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BACHELLER ESSAY CONTEST IN FLORIDA HISTORY

Florida's high school students are developing a lively interest in the Irving Bacheller Essay Contest, one of whose objects is to stimulate original research in the history of this state. Realizing the importance of such a movement, the Florida Historical Society has approved this plan and has helped to make it a success.

Eight years ago Irving Bacheller, the distinguished author, purchased a home at Winter Park, near Orlando. He at once became interested in Florida's educational work and shortly after becoming a Florida citizen was elected a trustee of Rollins College.

After a survey of the educational needs of Florida Mr. Bacheller established, under the auspices of Rollins College, an annual contest for the accredited high schools of the state, designed to encourage Florida boys and girls to use better English and to stimulate research and original thought on the problems of the state's welfare. As a reward for such effort he provided two handsome gold medals, to be given annually.

Mr. Bacheller and the committee in charge decided that the objects of the contest could best be brought about by choosing subjects in Florida history. Through the courtesy of President Williams of the Florida Historical Society, two prizes in gold were offered by the Society to supplement the Bacheller medals and to further stimulate this movement.

In order to provide reference materials for the contestants Dr. J. F. Taintor, Librarian of Rollins College, set about to compile a full bibliography on the subjects chosen. In this undertaking he received excellent co-operation from practically all the libraries

of the state. Announcements of the contest with copies of the bibliography were sent to all teachers of English and history in the state who have responded in a most gratifying manner. Some of these teachers have given writers of essays credit in the English and history courses for the work done.

Among subjects that have been used thus far are: "Florida, as First Seen by the Spaniards", "The Old Spanish Trail, 1620-1920", "Florida under English Rule, 1763-1783", "Florida in the 50's", "History of the Seminoles", "Historical Landmarks of Florida", "The Settlement of St. Augustine and its Early History".

Miss Anna Clark of the Sanford High School, won first place in this year's contest on the subject "Jackson's Administration of Florida". She was awarded the Bacheller medal for girls and because of the special excellence of her work President Hamilton Holt of Rollins presented her with an autographed portrait of General Jackson from his private collection.

The prize winners were -

First prizes (Bacheller gold medals)

Anna Clark Sanford

Hugh Seivert Orlando

Second prizes (Florida Historical Society gold pieces)

Geneva Miller Kissimmee

Clyde Russell Sanford

Miss Clark's essay follows:

A. J. HANNA.

JACKSON'S ADMINISTRATION OF FLORIDA

The beginning of the Creek War brought upon the field a Nashville lawyer, then forty-six years of age, with the education of a frontiersman, but dignified in manner, imperious in nature and successful in his profession.

At the period when he became associated with Florida, he had behind him a record of several duels, high political honors in Tennessee, service in the U. S. Senate, and membership in the Supreme Court of the State. He had led a large command of troops towards New Orleans, and his men being suddenly dismissed, had paid their way home. On his return to Nashville, the War with the Creeks broke out.

Jackson led 2,000 men into the Indian Country, carried on a very energetic campaign, and, after numerous battles, delivered the finishing blow at Horse-shoe Bend. In August, he made a treaty of peace with the Creeks in which they were compelled to cede a large area to the United States. Then came British troops to Florida, and Jackson after driving them out went to New Orleans.

In 1818 Pensacola was again captured by Jackson. This greatly astounded the government, as negotiations for Florida had then been under way and it was generally feared that Jackson's impulsive step would not only stop these, but cause enemies in Europe; But, by Adams's bold diplomacy and Jackson's mailed fist, Florida was acquired from Spain.

President Monroe appointed Jackson as commissioner to receive the formal surrender of the Floridas, as Governor of the whole territory taken possession of, and as Commissioner, vested with special and extraordinary powers, according to the treaty and acts of Congress.

Early in July traveling from the "Hermitage" with his staff, wife and adopted son, Gen. Jackson reached the "Fifteen Miles House", where he was entertained by the proprietor, Don Manuel Gonzalez. There, he made his headquarters, with the troops that followed him, until the arrangements had been made at Pensacola for the change of government.

On the morning of July 17, 1821, the day selected for this momentous occasion, a company of dismounted Dragoons from the Spanish army formed south of the flag staff in front of the government house, and a U. S. infantry batallion and company took place opposite. Between the lines Gen. Jackson and his staff passed to the government house where he joined with the Spanish Governor in executing the formal signatures for the delivery of West Florida, including the fortress at St. Marks, - after which, the two high officials passed between the saluting lines. As they reached the flag staff, the banner of Spain was lowered and the colors of the United States arose, greeted by the inspiring notes of the Star Spangled Banner and salutes from the artillery and guns.

The day of the exchange was one of sorrow to the Spanish inhabitants who elected to depart. "Oh, how they burst into tears", wrote Mrs. Jackson from Pensacola, "to see the last ray of hope depart from their devoted city and country."

