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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Firebrand of Liberty: The Story of Two Black Regiments that Changed the Course of the Civil War. By Stephen V. Ash. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2008. Acknowledgements, preface, maps, prologue, epilogue, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. Pp.ix-282. \$25.95 cloth).

Each year, publishers unveil dozens of new titles destined for large bookstores and book clubs. Civil War historians are lucky to write on a topic that draws this sort of interest. But because of Florida's small wartime population (barely 140,000 total residents in 1860, less than 10 percent the size of Virginia and less than 4 percent of New York's population) and its geographical remoteness from the major theaters of fighting, few scholars accord it much space in traditional narratives of the war. Stephen Ash's new book upsets this tradition, carving out for Florida a space at the center of the conflict. He argues for the importance of Florida's experience as the site of the first major action by black soldiers during the war and one directly focused on ending slavery in the region. Ash's book thus fits perfectly within the emerging body of literature that identifies emancipation as the most meaningful aspect of the Civil War.

The "firebrand" of the title are the 1st and 2nd South Carolina regiments, two black units recruited by Union forces from the sea islands and coastal reaches of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The change to which the second half of the title refers comes in early 1863, when Union Colonel and leading abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson led the regiments on an invasion of northeast Florida. The troops occupied Jacksonville, conducted raids up the St. John's River as far as Palatka, and were set to embark on an audacious movement into the interior of Florida.

The express purpose of the raid, and indeed the whole invasion of Florida, was to attack slavery. Higginson and his units hoped to draw slaves away from their masters who had retreated into the interior of the state. Jacksonville would then serve as a gateway out of which enslaved people could escape, weakening Confederate Florida and adding manpower to Union forces in the Deep South. Higginson never had the chance to enact the plan because his forces were recalled to Beaufort, South Carolina (the headquarters of the Union's Department of the South) to augment the troops needed for a more high-profile attack on Charleston. That effort failed, and Charleston would not be captured until February 1865, when troops attacked the vulnerable inland side of the city.

At first blush, the outcome in Florida would seem to confirm the wisdom of previous historians - the "invasion" was small in scale (not more than 2,500 soldier at its height), short in duration, and did relatively little damage to Confederate forces in the area. But Ash is not a traditional historian. In addition to having a rare gift for narrative, he sees the significance of events and processes that other historians overlook. In previous books, he has brought much needed clarity to the issue of Union occupation of the South and to the pivotal year of 1865. In this case, Ash argues that the success of Higginson's mission, though limited, was enough to convince Abraham Lincoln to push ahead with plans for wide-scale recruitment and enlistment of black men into the Union Army. Within days of news reports about the occupation of Jacksonville, the administration had shifted policy and embarked on what would eventually be the creation of the United States Colored Troops, a 180,000 man force of black soldiers within the regular army that provided the Union with a crucial manpower edge late in the war. Although Ash has no smoking gun that links the Florida expedition to Lincoln directly, his circumstantial case is persuasive.

Higginson left the best private records of the event. He was a writer before the war and in addition to his journals left a memoir that remains a Civil War classic. Ash draws heavily from Higginson but his footnotes reveal exhaustive research in all the relevant collections. Because the expedition was cut short before it reached its major objective, personalities must carry a lot of the narrative interest and here Ash excels. He gives concise descriptions and carries forward the stories of a wide array of individuals involved in the campaign, from white abolitionists to black soldiers to

unscrupulous Treasury Department agents to Jacksonville Unionists. The region's Confederates do not have much of a voice in this account because Ash's focus is on the significance of the event for the northern war effort. He is surely right that the campaign risked a great deal—failure would have weakened the case for the enlistment of black soldiers and perhaps set back the Union's enthusiasm for carrying emancipation forward. In the event, the campaign succeeded just enough to ensure that emancipation became a permanent Union policy. Just as Florida has emerged in recent years as one of the most important places to study in order to understand Colonial America, *Firebrand of Liberty* puts Florida at the center of the Civil War narrative.

Aaron Sheehan-Dean

University of North Florida

The Florida Life of Thomas Edison. By Michelle Wehrwein Albion. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. Acknowledgements, illustrations, maps, notes, index. Pp. xix, 239. \$34.95 cloth.)

The *Florida Life of Thomas Edison* delivers what it promises: a brief, well-illustrated, and engaging survey of the inventor's experiences at his Fort Myers winter home. Author Michelle Wehrwein Albion, a former curator at the Edison and Ford Winter Estates and author of several articles on Edison's career and south Florida history, presents the inventor as a human being, a humble and charming member of his new community, and someone genuinely interested in the natural environment, friendships, and solitude that southwest Florida offered.

When Edison first arrived in Fort Myers in 1885, it was little more than the end of a cattle trail; even the finest hotel lacked electricity, gas, or indoor plumbing. Edison was attracted nevertheless, and on his second day there purchased thirteen acres along the Caloosahatchee River for under \$3000. As with his hundreds of patents and inventions, the "Wizard of Menlo Park" proved wise despite his lack of formal education.

Edison soon constructed a new home, later dubbed Seminole Lodge, and eventually added laboratories, a swimming pool, a pier, and other amenities. Although his visits were intermittent at first, Edison's Fort Myers winters eventually became an (almost) annual event and an increasingly central part of his life. Albion

focuses mainly on the inventor's daily experiences, including fishing expeditions, camping trips, home renovations, and host to famous visitors. Guests included John Harvey Kellogg, President Herbert Hoover, the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team, and most significantly, Henry Ford, who in 1916 bought property that soon became his own winter home, The Mangoes, just a few hundred feet from Edison's.

