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A DIGITAL MEDIA EXPLORATION OF THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT'S FOLK  
SONG COLLECTING EXPEDITIONS IN DEPRESSION ERA FLORIDA

by

HOLLY BAKER  
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2014

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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in the College of Arts and Humanities  
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## ABSTRACT

This digital thesis project examines the folk song collecting expeditions of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) in Florida between 1935 and 1942. The FWP carried out numerous folk music collecting expeditions in Florida through the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Folklorists such as Zora Neale Hurston, Alan Lomax, and Stetson Kennedy led the expeditions and traveled throughout Florida to record blues, "jook" songs, work songs, and traditional music from African American, Cuban, Czech, Greek, Minorcan, Seminole, and Slavic communities. While romantic notions of nationalism in the 1930s often promoted homogenization, the FWP emphasized inclusiveness and highlighted cultural diversity. The FWP's approach challenged popular concepts concerning the homogeneousness of American culture and identity. Their recordings indicate that Florida was a patchwork of varied cultures. Yet, Florida's diversity is not adequately highlighted in popular history. Historians often see Florida history through the eyes of the mythologized "Florida Cracker", the Celtic pioneer who settled in Florida in the eighteenth century, but the Cracker perspective represents but a square in the patchwork quilt that makes up Florida's cultural history. An exploration of the FWP folk song recordings brings Florida's diversity to the forefront and increases the public's understanding of the state's cultural variety. The project includes a podcast series that features stories about the FWP expeditions, the folklorists, the performers, and the music. It also includes an interactive exhibit that is currently a work in progress. Source materials derived from open-access public archives create an immersive, interactive learning experience.

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I also could not have done this without my family, especially my husband Nathan who encouraged me and supported me emotionally and financially during my journey. His silly songs and jokes kept me going during stressful times. A special thanks to my cats and Bob Dylan. Thank you to my late father Freddie Knowles who played folk songs on his harmonica when I was a child. Lastly, I want to thank my mother Goldie May Knowles for buying a typewriter, thesaurus, and dictionary for me when I was a young girl after I told her that I wanted to be a writer. She loved history and introduced me to the work of Ken Burns who, in turn, made me dream of interviewing people and making history documentaries someday. My mother is no longer here to proofread for me, but she is still with me whenever I write.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT .....	6
The American Guide Series .....	7
The Federal Writers' Project in Florida .....	8
The Patchwork Quilt .....	13
Quantitative Analysis of the Songs .....	16
Conclusion to Chapter One .....	18
CHAPTER TWO: DIGITAL STORYTELLING THROUGH PODCASTS .....	19
Digital History .....	19
Podcasting .....	21
Storytelling through Podcasts .....	25
Project Details .....	26
Production Ideas and Challenges .....	28
Interactive Website and Mapping Components .....	30
Conclusion to Chapter Two .....	31
CHAPTER THREE: PUBLIC HISTORY .....	33
What Is Public History? .....	33

Podcasting and Public History .....	36
Conclusion to Chapter Three .....	36
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION.....	38
Proposed Plan for the Project after the Thesis .....	40
APPENDIX A: PODCAST ONE SCRIPT .....	45
APPENDIX B: PODCAST TWO SCRIPT .....	50
APPENDIX C: PODCAST THREE SCRIPT .....	58
APPENDIX D: DIGITAL EXHIBIT.....	65
REFERENCES .....	67

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Information from the Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942, Library of Congress .....	18
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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis project includes a podcast series and a supplementary digital exhibit to reveal and celebrate the cultural history of Florida through the folk song collecting expeditions of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP). The project explores the work of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida and their efforts to capture a more inclusive history of Florida through their folk song recordings. The project incorporates podcasting along with an interactive exhibit to tell the story of the folklorists with the FWP and the folk songs they found in Florida between 1935 and 1940. The digital project focuses on the FWP's folk song recordings because the songs bring Florida's diversity to the forefront and increase the public's understanding of the cultural variety that exists in the state.<sup>1</sup>

The Federal Writers' Project participated in several folk music collecting expeditions in Florida in the 1930s and 1940s through the Works Progress Administration (WPA). President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the WPA in 1935 to employ millions of Americans in a variety of public projects. The WPA not only built highways, improved infrastructure, and initiated reforestation, but also introduced important cultural programs such as the Federal Writers' Project, the Federal Arts Project, and the Federal Music Project, all of which sought to "rediscover the richness and variety of the nation's folk experience" by collecting and promoting folklore, folk art, and folk music across the country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/florida-folklife-from-the-works-progress-administration> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Jane S. Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk*, 1930-1940, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 230-231.