The Spanish officers and garrison sailed away, but Governor Callava and his staff remained for some time. While preparing for his departure, an incident, which for a time cooled the friendly feeling between the Americans and Spaniards, occurred. It was reported that Callava was not carrying out his agreements. Jackson ordered his arrest and sent him to the calaboose. When Judge Fromentin issued a writ of Habeas Corpus for Callava, Jackson called him to account. But Callava was released and peace was restored.

In determining his scope of authority in Florida, Jackson was informed that it was impossible to find what manner of government the provinces were accustomed to under Spanish authority and that military rule was supreme. Judge Brackenridge said, "When Jackson came to consider his powers, he can-

didly declared that they were greater then should be committed to any individual and he willingly consented to delegate part of them to the inhabitants, both old and new." So, assuming the imposing title of "Governor of the provinces of the Floridas, exercising the powers of the Captain-General and of the Intendant of the island of Cuba, he issued his first Ordinance which was essentially American, and, as might be expected, not generally satisfactory to the inhabitants. This Ordinance, the first law under the rule of the United States, divided the territory into two counties-Escambia, west of the Suwanee River, and St. Johns, east. County Courts were provided for, grand and petit juries were authorized, and speedy and public trials required.

Other Ordinances restricted liquor-selling and gaming-houses by license, prohibited the selling of intoxicants to soldiers, established a Board of Health and Quarantine at Pensacola, and, at the suggestion of Mrs. Jackson, required the observance of the "Christian Sabbath."

The last Ordinance dated Sept. 6, 1821 was in regard to the regulation of the practice of medicine. As has been intimated, there was dissatisfaction with the Ordinance, especially the Sabbath regulation and the taxing power, and their repeal was obtained by Hernandez.

During Jackson's administration, Henry M. Brackenridge was appointed Commissioner, to act upon the claims for damages arising from the military operations of the United States. Commissioners were also appointed to settle the claims for lands under the Spanish and British grants. As these land claims covered large tracts of the Territory, their adjustment occupied several years, and, meanwhile, the public lands was kept from market to a large extent. As late as 1825, general discontent on this 'subject was voiced

when Simmons, Clark, and Mitchell declared that for "nearly four years, the incubus of a land commission had continued to paralyze and oppress the energies of the territory."

During this time, a military force was stationed at Pensacola and St. Marks, under Col. Fenwick, and at Amelia Island, under Lieut.-Col. Abram Eustis. This gave new life and activity to the towns, accentuated by the presence of a crowd of adventurers and prospectors from all parts of the Union, particularly at Pensacola, which soon had 4,000 inhabitants. But this period of prosperity was of short duration. In the following year, an epidemic of yellow fever swept Pensacola and killed many.

The Seminoles at this time, numbered 5,000. Jackson advocated the removal of all the Indians in Florida up into the Creek Nation, assuming that they had no rights in the land. "Why should we hesitate to order them up at once?" he wrote to Washington. "And where", he asked, "unless the Indians can be consolidated at one point, is the country that can be brought into market, from which the \$5,000,000 are to be raised to meet the claims of our citizens under the late treaty with Spain?" But in East Florida, the chief of the Seminoles sent an eloquent memorial to Washington, in regard to the neglect of any guarantee of their rights in the treaty with Spain.

Governor Jackson did not continue long at Pensacola. His home and higher ambitions appealed to him more strongly, than the administration of this young Territory, and, in the confidence of his family, he declared that he had enough of "A wild goose chase". He resigned Nov. 13, 1821, and returned to Tennessee, leaving the conduct of affairs with the Secretaries of Eastern and Western Florida.

Later, he served successful terms in the presidency and is the only president, who can be said to have gone

out of office far more popular than he was when he entered. He died on June 8, 1845.

He had lived, as it were, two lives. He had first assisted to subdue the Western Wilderness and then had taken the lead in defending it. He had first broken the power of the Seminole Indians and then, by a series of treaties, regulated the terms upon which they were to live in neighborhood with the conquering race.

Colonel White, a writer of this time, who had in contemplation a history of the State, remarked, "I wish to finish my History of Florida by the addition of some chapters on the Indian War, by, which it will be shown that General Jackson is the hero of three wars."

On the second day of the first session of the General Assembly of the State it was announced that Andrew Jackson was dead, and badges of mourning were donned to be worn for sixty days. For Jackson, the Colossus of his time, "whose intrepidity, whose energy, whose fiery temper and intense love of right made the most remarkable man The Republic has ever produced" was closely associated with Florida throughout his years of greatest fame. The strands of her destiny and his had been closely woven together and no one was more revered and beloved in The Young State than the great soldier who had hastened her separation from Spain.

ANNA CLARK.