Edison did not do much research or experimentation in Fort Myers until his later years, when he became obsessed with the search for a domestic source of natural rubber. By 1927, Edison had turned the Fort Myers property into a serious research facility, testing thousands of plant varieties for rubber content, conducting laboratory tests on rubber solvents, and straining to improve rubber yields, before eventually settling on a species of goldenrod as the most promising possibility. Although the inventor fell short of his goal, he could not have been more accurate about the threat of a wartime rubber emergency, and descendants of his goldenrod plants became an important part of the nation's massive response to the rubber crisis of World War II.

Albion gives considerable attention to Edison's second wife, Mina. Daughter of a prominent Ohio family, Mina Miller Edison was appalled on her honeymoon to find Fort Myers a backward village, her winter home unfinished (and lacking electricity), and her new husband more devoted to work and business than to family affairs. Nevertheless, she remained a devoted wife and eventually became a dedicated ambassador for the city. In many ways, she worked to preserve the region's natural beauty, to control the town's development, and to promote education and community improvement. As her husband aged, she also worked hard to protect him from tourists, the media, and other distractions. Her activism in community affairs continued well after the inventor died in 1931, and she participated in efforts to protect Seminole lands in the Everglades and to reduce racial barriers in the segregated city. Just months before her death in 1947, she deeded Seminole Lodge to the city of Fort Myers for the price of one dollar. It was the first step in the preservation of this famous winter home and research facility.

Although this is not a scholarly book in the traditional sense, it is well researched. Albion relied especially on Fort Myers newspapers and other periodicals, which are supplemented with archival correspondence and oral histories with local residents.

The text also includes a very fine collection of nearly fifty photographs, as well as dozens of pull-out boxes that add anecdotal and incidental color to the story. On the other hand, because she had little intent to engage or challenge what scholars have written on Edison, South Florida's development, race relations, or other topics, Albion tends to lift Fort Myers history, Edison's career, his research on rubber, and Mina's activism in local affairs out of their historical context. The emphasis on daily activities captures the flavor of the Edisons' Florida experiences, although details on boat repairs, bird sightings, meals served at the local hotel, and tales of the fish that got away do limit the book's overall significance.

The Florida Life of Thomas Edison fits a fairly small niche in the extensive literature on the nation's most famous inventor, but it succeeds as a rich and interesting portrayal of Thomas and Mina Edison's work, recreation, and community activism in the Sunshine State.

Mark R. Finlay

Armstrong Atlantic State University

A Journey into Florida Railroad History. By Gregg M. Turner. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008. Foreword, acknowledgments, introduction, b/w photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. 304. \$27.50.)

With this latest book, Gregg M. Turner has cemented his credentials as one of the leading, and most prolific, authorities on Florida railroads writing today. Former national director of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society at Harvard Business School and co-author of *Connecticut Railroads: An Illustrated History* (1988), Turner began his forays in Florida history from his Southwest Florida base at Fort Myers with *Railroads of Southwest Florida* (2000), *Venice in the 1920s* (2000), and *Fort Myers* (2001) co-authored with Stan Milford. Methodically and with diligence, he expanded his interests in Florida railroads and followed with *A Short History of Florida Railroads* (2003), *A Milestone Celebration: The Seaboard Railway to Naples and Miami* (2004), *The Plant System of Railroads, Steamships and Hotels: The South's First Great Industrial Enterprise* (2004) co-authored with Seth Bramson, and *Florida Railroads in the 1920s* (2006) with the thematic detour *Fort Myers in Vintage Postcards* (2005) squeezed in between. He now delights us with *A Journey into Florida Railroad History* (2008).

Turner realizes the enormity of the task facing any historian attempting to thoroughly cover Florida railroad history. In the 2003 introduction to his *A Short History of Florida Railroads*, he wrote: "For at least one generation, perhaps more than one, the story of Florida railroading will be something of a surprise" (11). That he perceptively entitled his latest work *A Journey into Florida Railroad History* is an expression of his hope that future journeys into Florida railroad history will follow. That said, Turner's journey, if more a synthesis than an exhaustive study, is an exciting and informative one for both amateur and professional historians alike.

The first chapter of the book, "A Railway Primer," is destined to become a standard introduction to the story of Florida's railroads. Basic concepts such as the role of railroad promoters, the mechanics of state charters, financing and construction costs, the issuance of corporate bonds (so crucial in Florida's railroad history), sources of labor, contractors and subcontractors, the laying of rails, the gauges of tracks, the acquisition of equipment, station construction, and personnel hiring and operations are succinctly and entertainingly presented and lay the foundation for his journey in future chapters.

The next seven chapters cover almost 100 years of Florida railroad history from the first operational line in 1836 to the period just before the Great Depression of the 1930s. These were, undoubtedly, the glory years of Florida's railroads in terms of scope, drama, and personalities. The difficult task of recounting the multiple short early lines and their tortuous path to regional consolidation is admirably covered in the first three of the seven chapters. The main personalities and the railroads involved in territorial Florida during what Turner calls an early "era of private enterprise"—General Richard Keith Call and the Tallahassee Railroad, Benjamin Chaires and the St. Joseph Railroad, the short-lived Arcadia Railroad Company, and Captain William Chase and the Alabama, Florida, and Georgia Railroad Company—are dutifully chronicled. With statehood in 1845, federal and state land grants increasingly became incentives for railroad building as Congressman Edward C. Cabell and his Pensacola and Georgia railroad, Dr. Abel Seymour Baldwin and the Florida Atlantic and Gulf Central Railroad, Captain William Chase and a re-chartered Alabama and Florida Railroad, Dr. John Westcott and the St. John's Railroad, and Senator David Yulee and his Florida Railroad

took advantage of the passage of the Internal Improvement Fund Act in 1855. Turner closes this era of private enterprise by summarizing the decline and virtual collapse of Florida's early rail lines during the Civil War, the lack of progress during Reconstruction, and the swindle by General Milton Littlefield and North Carolina banker George Swepson of innocent Dutch investors in the Jacksonville, Pensacola & Mobile Railroad fiasco.