The Federal Writers' Project of the WPA carried out some of the most impressive undertakings in the history of folklife studies when they sent writers, historians, researchers, and artists to travel across the country to record various facets of American history and folklife. As they explored every corner of the United States, they invited regular Americans to share their own stories. Yet, the legacy of the FWP has been largely overlooked by historians and scholars.<sup>3</sup>

It was not until the 1970s that historians began to discuss the legacy of the FWP. In 1972, Jerre Mangione wrote one of the first books about the FWP titled *The Dream and the Deal: the Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943*. In it, Mangione primarily gave an overview of the administrative aspects of the FWP. Mangione referred to the legacy of the FWP as essentially forgotten. He claimed that the academic world had thus far "ignored the Writers' Project and its achievements."<sup>4</sup> Mangione asserted that the prior neglect was due to "philistinism" and resentment in the press toward the WPA and its government programs.<sup>5</sup>

In Monty Noam Penkower's 1977 book, *The Federal Writers' Project: A Study in Government Patronage of the Arts*, the author also concentrated on the "administrative hurdles" the FWP faced, such as bureaucratic procedures, censorship, funding issues, and Congressional attacks claiming the FWP's *American Guide Series* travel books contained Communist propaganda. Penkower concluded that historians in the past had given "insufficient attention to

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<sup>3</sup> State Library & Archives of Florida, "WPA Stories," Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/collections/wpa> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Jerre Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), 372.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

the federal government's patronage of the arts during the Depression years.”<sup>6</sup> He hoped his book would help to shine a light on the contributions of the FWP.<sup>7</sup>

In 1999, Christine Bold wrote *The WPA Guides: Mapping America*. Her book discussed the FWP and focused on the *American Guide Series*. Unlike Mangione and Penkower, Bold's view was more critical toward the motives of the FWP.<sup>8</sup> Bold pointed out that, while attempting to capture aspects of American identity for the guidebooks, the primarily white FWP writers often took part in “image making” while presenting mythical, paternalistic depictions of African Americans and Native Americans.<sup>9</sup>

Jerrold Hirsch's 2003 book *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* offered a more celebratory examination of the FWP than Bold's study. Hirsch saw the FWP objectives as idealistic endeavors intent on celebrating cultural pluralism and enabling “ethnic groups, ordinary southerners, urban workers, and former slaves” a chance to “speak directly to their fellow citizens.”<sup>10</sup> In his book, Hirsch acknowledged that the administrative history of the FWP had already been addressed at length, and the time had come to move beyond the topic in order to initiate a dialogue on the FWP's cultural achievements and contributions to American culture.<sup>11</sup>

The most recent book about the FWP, Susan Rubenstein Demasi's *Henry Alsberg: The Driving Force of the New Deal Federal Writers' Project*, was published in 2016. The book

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<sup>6</sup> Monty Noam Penkower, *The Federal Writers' Project: A Study in Government Patronage of the Arts*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), viii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Bold, *The WPA Guides: Mapping America*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), xv-xvi

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11, 36, 207.

<sup>10</sup> Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 9.

continued the discussion by focusing on Henry Alsberg and his influence on the FWP. Alsberg, the director of the FWP from 1935 to 1939, was a journalist and an advocate for human rights. Demasi's book followed the life of Henry Alsberg before, during, and after his involvement with the FWP and highlighted the ways in which he shaped the pluralistic vision of the project. The book depicted Alsberg as a "social justice warrior" who sought to give a voice to marginalized and previously ignored Americans.<sup>12</sup>

While historians have written about the Federal Writers' Project generally, no previous study has concentrated exclusively on the archive of folk songs that the FWP collected in Florida. Additionally, no one else has created a podcast series and a digital exhibit dedicated entirely to showcasing the song collecting efforts of the FWP in Florida. The podcast series and digital platform enable a comprehensive and interactive exploration of Florida during the Depression Era.

