretty much gone in the 1760s for the first time. You could call it a slow death. So, for 60 years their empire was hemorrhaging, and you can connect that to the mission system. It's kind of a symbol, the mission system is kind of symbolic, I guess is the best way to say it of the Spanish and Florida. It was limited. It did have an impact, but it was fleeting. It didn't last very long, and once it was gone, the Spanish power, if they ever had any in Florida, it was largely gone too.

Holly Baker

For Florida Frontiers, I'm Holly Baker, public history coordinator for the Florida Historical Society and archivist at the Library of Florida History in Cocoa.

Ben Brotemarkle

You've been listening to Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society. Please join us right here again next week and visit us anytime online at myfloridahistory.org. Production assistance for Florida frontiers comes from Holly Baker and Connie Lester. The program is edited by John White. Have a great week. I'm Ben Brotemarkle.

(Music Break)

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