Turner ushers the reader into what he labels "the era of consolidation and system building" in the book's next two chapters. In the first of these chapters he discusses the role played by Governor William Bloxham and Philadelphia entrepreneur Hamilton Disston in reviving the Internal Improvement Fund in 1881 with the famous or infamous state land sale of four million acres for one million dollars which freed the fund from its debts and resulted in the renewal of land grants and railroad construction in Florida. The work of William D. Chipley and the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, English capitalist Sir Edward Reed and what would eventually become the Florida Central & Peninsular Railroad, Henry B. Plant and his Plant System of railroads, and Henry M. Flagler and the Florida East Coast Railway are, again, dutifully covered. The second of the two chapters covers the expansion into the state of the Seaboard Air Line Railway, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and the Southern Railway at the turn of the twentieth century to join the Louisville & Nashville railroad with only the Florida East Coast Railway remaining as an independent major railroad in the state. The impact of federal government intervention during World War I in Florida's and the nation's railroads is also covered. Turner closes the era in the last two chapters of this series which chronicle a period of further line consolidations and the railroad construction boom in Florida during the 1920s.

The book's last three chapters compress Turner's last two eras of Florida railroad history— the "era of decline and competition" and the "era of megamergers and short lines." In these chapters he chronicles the receivership of the Florida East Coast Railway in 1931 and bondholders' protracted fight for control of the railroad, the 1935 hurricane and the end of the FEC rail line to Key West, the impact of World War II, Ed Ball and his battle with the Atlantic Coast Line for control of the FEC, the merger between the Seaboard Air Line and the Atlantic Coast Line in 1967 to create the Seaboard Coast Line, and that line's subsequent merger in

1980 with the Chessie System of railroads to create CSX Corporation. The last chapter closes with a listing and brief discussion of the three large railroads currently operating in Florida (the CSX Corporation, the Norfolk Southern Corporation, and the Florida East Coast Railway) and the number of short lines also in operation which are remarkably reminiscent of those similar early short lines almost two centuries before.

In a volume edited under The Florida History and Culture Series of the University of Florida Press which aims for a broad audience among academics and non-academics alike and with, probably, book-length constraints, there are, inevitably, omissions. For the non-specialist, the absence of detailed maps of Florida to piece together the multitude of short lines, especially during the earlier periods, is a major shortcoming of the book not entirely compensated by the ample use of illustrations. For the specialist, more space and analysis should have been devoted to the intricacies of the political context of railroad construction in Florida. The glossing over of the Reconstruction period and the absence of any discussion of the role of Governor Harrison Reed and his Great Southern Railroad Company project in the early 1870s as a southern trunk line linking the Northeast to the Caribbean and points further south through Florida is a glaring omission. The same goes for no mention of General John B. Gordon's projected International Railroad and Steamship Company in the 1880s with goals similar to the Great Southern project. For the Progressive Era, Senator Wilkinson Call and his antagonistic views of railroads deserve greater coverage than the brief one paragraph assigned to him. Economic historians will lament the scant coverage given to the issue of the historical manipulation of rates (both passenger and freight) by railroads as well as the competition between rail and water transport and its impact on decisions rendered by the House Committee on Rivers and Harbors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Finally, the almost circuitous nature of Turner's railroad journey which has brought his readers to a discussion of short rail lines in Florida early in the twenty-first century—a discussion with striking similarities to events almost 200 years before—elicits no comment from the author. Academicians will, however, find comfort in Turner's research and the wealth of documentation found in his numerous endnotes.

A Journey into Florida Railroad History by Gregg M. Turner is, in short, a well-written, highly entertaining, and well-documented

synthesis of the chronology of Florida's railroads which general readers will thoroughly enjoy and which academic specialists most certainly welcome as the journey into Florida railroad history continues.

Jesus Mendez

Barry University

Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos.

By Louis A Pérez, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Acknowledgments, introduction, photographs, political cartoons, notes, index. Pp. xi, 33. \$34.95 Cloth.)

Throughout his career, Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Carlyle Settersen Professor of History and director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has excelled as one of the foremost scholars of United States—Cuban relations. In this superbly written book, Pérez uses Cuba as metaphor to explore United States—Cuban relations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

After a thoroughly convincing introduction describing how Cuba became the laboratory for American global imperialism, the book's first chapter examines the importance of the use of the metaphor throughout history. In explaining the metaphor from a historical perspective, the author relies on the works of renowned historians, linguists, sociologists, philosophers and psychologists. As a result, the reader realizes how instrumental the metaphor was to American empire-building.

In the second chapter, Pérez—aided by newspaper illustrations, cartoons, editorials, travel accounts, and quotations from journalists, historians, and politicians—presents a detailed analysis of Cuba, in the view of nineteenth century American policymakers, as essential to the security, welfare, and destiny of the United States.