The podcast series provides a documentary style narrative and includes a historical examination of the journeys of the Federal Writers' Project folklorists as they collected folk songs in Florida. The project focuses on the folklorists, the songs they collected, and the people they encountered as they explored Florida's folk music. Through the podcasts and the digital mapping interface, an audience can follow the expeditions, listen to the music, hear interviews, and get a sense of what it was like to travel through Florida in the 1930s.

This paper describes the digital project. Chapter One discusses the history of the Federal Writers' Project and familiarizes the reader with the *American Guide Series*, the travel books that

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<sup>12</sup> Susan Rubenstein Demasi, *Henry Alsberg: The Driving Force of the New Deal Federal Writers' Project*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2016), 5-10, 180-182.

the FWP created on behalf of the federal government. In Chapter One, I also concentrate on the work of the FWP in Florida and reference the “patchwork quilt” of Florida’s cultural history. I include a chart to visually indicate the cultural origins of the folk songs. The chart is meant to show ways in which one can use digital tools to visually represent quantitative information derived from open-access public archive materials.

In Chapter Two, I focus on digital history and storytelling through podcasts. I explain how podcasting and other digital components come together in the project to tell the story of the FWP in Florida. I also give specific details pertaining to the digital project and I share some of the challenges faced during the production process.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the historiography of public history. I also describe the common goals and objectives of public historians. I explain how podcasting is a useful public history medium, and I make the case that the project is an example of an effective way in which digital tools and public history can be combined to tell a story.

In Chapter Four, I clarify the purpose of the project. I also discuss the future goals for the podcast series and the digital exhibit. The appendices include the podcast scripts for the three episodes produced so far about the Federal Writers’ Project and their song collecting efforts in Florida during the Depression Era. This digital project combines auditory, visual, and textual components to more fully tell a story about Florida’s history and heritage through the music captured by the FWP.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT

Between 1935 and 1943, writers and folklorists working on behalf of the federal government set out to find America, one state at a time. That was when the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) embarked on a treasure hunt through Florida. Instead of seeking gold or jewels, they sought to preserve the voices of ordinary Americans by capturing the songs that they sang. The expeditions of the FWP took place during the Great Depression, when one in four Americans were unemployed. Nearly every American felt the effects of the historic economic downturn after the stock market crash of 1929, including writers, historians, researchers, and artists.<sup>13</sup>

The Great Depression was an age of "folk rediscovery". In a time of uncertainty, many Americans became nostalgic for the past and they wanted to return to perceived simpler roots. Along with a sense of regionalism emerged a new appreciation for folk culture. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation reflected the renewed interest in preserving American folklife. President Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to employ jobless Americans in public works projects ranging from the construction of infrastructure to environmental protection and historic preservation. One project of the WPA, The Federal Writers' Project, provided employment opportunities to writers, historians, ethnographers, folklorists, and artists who were sent to each state to identify and preserve aspects of American culture found in the folklore, foodways, music, art, and other traditions across the

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<sup>13</sup> David A. Taylor, *Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers Depression America*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 161-188.

country. The FWP traveled through every state, including Florida, to collect folk songs with the assistance of an acetate disk recorder on loan from the Library of Congress.<sup>14</sup>

### The American Guide Series

One of the primary goals of the Federal Writers' Project was to create *The American Guide Series*. Every state produced a guidebook, which were created by unemployed writers, editors, historians, and researchers with the objective to promote tourism while also providing an inclusive "self-portrait" of America. Henry Alsberg, the director of the FWP from 1935 to 1939, helped shape the guidebooks by insisting that they capture and explore the entire cultural landscape of America while also providing information for tourists. Fieldworkers for the FWP traipsed throughout the country seeking material for the guidebooks. They not only looked for material for travelers, but they also sought to uncover the life stories and traditions of ordinary Americans.<sup>15</sup>

Florida's guidebook called *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* included information about Florida's history, geography, and culture, along with suggested excursions that tourists could take across the state. Even though the Federal Writers' Project collected hundreds of folk songs in Florida between 1935 and 1940, Florida's guide only briefly touched upon the folk music of Florida. The book devoted less than five pages to Florida folk songs, in a chapter titled "Music and Theater". The chapter mentioned traditional Seminole songs, and what they called "negro" songs, but it did not discuss Greek, Minorcan, or Cuban songs.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Becker, 24, 230-231; Taylor, 9-21.

