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## The Annual Meeting

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## THE ANNUAL MEETING

by JOHN W. GRIFFIN

ON APRIL 13TH AND 14TH, 1956, the Florida Historical Society observed its centennial, if not its one hundredth annual meeting. Organized in 1856 as the Historical Society of Florida, the Society returned to St. Augustine, the place of its founding, for the occasion. The role of host was played by the St. Augustine Historical Society, and all program sessions were held at the Ponce de Leon Hotel, itself a reminder of the Flagler Era of Florida history.

Registration, which began Friday morning, totaled 126, of which 96 came from communities other than St. Augustine. Gainesville contributed twenty-one of the registrants, with Jacksonville running second with thirteen. Miami and Lakeland tied for third place with eight each, while close behind ran Tallahassee and Mt. Dora with six and Tampa with five. Thirteen other Florida communities were represented, as were seven other states and England.

The Friday morning program was devoted to a centennial observance with past-president John C. Blocker as chairman. Following the invocation by the Right Reverend Monsignor John J. Fitzpatrick, greetings were extended by Mayor Dwight L. Brett of St. Augustine and President X. L. Pellicer of the St. Augustine Historical Society. President Thrift made the response.

The first paper, by Herbert J. Doherty, Jr., of the University of Florida, set the stage by sketching in the background of "Florida in 1856." Then, as now, Florida was in a period of expansion and change, and political heat was being generated in 1856, just as in 1956. Watt P. Marchman, Director of the Rutherford B. Hayes Library, and former secretary and librarian of the Society, followed with a review of "The First Century of the Florida Historical Society." Organized in 1856, the Society became dormant during the Civil War, and was not successfully reorganized until 1902. The founders and leaders of the Society were named, and the trials and wanderings of a century were discussed. Rembert W. Patrick of the University of Florida concluded the session with a paper entitled "The Florida Historical Quarterly".

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Begun in 1908, publication was suspended the following year, and was not resumed until 1924. It may be said that in many respects the *Quarterly* has been the Society, and it may truly be said that from 1924 to 1955 Julien C. Yonge was the *Quarterly*. Through his untiring editorship the *Florida Historical Quarterly* has taken a high place among state historical journals.

The luncheon meeting, held in the Venido Room of the Ponce de Leon Hotel, was presided over by President Charles T. Thrift. As usual this was the occasion for reports from local and regional societies. Continued growth was reported from most quarters, and the organization of several new local societies and county historical commissions was noted.

The Friday afternoon program session, Charles S. Davis, Chairman, was devoted to papers on Florida under the United States. Weymouth T. Jordan, Florida State University, outlined "The Florida Plan; An Ante-Bellum Effort to Control Cotton Prices", an interesting early attempt to stabilize fluctuations in the market through agreement, warehousing, and selling at a fixed minimum price. M. W. Dodson, III, of Pensacola dealt with a later agricultural phase of Florida history in his paper "Hamilton Disston's St. Cloud Sugar Plantation." This enterprise, spanning the years 1887-1901, was a major factor in establishing the pattern of draining and farming the Everglades.

Samuel Proctor, University of Florida, described "Jewish Life in Florida During the Nineteenth Century," beginning with the large-looming name of Moses E. Levy. The population was small until the 1880's, when it began to expand. Charlton W. Tebeau, University of Miami, discussed "Seminole Indian Trading Posts in South Florida." Many South Florida communities had their beginning as a trading post, providing contact between the Indian and the white man.

Late afternoon found many visiting members enjoying the hospitality of the Woman's Exchange at a garden party held at the Old Spanish Treasury.

The Annual Banquet in the Venido Room of the Ponce de Leon Hotel was attended by 105 persons who enjoyed the setting and the food. President Charles T. Thrift served as toastmaster, and introduced the speaker, Elizabeth Ives of Southern Pines, North Carolina, who spoke briefly on her experiences in the

historic restoration movement in that area. At the banquet, the St. Augustine Historical Society presented a citation to Julien C. Yonge for his services on behalf of Florida history, and presented Mrs. Ives with an inscribed copy of Barcia's *History of Florida*.

An evening session of slide-talks was held with John W. Griffin as chairman. Earnest G. Gearhart, Jr., and Justin P. Havee ably represented the Historical Association of Southern Florida in presenting their slide-talk "The History of South Florida in Pictures." This presentation, designed for public showings, is an excellent example of the interpretation of local history. C. R. Vinten of the National Park Service concluded the evening with a colorful slide-talk about "Mission 66," the 10 year plan of the National Park Service to prepare our parks and historic shrines for ever increasing visitor use.

The program was resumed on Saturday morning, under the chairmanship of Miss Dena Snodgrass, with a session on Colonial Florida. Charles W. Arnade, University of Tampa, spoke on "The Trial of Florida: 1593-1602", a period during which repeated pressure was felt for the abandonment of Florida. Specifically treated was the investigation which assured its continuance. Mark F. Boyd, Tallahassee, followed with a biographical sketch of Juan Joseph Eligio de la Puente, perhaps the most important figure born in Florida in Spanish times, and a significant factor in Spain's attitude toward the American Revolution.

Julian Granberry, University of Florida, discussed "The Problem of Culture-Contact in Colonial Florida", advancing the thesis that cultural conflicts and misunderstandings played as great a role in unsettled Florida conditions as did the repercussions of European diplomatic and military affairs. Nancy Engstrom, University of Florida, concluded the program with a sketch of the administration and tribulations of Governor Pablo de Hita y Salazar (1675-1680) under the title "Governor Salazar: Red Tape, Adversity, Animosity".

The Business Meeting and election of officers is fully covered in another portion of the *Quarterly*. Following this meeting, members were invited to visit the various properties of the St. Augustine Historical Society, and to view the new museum of St. Augustine History opened during the meetings. A reception by the St. Augustine Society in the garden of the Llambias House marked the formal conclusion of the Centennial Meeting.