Although the chapter concentrates on the Spanish-American War, it offers invaluable insights into the northern republic's obsession in acquiring the Spanish-held island by reason or by force. As evidenced by the author's use of cartoons, illustrations, and other images, the reader will notice how the metaphor as a mode of persuasion changed throughout the nineteenth century. Prior to the outbreak of the Cuban War for Independence in 1895, the most commonly employed metaphor was that of Cuba as a ripe fruit ready to be picked by Uncle Sam's friendly hand. Once the

Independence War started, the metaphor switched to invoke moral suasion as Cuba was depicted as a neighborly damsel in distress, begging to be rescued from the abusive Spanish master. Through Pérez's craftsmanship in combining all of his sources, the reader realizes that while there was an altruistic component to the Spanish-American War, the United States also acted out of self-interest.

The next three chapters concentrate on United States relations with post-independent Cuba. During the first years of the Cuban republic, the metaphor changed from the damsel in distress to a Black child in need of discipline. Cuba was depicted as a primitive, immature unruly child in a school setting with other unruly classmates (Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines) under Uncle Sam's tutelage.

As the book progresses, there are new metaphors revealing the Americans' sense of entitlement as Cuba is depicted as a tropical playground, a saloon, a cabaret, a casino, or even a brothel. The author is at his best in portraying the Cubans' grievances towards the Americans' paternalistic, arrogant and jingoistic attitude. Pérez, however, avoids the trap of his book becoming another anti-Yankee diatribe. Instead of sermonizing and pontificating, he relies on the works of Cubans intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s such as Eduardo Abril Amores, Rafael A. Cisneros, and Jorge Mañach. According to them, the United States' forced establishment of a dependency system for Cuba, crushed the Cuban sentiment of self-determination and prevented Cubans from realizing their own destinies.

After Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959 and his subsequent nationalization of American properties, the Cuban-as-child metaphor reappeared as Castro was often portrayed as a brat in need of punishment. As Cuba became a Communist island only 90 miles away from the United States, the prevailing metaphor was that of a cancer ready to spread all over Latin America.

In explaining Castro's vitriolic attitude and hate towards the United States, Pérez accurately points out that the Cuban leader became the embodiment of his countrymen's grievances against the United States. However, in this reviewer's opinion, Castro paid a very high price for this "independence," for in order to survive, he had no other alternative than to depend on a more nefarious imperialist power, the former Soviet Union.

The last chapter is a recapitulation of the previous ones, but Pérez admonishes that if changes were to take place in Cuba, that planning for its future should be left to the Cubans on the island,

and American policymakers must avoid the arrogance and mistakes of their predecessors in a post-Castro Cuba.

In summary, Pérez, with balance and authority, has done a magnificent job in depicting nineteenth and twentieth-century United States-Cuban relations. The book is highly recommended for those interested in United States-Latin American relations and is a must read for American policymakers.

José B. Fernández

University of Central Florida

Coming Through: Voices of a South Carolina Gullah Community from WPA Oral Histories. Edited by Kincaid Mills, Genevieve C. Peterkin, and Aaron McCullough. (Columbia: SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008). Acknowledgements, foreword, introduction, illustrations, appendices, index. Pp. 384. \$29.95 cloth.)

Coming Through is an edited collection of interviews that Genevieve Willcox Chandler conducted with 49 members of the Gullah community along the east side of the Waccamaw River in South Carolina, for the Federal Writers Project (FWP). Although the book is a challenging read for those of us who are not fluent in the cadences of Gullah speech, it is nonetheless worth the effort. With patience, the rhythms of the remarkable stories become familiar. *Coming Through* will entrance readers who are interested in Gullah life and culture, in slavery and the coming of freedom, and in folklore.

Chandler, an educated middle class white woman, grew up in the local community and understood Gullah. More important, the local African-American people knew and trusted her, making the stories she collected more vivid and detailed than many of those that African Americans told white New Deal-era interviewers. Widowed in middle age with five children to support, she turned to teaching and work with the FWP to support her family. Chandler taught local white children during the day and began a night school for adults. Because segregation laws prevented her from conducting night classes for African-Americans in the white school building, she offered them lessons in her own home, a progressive move in the Jim Crow South, and one that earned her the respect of local blacks. Chandler's brother was a local doctor much beloved for his work among local blacks.

Between May 1936 and October 1938, Chandler collected thousands of pages of interviews. She framed her earliest inter-

views in a highly stylized literary fashion, but over time, she moved more and more toward letting informants tell their stories without any narrative framing. Although she was not trained in folklore or linguistics, she endeavored to record both the Gullah tales and the Gullah dialect in an accurate and respectful manner. In those days that pre-dated portable recording technology, she developed her own short-hand to take down the stories verbatim.

Coming Through is the product of a decade and a half of work by Chandler's daughter, Genevieve Chandler Perterkin, Kincaid Mills, and Aaron McCullough. The editors combed several archives, including the South Caroliniana Library and the Library of Congress, to assemble copies of all of Chandler's interviews. What they found was a diverse collection of songs, folklore, slave narratives, and life histories. Their goal was to make Chandler's interviews available to a broad readership in a format that offered an organized account of the Waccamaw River Gullah community's history.

Historian Charles W. Joyner's Foreword is a warm recollection of his own long acquaintance of Genevieve Chandler. The introduction offers a brief history of the FWP and its "unprecedented narrative recording effort" as well as an overview of Chandler's life and work (xviii). Four appendices reprint various directives from FWP officials to guide the gathering of ex-slave narratives and folktales. Three maps of the Waccamaw community geographically orient the reader.