<sup>15</sup> Demasi, 169-170.

<sup>16</sup> The Federal Writers' Project, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 149-154; Hirsch, 2-13; Sonnet Retman, *Real Folks: Race and Genre in the Great Depression*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 114-117.

This thesis project can be seen as a digital supplement to the *American Guide Series*. While the *American Guide Series* devoted only a few pages to folk music in Florida during the 1930s and 1940s, my project focuses entirely on the folk songs collected by the Federal Writers' Project. The recordings of the songs allow a public audience to learn more about Florida in the Depression Era while also introducing them to the traditional music of everyday people during that time.

The brief discussion of Florida folk songs in the *American Guide Series* indicates the limitations of the written word. Reading about music cannot transport the audience in the same way as listening to the recordings of the songs. This project utilizes a podcast series to tell the story of the Federal Writers' Project because a written thesis does not capture the sound of the voice, the barking dog in the background, and the stomping foot. The project expands on the *American Guide Series* by emphasizing the Florida folk songs in ways that were not possible just a few decades ago. The podcast series and interactive website supplement the guidebook series by implementing digital components to creatively tell the story of the Federal Writers' Projects folk song collecting expeditions in Florida.<sup>17</sup>

### The Federal Writers' Project in Florida

The digital project concentrates on the Federal Writers' Project and their folk song collecting expeditions in Florida. While working with the FWP, writers and folklorists from Florida such as Zora Neale Hurston, Stetson Kennedy, Carita Doggett Corse, and Alton Morris documented American culture in their home state, traveling to communities from Jacksonville to

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<sup>17</sup> The Federal Writers' Project, 149-154; Hirsch, 2-13; Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center. See appendices A, B, and C for more information about the podcast series; State Library & Archives of Florida, "Florida Folklife Collection," Florida Memory.



Key West. The work of the Federal Writers' Project is significant because they highlighted and preserved traditional music from African American, Cuban, Czech, Greek, Minorcan, Seminole, Slavic, and Syrian communities.<sup>18</sup>

The preservation efforts of the FWP took place during a time in which American identity was thought of and celebrated as culturally Anglo or British. At that time, scholars believed that folk songs embodied aspects of American culture that were disappearing, and so they occupied themselves with rescuing it. Child was one of the first folklorists to collect and examine American folk ballads. He believed that traditional folk music was rapidly vanishing and he hoped to document it before its demise. Child collected more than three hundred traditional folk ballads in the South between 1882 and 1898. He included the songs in a series of five books called *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Even though Child was American, he did not believe that authentic American folk music existed. Child claimed that American folk songs were essentially British in origin. He also assumed that folk music was not a living thing, but a relic of the past, and an inevitable casualty of modernity.

Though Child held that America had no native folk music, prominent folklorists John and Alan Lomax indicated the existence of genuine American folk music with their song collecting trips to the American South during which they recorded thousands of folk songs such as African American spirituals, Appalachian mountain songs, cowboy ballads, prison songs, and Mississippi Delta blues songs. The fieldwork of John and Alan Lomax led to their 1934 book *American*

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<sup>18</sup> Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center; State Library & Archives of Florida, "Florida Folklife Collection," Florida Memory.

*Ballads and Folk Songs* which emphasized and celebrated the multicultural roots of southern folk music.

While working as the director of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress in the 1930s, folklorist Alan Lomax carried on the work of his father by concentrating on the preservation of traditional folk music. Lomax bridged the gap between the old and the new generations of folklorists when he confirmed that folk music is a living thing and not a relic of the past. In the 1960s, Lomax's efforts prompted a folk music revival in the United States which led to the popularization of traditional southern music such as blues, bluegrass, and country music and inspired future generations of musicians.<sup>19</sup>

During the Great Depression, folklorist B.A. Botkin was the editor for the FWP. While many scholars of his time thought that folk customs were slowly becoming casualties of modernity and urbanism, Botkin did not believe that industrialism could destroy folk culture. Instead, he believed that folk culture not only adapted to change, but still had an important place in modern society. Furthermore, Botkin broadened the accepted definition of "the folk" by directing the FWP to collect historical materials from those whose lives had not previously been documented such as former slaves, Native Americans, and other minority groups. Botkin argued that "the folk" were not just Anglo Saxons but were of many races and cultures. Under Botkin's guidance, the Federal Writers' Project endeavored to uncover the perspectives of those formerly overlooked Americans. The effort was particularly admirable in the South where such voices had often been suppressed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John Szwed, *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*, (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 12, 32-38, 50, 62-63, 315, 348; Becker, 3-5, 23-27, 59-61.

<sup>20</sup> Becker, 24-26.

The song collecting efforts of the FWP folklorists in Florida during the 1930s disproved Child's notion and confirmed the beliefs of Ben Botkin, and John and Alan Lomax concerning American folk music. Furthermore, the work of the FWP challenged the widely held concept of what it meant to be an American. More than any other state, the multiculturalism of America was most evident in Florida. While traveling in Florida, the FWP visited turpentine camps, "jook" joints, front porches, church gatherings, a food kitchen, labor camps, and a Seminole reservation in the Everglades. The folk songs collected by the federal folklorists with the FWP revealed that, everywhere they collected songs, the people in the community had their own distinctive music.<sup>21</sup>

In 1937, Florida native Stetson Kennedy became the State Director of the Federal Writers' Project unit on folklore, life history, and social ethnic studies for the Works Progress Administration. Two years later, he led a folk collecting journey through his home state of Florida for the Federal Writers' Project. Eatonville, Florida native Zora Neale Hurston joined Kennedy on the 1939 expedition in Florida. Hurston was an anthropologist, a folklorist, and an author of several books, including *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937).<sup>22</sup> In 1935, Hurston gained fieldwork experience while assisting folklorist Alan Lomax in song collecting efforts in Eatonville and Belle Glade, Florida.<sup>23</sup>

In May of 1939, Zora Neale Hurston wrote to Henry Alsberg and Ben Botkin of the Federal Writers' Project to encourage them to record more folk songs in Florida. In "Proposed Recording Expedition Into the Floridas," Hurston informed them that, "There is no state in the

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<sup>21</sup> Taylor, 161-188; Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center; State Library & Archives of Florida, "Florida Folklife Collection," Florida Memory; Stetson Kennedy, *Palmetto Country*, (Cocoa: Florida Historical Society Press, 1942), xi-xiv, 275-286.

<sup>22</sup> Stetson Kennedy, *Palmetto Country*, xi-xiv, 275-286.

<sup>23</sup> Szwed, 77-87; State Library & Archives of Florida, "Florida Folklife Collection," Florida Memory.

Union with as much to record in a musical, folklore, social ethnic way as Florida has.”<sup>24</sup> Hurston furthered claimed, “Nowhere else is there such a variety of materials. Florida is still a frontier with its varying elements still unassimilated. There is still an opportunity to observe the wombs of folk culture still heavy with life.”<sup>25</sup> Shortly after her proposal, Hurston headed to Florida to collect songs in Jacksonville and in a turpentine camp in Cross City. There, she recorded songs of turpentine workers and documented details about their lives.<sup>26</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, an African American woman, was instrumental during the folk song collecting expeditions in Florida. She acted as a valuable liaison between the mostly white FWP folklorists and the black communities they visited in Florida in Belle Glade, Chosen, Cross City, Eatonville, and Jacksonville.<sup>27</sup>

In his essay called “A Florida Treasure Hunt,” Kennedy recalled of his expeditions in Florida, “None of us had ever gone hunting for folk songs before, but we were soon able to recognize one the moment we heard it, and to realize that it was truly a bit of cultural treasure that we were discovering and preserving for future generations to enjoy.”<sup>28</sup> The folklorists with the FWP felt strongly that the voices of everyday people in Florida should be heard and preserved.

The WPA and the FWP came about when there was a perceptible “liberal-reformist” mindset and a renewed interest in “rediscovering” American culture. As Sonnet Retman pointed

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<sup>24</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, “Proposed Recording Expedition into the Floridas,” Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937–42, Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, <https://www.loc.gov/item/flwpa000213> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, 167-180; Library of Congress, “Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942,” American Folklife Center.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, 167-180; Szwed, 77-87.