Each chapter contains the narratives on a single informant. Stunning photographs of many of the informants by North Carolina photographer Bayard Wooten accompany the text. A single interview constitutes some chapters; others contain the result of dozens of encounters between Chandler and her subjects. Trickster stories and accounts of folk medicine are interwoven with stories about slavery times and references to contemporary community events. Chandler's interviewees ranged from ditch diggers to oyster men, from domestic workers and farmers, to rice plantation hands, and carpenters; many owned their land while others were landless. Some were children; the oldest was more than 100; most had been young at the time of emancipation. Typical was Hagar Brown, a midwife seen as a matriarch in the community. Brown frequently visited Chandler to obtain milk and produce, and she shared many conjure stories as well as tales about slavery times and about her experiences as a midwife and folk healer. She lived with her family on a small farm that she inherited from her

husband who died in prison after being falsely convicted of stealing a pig. Like many of the narrators, she spoke at length about the value of work and land. She told Chandler "Land a good thing to look after. I work till I loney (looney) in the field" (23).

The orientation of the Waccamaw Gullah people was profoundly local. They marked time by births and deaths, the earthquake of 1886, and the hurricane of 1893. Most important of all, they marked time by the year that freedom came. One narrator explained that Lee had surrendered to Grant nearby, a distortion that the editors believe reflected his profoundly personal identification with the end of the Civil War. Many narrators shared vivid tales of life during slavery and of the passage of Yankee gunboats up the Waccamaw River. William Oliver explained that slaves on the plantation where he grew up enjoyed secret reading lessons at night away from the master's eyes. Ben Horry told how his father went to war with his white master and worked as a ditchdigger for the Confederates. Mariah Heywood recalled that slaves on her plantation spent the war years praying for freedom: "Four years of the war been hold prayer meeting" (79). Of the arrival of freedom, she said, "I know when Lincoln shoot the chain of slavery off my neck. And I hear the gun" (76).

Although the editors used footnotes to explain much of the social and historical context of various stories and to define some Gullah terms, a glossary of common Gullah terms would have made the book more user-friendly. This is, however, a minor quibble. The poetic Gullah storytellers offer a richly textured picture of nineteenth century life on the Waccamaw rice plantations from the perspective of its African-Americans.

Melissa Walker

Converse College

A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture Since 1929. By Paul K. Conkin. (Lexington, Ky.: The University of Kentucky Press, 2008. List of Illustrations, Preface, Acknowledgements, Afterword, Notes, Index. Pp. 240. Cloth, \$29.95.)

Recently, the editor of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* and I visited Hydro Harvest Farms in Ruskin, Florida. There, on barely half an acre, hundreds of plastic containers full of plants sat on tarmac being fed via tubes from vats of water. This operation, a family farm

for the twenty-first century, embodies many of the changes described in Paul Conkin's book, *A Revolution Down on the Farm*. For Conkin, long-time professor of history at Vanderbilt University, this work represents a reflective, retrospective journey through both his personal and professional life. In it, he analyzes the changes in American agriculture and rural life from his birth in 1929 to the present day. The book is designed to appeal to the lay reader who has an interest in America's agricultural past, but it would also serve as an overview text for a class on agricultural or rural history.

Although Conkin constructs his book chronologically, he has four main themes: the survival of the family farm, the increasing efficiency of agriculture, federal intervention, and the depopulation of the countryside. Over much of the twentieth century politicians and others indulged in considerable handwringing about the loss of the family farm. They claimed this institution was disappearing in the face of agribusiness, Jeffersonian yeomen giving out to corporations. Hopefully, Conkin's book will finally put this myth to rest. He clearly demonstrates the continuing existence of the family farm. Most usually these operations survived by increasing both in size and efficiency. In effect, these farms become agribusinesses run by a single family.

The *Revolution* of Conkin's title is one of production. He shows how a combination of innovations in farm machinery, scientific advances in fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and animal and plant genetics dramatically improved agricultural production in the United States. In 1900, for example, "it took 147 hours of labor to grow 100 bushels of wheat . . . by 1990 . . . only 6" (98). The per-acre productivity of the land also grew. In 1900 one acre produced 25 bushels of corn; by 2000 one acre generated more than 120 bushels (99). Similar growth figures can be seen in most animal and field crops—fruits and vegetables also gained but not as dramatically.

Much of this revolution was funded by government subsidies. From the Great Depression on, the federal government has provided significant financial aid to farmers to ensure a continuous affordable food supply at a reasonable rate of return for the farmer. Conkin rightly points out two fundamental tenets of these subsidies that sculpted the dimensions of twenty-first century agriculture. First, they always favored larger-scale farmers, allowing them to expand and prosper, often at the expense of their smaller neighbors. Second, the government has maintained a contradictory approach to farming. On the one hand, it has worked steadily, with the exception

of the period during the World Wars, to reduce farm production—paying farmers to remove land from cultivation. On the other hand, it financed the scientific research that has enabled these farmers to generate ever-increasing harvests on reduced acreage.

Hand-in-hand with the increasing efficiency of agriculture has been the depopulation of the countryside, as laborers and farmers left the countryside for work in the cities. There is considerable controversy over this mass migration, as Conkin rightly points out. Many people regret the loss of a life lived close to the land, while others point to the low wages and poor conditions of farm work. As we move into this century, this rural-urban divide is blurring as suburbs spread into the countryside, hobby farms proliferate, and many farm owners gain income from off-farm employment.

Conkin does not avoid controversy. He discusses the environmental, racial, economic, and social problems engendered by contemporary American agriculture. And he devotes a chapter to alternative perspectives of rural life from the communal farming of the Hutterites to the wide-ranging critiques of Wendell Berry. He does not take sides in any of the debates, exploring their complexities with admirable evenhandedness.