<sup>28</sup> Stetson Kennedy, “A Florida Treasure Hunt”, Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/florida-folklife-from-the-works-progress-administration/articles-and-essays/a-florida-treasure-hunt> (accessed June 1, 2018).

out in her book, *Real Folks: Race and Genre in the Great Depression*, in the 1930s there was a “search for authenticity” that was further heightened due to the modern technology of the era such as sound recordings, newsreels, photographs, and films.<sup>29</sup>

The ambition to uncover cultural diversity in America during that time is especially evident in the folk collecting efforts of the Federal Writers’ Project in Florida. While cultural renewal and romantic notions of nationalism in the 1930s tended to promote homogenization, the Federal Writers’ Project was the first program of its kind to place such an emphasis on inclusiveness and highlighting cultural diversity in America.

The FWP’s approach is significant because it challenged widely held concepts pertaining to the homogeneousness of American culture and identity. The FWP also hoped to promote cultural understanding and national unity. The recordings they made of African American, Cuban, Czech, Greek, Minorcan, Seminole, Slavic, and Syrian communities singing traditional songs throughout Florida reveals that the state was a veritable patchwork of vibrant and diverse cultures. Yet, Florida’s diversity is not properly emphasized in popular history.<sup>30</sup>

### The Patchwork Quilt

Historians and authors often present Florida history through the experiences of the mythologized “Florida Cracker”, the Celtic pioneer who settled in Florida in the eighteenth century. Travel accounts dating back to the eighteenth century described the Florida Cracker in mostly derogatory terms.<sup>31</sup> In a 1767 letter to Georgia, the author labeled Crackers as “a set of

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<sup>29</sup> Retman, 1-19, 113-116; Penkower, 132-3.

<sup>30</sup> Penkower, 115, Hirsch; 2-13; Retman, 113-118; Library of Congress, “Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942,” American Folklife Center.

<sup>31</sup> Dana Ste. Claire, *Cracker: Cracker Culture in Florida History*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 10, 17, 20, 71, 99, 115, 116, 205; Retman, 138, 139, 140, 141.

vagabonds often as bad as or worse than the Indians themselves.”<sup>32</sup> In 1865, a Union soldier in Florida called Crackers “a class entirely destitute, ignorant, and generally ambitious only for enough to eat.”<sup>33</sup> In 1895, artist Frederic Remington’s article in *Harper’s Weekly* described Florida Crackers as “picturesque in their unkempt, almost unearthly wildness.”<sup>34</sup> Numerous firsthand accounts from the 1700s to the early 1900s provide similar negative descriptions of the Florida Cracker.<sup>35</sup>

The origin of the term “Cracker” is still debatable. In 1595, English playwright William Shakespeare’s *King John* used the term to refer to a loud, annoying person. One theory is that it is derived from the Gaelic word “craic”, which refers to verbal dexterity and quick wit displayed during lively conversation. Some claim that the word “Cracker” comes from the sound of a whip used by slave-owning planters while others believe the term refers to the crack of a cattle driver’s bull whip. While its origin is unclear, for at least four hundred years it was primarily used as a derogatory word. However, the negative connotation of the term changed during the early twentieth century.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s, during a time in which many Americans nostalgically sought to rediscover a “simpler” past, the Florida Cracker became increasingly romanticized in literature. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote extensively about the Florida Cracker in her novels. Her acclaimed books *The Yearling* (1938) and *Cross Creek* (1942) painted an endearing picture of

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<sup>32</sup> Ste. Claire, 42.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>35</sup> Tina Bucuvalas, ed. *The Florida Folklife Reader*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 211-212.

<sup>36</sup> Bucuvalas, 207-224.

Cracker culture and further shaped the public's view of Florida history by primarily focusing on the experiences of the Florida Cracker.<sup>37</sup>

In 1953, the National Federation of Music Clubs (NFMC) held the first Florida Folk Festival in White Springs, Florida with assistance from Sarah Gertude Knott, founder of the National Folk Festival, and folklorist Alton Morris with the University of Florida. In 1957, the program for the annual folk music festival included an essay called "What is a Cracker? Where did the Florida native get its name?" The author of the essay described the Florida Cracker as a "busy, prosperous man, and a prominent citizen" who was the "backbone" of Florida. The romantic description of Crackers in the essay from the 1957 Florida Folk Festival contrasts with the earlier class-based derogatory depictions. As Martha Nelson pointed out in her essay "Nativism and Cracker Revival at the Florida Folk Festival," the organizers of the Florida Folk Festival altered the perception of the Cracker by using the word as a complimentary term indicating "pride and heritage". Today, due in part to the influence of the long-running Florida Folk Festival, many native Floridians proudly call themselves Crackers.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1980s, Patrick Smith's *A Land Remembered* (1984) and Grady McWhiney's *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (1988) perpetuated the idea of the Florida Cracker as the bearer of Florida's folk culture and depicted the Celtic settler as the primary historical actor in Florida's past. In the late twentieth century, Michael Gannon's *The New History of Florida* (1996) and Dana Ste. Claire's *Cracker: The Cracker Culture in Florida*

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<sup>37</sup> Dana Ste. Claire, *Cracker: Cracker Culture in Florida History*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 10, 17, 20, 71, 99, 115, 116, 205; Retman, 138, 139, 140, 141.

<sup>38</sup> Bucuvalas, 207-224.

*History* (1998) indicated that the Florida Cracker was still the focus of much scholarly attention, inspiring an array of literature about their history, food, architecture, music, and folkways.<sup>39</sup>

In the twenty-first century, the experiences of the black turpentine camp laborer, the Greek fisherman, or the Cuban cigar roller have yet to receive proper attention in popular history. This project fills that enduring gap by indicating that the Cracker perspective represents but a square in the patchwork quilt that makes up Florida's cultural history. The digital project allows a celebration of the colorful patchwork of Florida by including the voices of those whose experiences were largely ignored in the past.

### Quantitative Analysis of the Songs

The project's digital storytelling elements bring the journeys of the FWP to life and allow an exploration of the multiculturalism of Florida through the music of the people. The primary sources come largely from the Library of Congress digital archive, which includes almost three hundred audio recordings from the Florida Folklife Collection. Most of the songs collected by the FWP during the 1930s and 1940s are housed in the American Folklife Center in Washington, D.C. The collection contains audio recordings, some song transcriptions, letters, and photographs. The Florida Memory digital collection provided some primary sources for this project as well. The digital primary sources permit an analysis of the songs and give an opportunity to uncover the perspectives of everyday Floridians during that time by providing a glimpse into aspects of their cultural traditions and daily experiences.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ste. Claire, 10, 17, 20, 71, 99, 115, 116, 205; Retman, 138, 139, 140, 141.

<sup>40</sup> Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center; State Library & Archives of Florida, "Florida Folklife Collection," Florida Memory.



In a 1935 letter to Betty Calhoun with the WPA, folklorist Alan Lomax insisted that the folk songs collected by the federal government “should not be buried in libraries as they are in Washington and in universities all over the country.”<sup>41</sup> Lomax wanted the public to be able to hear the music and to keep it alive for future generations. Still, the songs recorded in Florida were stored away for several decades, until a digital archive was created at the Library of Congress to house the recordings. Some of the sound recordings in the collection are not included in the online presentation while other songs are included but are of poor quality. Despite some issues with recording quality, the quantity of the primary sources provide abundant material for an exploration of Florida’s cultural history in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>42</sup>