All in all, Conkin is to be commended for this overview of modern American agriculture. I particularly liked his two personal chapters—the first offering a snapshot of farm life the year he was born in his particular community in Tennessee, the second continuing the story through World War II to the 1970s. I was frustrated by the scarcity of endnotes; many times I wanted more information on a subject, only to find no sources cited. Despite this, many readers will enjoy *A Revolution Down on the Farm* and, like me, will find it illuminating their visits to farmers' markets, pumpkin patches, and hydroponic farms.

Claire Strom

Rollins College

Historic Pensacola. Edited by John J. Clune, Jr., and Margo S. Stringfield. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009. Series Foreword, acknowledgments, introduction, color images, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. 200. \$27.00 cloth.)

Historic Pensacola is the inaugural volume in the series *Colonial Towns and Cities of the Atlantic World*, edited by John J. Clune, Jr.

(University of West Florida) and Gregory Waselkov (University of South Alabama), and if this volume is an indication of things to come, fans of colonial Florida, the Gulf Coast, and the Atlantic seaboard are in for future treats. This particular volume, focused on colonial Pensacola, is authored by John J. Clune, Jr., and Margo S. Stringfield. Clune is chair of the University of West Florida History Department and Stringfield is an archaeologist with the University of West Florida Archaeology Institute. What makes this book enjoyable is the readable synthesis between the disciplines of history and archaeology.

Pensacola was Florida's largest city when the United States acquired the territory from Spain in 1821. Its colonial history goes back to 1559, when the Spanish first attempted a settlement at Pensacola Bay (the Pensacola 450th Anniversary Committee aided in the publication of this volume). The authors divide the book into five chapters, reflecting the five stages of Pensacola's colonial existence—"First Settlement, 1559-1561," "First Pensacola, 1698-1719," "Storms and High Tides, 1722-1763," "British Pensacola, 1763-1781," and "Second Spanish Period, 1781-1821." Using the latest historical and archaeological research and discoveries, Clune and Stringfield weave the rich tapestry that defined this colonial town. Especially well covered is the first settlement attempt by Tristan de Luna from 1559-1561, including the many diverse reasons behind Spain's interest in Florida. Unfortunately a hurricane struck the large expedition (1500 persons) only a short time after they had landed, and after searching for elusive food the colony began to fall part, finally being abandoned in 1561, and allowing St. Augustine to claim the honor of Florida first settlement four years later. Underwater archaeologists have discovered two of Luna's ill-fated ships in Pensacola Bay, and the artifacts have revealed much information about this first colonizing attempt.

It would not be until 1698 that Pensacola would be permanently settled, and once again archaeological investigations at that first site of Pensacola have revealed rich details about life in the very primitive outpost. After a brief French interlude, the Spanish moved their colony to the hurricane prone shores of Santa Rosa Island from the 1720s to the 1750s, before finally relocating it to the mainland where the modern city of Pensacola sits. But because of geopolitics, Spain lost Florida to the British, 1763-1781, but regained it and held the city until the United States acquisition in 1821. Each of these episodes is treated, being enriched by new

documents and numerous archaeological investigations that have shed light on each of these eras and sites.

This is the beauty of the work; it shows the promise and opportunities when historians and archaeologists work together. Too many times the fields of history and archaeology do not intersect, and the valuable knowledge from both disciplines is not shared and key information is lost. By wedding the historical documents and the archaeological record Clune and Stringfield are able to present the most balanced and thorough analysis of Pensacola's colonial past. The artifacts of the past add new dimensions to the economic, geopolitical, and cultural web that comprises the past, and the historiography and original documents illuminate the context in which those artifacts came to be. Numerous full color photographs shine a light on these artifacts and illustrate how they have helped add to our understanding of the city's past. Historic maps are included which also provide readers with a geographical understanding of Pensacola, and its place on the bay, and on the Gulf Coast. Illustrations blend historic and archaeological discoveries into a visual window to the colonial world.

Historic Pensacola is intended for the general audience, but the full color photos, illustrations, and excellent maps make it a treat for any serious student of Florida history. Each chapter also concludes with a historic recipe reflective of the colonial era of the chapter. For those desirous of more in-depth scholarship, the authors have included excellent sources and an extensive bibliography with the most significant works chronicling colonial Pensacola. In summation, this is an attractive, readable, and affordable book that distills the basics of colonial Pensacola with an engaging and colorful text. It is a volume that will appeal to both neophytes and experts. What a wonderful book to highlight the 450th celebration of Florida's historic city of Pensacola.

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Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress. By Alice Yang Murray. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. List of Figures, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xv, 590. \$65 cloth.)

Historians of comparative reparations and historical justice routinely cite America's 1988 Civil Liberties Act as landmark legislation

in the quest for redress for past discrimination. This act provided a national apology for the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and awarded \$20,000 to each survivor. Between 1941 and 1946 the U.S. government violated the civil rights of as many as 110,000 persons of Japanese heritage, two-thirds of whom were born in America. The Civil Liberties Act inspired a new age of apologies for historic wrongs throughout the world.

Historian Alice Yang Murray's deep research, especially utilizing oral history interviews with almost eighty former internees and redress activists, complicates the story of how over six decades Japanese Americans remembered their past, sought collective justice, and campaigned for the Civil Liberties Act. Rather than a unified mass movement to obtain redress from the U.S. government, different groups acted independently, often clashing in terms of goals, tactics, and strategy. They premised their campaigns on how their constituencies reconstructed what happened during the war, the effect of internment on Japanese Americans, the efficacy of different strategies to achieve redress, and the broad meaning of internment for all Americans.

Murray's gracefully written and well organized book examines the campaigns for redress launched by three rival groups: the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the National Council of Japanese American Redress (NCJAR), and the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRJ). As Murray explains, some activists belonged to more than one organization. And not every member of each group shared the same historical memory of the Japanese American experience. "Yet," she maintains, "almost all of the activists associated each organization with a particular history of internment" (p. 3). Beyond this, Murray notes that though the three groups differed about the meaning of internment and specific redress goals and strategies, they concurred that the forced evacuation was unjust and that the former internees deserved financial compensation. "Moreover, all reinforced the right of Japanese Americans to define their own history of internment as well as their right to challenge depictions by the architects of the decision, by the administrators of the camps, and even by sympathetic academics" (p. 322).

Members of the JACL identified with a history of wartime cooperation and military service by Japanese Americans. Interviewees considered those Japanese Americans who served in the American military as the true heroes of their community.

Backers of the JACL stressed the wartime loyalty and patriotism of Japanese Americans internees as their foremost weapon in combating the racism and intolerance that led to their internment in the first place. They cited with special pride the distinguished service of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a Japanese-American fighting unit, as justification for the redress legislation in 1988.

Backers of the NCJAR espoused a radically different history of Japanese Americans during World War II. They described the suffering of internees, branded as collaborators those persons of Japanese descent who supported the U.S. military effort, and celebrated those who protested against the government, refusing to sign loyalty questionnaires or to comply with selective service procedures. NCJAR leaders accused the JACL of accommodating with the U.S. government both during the war and during the redress campaign of the postwar years.

In contrast, many NCRR supporters, born after 1945, revered Japanese-American internees irregardless of their stance on military service or to the loyalty questionnaires. Unlike the JACL or the NCJAR, however, members of the NCRR interpreted the mass incarceration of Japanese-Americans within the broad context of group discrimination against minorities in American history. They drew a parallel between the confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II and the enslavement of African Americans, the neo-slavery of Jim Crow, the consignment of Native Americans to reservations, and the economic exploitation of Asian Americans. NCRR activists urged Japanese Americans to make common cause with other ethnic and racial minorities and to launch grassroots campaigns against injustice and towards redress.

After establishing that the internment of Japanese Americans for so-called "military necessity" resulted from both overt and subtle racism, "twisted logic, unsubstantiated facts, and deliberate lies," Murray details the competing histories of the internment (p. 45). The War Relocation Authority, the civilian government agency responsible for administering it, publicized internment as a benign "relocation" that enabled Japanese Americans to prove their loyalty and faith in democracy. While the JACL, which constructed and promoted this historical memory, "helped repeal decades of anti-Japanese legislation, it concealed a history of internee suffering, protest, and bitterness" (p. 139).

The NCJAR presented a revisionist history of internment, interpreting and popularizing the mass incarceration of Japanese

Americans as “America’s Concentration Camps.” It challenged the JACL for leadership of the redress movement and, according to Murray, the group’s aggressive national legal campaign in the 1980s “helped to sustain an American tradition of protesting government tyranny and defending individual rights from government abuse” (p. 313).

Like the NCJAR the NCRR also challenged the JACL’s redress project, mobilizing ordinary Japanese Americans in demonstrating “Third World solidarity” with other victims of racism and condemning the U.S. government’s long history of repression. Celebrating their ethnic heritage, participating in political demonstrations, and urging former internees to testify at hearings, NCRR members emphasized the government’s racist motivation for the internment, government betrayal of its loyal citizens, and the suffering internees experienced during the war. Contextualizing the internment of Japanese Americans within America’s long history of racial profiling and marginalizing, the NCRR promoted allegiances among people of color.

By unraveling the multiple interpretations of Japanese American history, especially assimilation and the meaning of internment, Murray offers a critically important look at communal conflict and internecine battles over historical memory and the construction and representation of history within what she terms “memory arenas.” In doing so Murray underscores the tensions between official and vernacular memories of the past and their meaning for the present in art, exhibits, film, media, monuments, and the Internet. Her book is essential for scholars studying the history of public apologies, reparations, historical justice, and the shaping of competing historical narratives over time and place.

John David Smith

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MUSEUM EXHIBIT REVIEW: “From Kin to Kant: The Culture of Turpentine.” Dr. Robert Cassanello, curator; Katherine Parry and Marianne McClain Popkins, associate curators; and William A. Gura, exhibit designer and fabricator. Presented by the Winter Park Historical Association in partnership with the UCF Department of History at the Association’s museum in the north end of the historic Winter Park Farmer’s Market at 200 West New England Avenue, Winter Park. (407.647 8180) The exhibit will close, briefly, on February 20, and a smaller version

will be displayed through May at the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce's Galloway Gallery at 151 West Lyman Avenue, Winter Park, FL 32789 (407.644.8281). Reopening in June at the museum, the exhibit will remain through the summer.

Turpentine is like dice, to shoot you up on the loose

Turpentine is just like dice, to shoot you up on the loose

That's the reason why, I've got those turpentine blues

From Tampa Red's "Turpentine Blues," recorded in Chicago on May 7, 1932.

A 19th century food critic suggested a few drops of turpentine in one's chamber pot to eliminate the mal odor of asparagus. But then you have to smell turpentine!

That's not exactly the scholarly wisdom found elsewhere on these pages. Still, it is among the responses from visitors to a Winter Park museum's exhibit of artifacts from an abandoned turpentine still on the wooded northern edge of the University of Central Florida. And, it validates the concept of public history education by completing a circle that began when a jogger showed two scholars a hidden treasure and those professors turned not only to their colleagues but to the public to enlighten a dark recess of Florida's history.

The food critic's remedy came from Marianne McClain Popkins, the executive director of the Winter Park Historical Association, in a whimsical email to friends. One of those who responded — apparently — saw no great improvement in smells.

Visitors also have been surprised to learn that turpentine from Florida's first-growth, long-leaf yellow pines was a base used in perfumes and that frontier Floridians turned to turpentine-based home remedies for snake bites, cuts and wounds. Vicks VapoRub® is just one example of the pharmaceutical and cosmetic uses of turpentine to this day.

That's just a little whiff of the atmosphere at the "From Kin to Kant: The Culture of Turpentine" exhibit created as a public history project by professors and master's students at the University of Central Florida. The title comes from turpentine workers' description of their sun-up to sun-down working hours — from the time they "kin" see to the time they "kant" see.

The response, however, reveals the connection to history that draws non-historians to participate in a shared wisdom that is expanding the meaning of public history, accessible history. Few

people other than history scholars may have read Jeffrey A. Drobney's "Where Palm and Pine Are Blowing: Convict Labor in the North Florida Turpentine Industry, 1877-1923," (*Florida Historical Quarterly*, Volume LXXII, Number 4, April 1994). Nevertheless, the turpentine exhibit draws on that research to rekindle public curiosity, even among people who hated high school history books. All it takes is one little sliver of historical fact that makes them pause and say to themselves, "I didn't know that!" These exclamations leap out around every corner of the exhibit's panels, display cases and staged scenes.

The exhibit's curator, Dr. Robert Cassanello, who teaches Florida history, concedes he knew little about the turpentine era when a Siemens engineer took him to the distilling site. And, he credits the enthusiasm of that engineer and others contributing to an email and blog dialogue that not only helped identify turpentine artifacts – including a worn-down curry comb used to scrape the inside of barrels — but inspired an unexpected passion for a time lost. Cassanello said his biggest surprise in leading the exhibition planning was discovering "the passion people have for turpentine specifically for its material culture and social history." He elaborated, "it surprised me that people were actively handing down this turpentine culture to anyone willing to listen and learn. I learned more from these lay people preserving this past than many of the academic sources because the professional historians were really interested in a narrow question and could help me learn a depth of knowledge, but these people passionate about turpentine really could help me with the broad picture as well as giving me ideas about some of the specific materials we found and could not catalog."

The exhibit's genesis came in 2005 when Bob Putnam, the engineer whose office is near UCF, took one of his many jogs through the pines near the border between Seminole and Orange counties. Putnam's trail led to a grassy opening where he found broken glass, rusting iron and old wooden posts. He later shared his finding with Dr. Connie Lester, another UCF history professor. Joined by Cassanello and Joel Slingerland, a public history graduate student, they made other research and artifact discoveries, including a dried black chunk of tar, known as "drought," the residue skimmed off while distilling turpentine.

Putnam provided UCF professors and graduate students an opportunity to combine scholarship and entertainment "to make

the past useful to the public," in the words of the National Council of Public History. The exhibit — a rediscovery of an era of Florida history fading from memory — sheds light on the sun-up to sundown laborers and their after-hours distractions from their hard life. A Zora Neale Hurston-inspired exploration of turpentine culture's ties to juke joint blues lauds Florida musicians who took their tunes from the piney woods to the recording studios of Chicago, including Hudson "Tampa Red" Whittaker, born Hudson Woodbridge, and Arthur "Blind" Blake, Jacksonville's rag and blues guitarist whose dance music was a favorite at juke joints. Slide guitarist Tampa Red wrote "Turpentine Blues" about the adversities faced the workers. Blues greats Muddy Waters and Eric Clapton would interpret his tunes. Hurston's Depression-era research for the Federal Writers' Project as well two of her books, *Mules and Men* and *Dust Tracks on a Road*, documented the brutality of Florida turpentine industry and the songs laborers inspired.

Visitors also learn of the dark underside of the state's turpentine heritage that brought cruel treatment of state and county prisoners consigned to labor camps. Just a few miles from the UCF campus is the former farm community of Gabriella and Camp Road. Exhibit researchers found journalist Marc Goodnow's 1912 exposé on abuse at convict camps. The camp captain at Gabriella made shoeless men run the eight miles to and from work, setting the pace riding horseback. State inspectors "found the men's feet splintered and swollen from the leaves of the saw-palmettos they encountered on their daily runs. Untreated, the lacerations produced intense inflammation, sometimes blood-poisoning, and even death." Not all of the camps used convict labor. Still, life at an isolated turpentine camps was miserable.

Katharine Parry, a recent graduate of UCF's public history track, became an associate curator for the exhibit while interning at the Winter Park Historical Association. "This project was a student's dream - to be in on the ground floor and create text and find artifacts and put together the final exhibit," Parry said of her experience, which included researching the sites of old turpentine shacks near her Oviedo home. "It is truly part of the lost history of Florida - once so important, now unknown. The story of 'finding' this history through a jogger on a campus, to interested faculty and then to an interested local museum is amazing. I

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liked the way our exhibit embraced rather than smoothed over the labor of African Americans and their exploitation.” Summing up the exhibit and the work of public historians, she added, “I believe the scholarship on a topic remains dusty with only a small audience without Public History’s attempts to present it in an entertaining, engaging manner to a wider public audience.”

Jim Robison

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