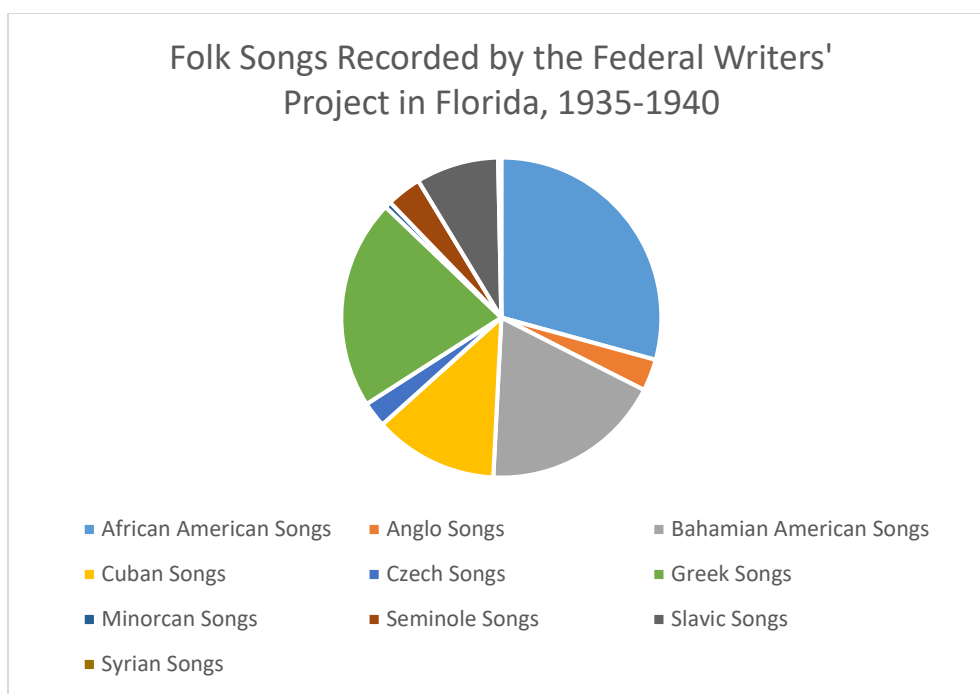
The nearly three hundred songs from the Library of Congress enable an auditory exploration and a visual examination of primary sources from the FWP expeditions in Florida. For a visual representation of the communities visited by the Federal Writers’ Project, I created a chart to indicate the cultural origins of the audio recordings housed in the Library of Congress digital collection. As the chart shows, most of the songs collected by the FWP were found in African American communities in Florida. The Greek communities of Jacksonville and Tarpon Springs provided abundant material as well, with more than seventy songs in the collection. The Cuban community in Ybor City contributed almost forty songs. The remaining songs were found in Minorcan, Seminole, Slavic, Czech, Anglo, and Syrian communities throughout the state.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ronald D. Cohen, *Alan Lomax: Assistant in Charge: The Library of Congress Letters, 1935-1945*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 13.

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, 13; Library of Congress, “Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942,” American Folklife Center; State Library & Archives of Florida, “Florida Folklife Collection,” Florida Memory.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



*Figure 1: Information from the Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942, Library of Congress*

### Conclusion to Chapter One

Through this digital project, the Library of Congress audio archives permit a mass audience to rediscover the song collecting work of the folklorists who made the recordings of folk songs in Florida. An examination of the recordings reveals the diversity of the communities in Florida during the Depression Era. Quantitative analysis of the songs discovered by the FWP indicates the cultural diversity of Florida, as shown through the preserved music of the numerous communities they visited during the Depression Era. A visual representation of the origins of the songs reveals the colorful patchwork quilt that makes Florida's cultural history so distinct. The Florida Folklife Collection allowed an in depth analysis of the songs, which in turn enabled the construction of a visual representation of the songs.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER TWO: DIGITAL STORYTELLING THROUGH PODCASTS

### Digital History

Due to the proliferation of the Internet, podcasting, and the availability of digital archives, historians now engage with the public more fully than they ever have before. While doing so, they often merge digital tools and mapping components in order to visually and audibly examine history. Digital tools such as interactive maps, timelines, and podcasts allow for new approaches to historical research. Digital history offers innovative alternatives to the traditional consumption of information and invites the public to interact with the past and take part in the exploration of history in new ways.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the first historians to integrate digital history and “spatialization” were Edward L. Ayers and William G. Thomas III. In 1993, they launched the pioneering *Valley of the Shadow* digital history project which used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to spatially examine two counties during in the Civil War. The project served as a model to historians to indicate new possibilities in historical scholarship. Ayers, Thomas, and other digital history pioneers influenced countless projects and indicated that historians could study the past and represent it in ways that were once only imagined.<sup>46</sup>

Digital storytelling is a groundbreaking concept as it allows for innovative ways to tell stories. In his 2014 book *Computers, Visualization, and History: How New Technology Will Transform our Understanding of the Past*, historian David Staley argued that the written word is

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<sup>45</sup> Anne Kelly Knowles and Amy Hillier, eds. *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship*, (Redlands: ESRI Press, 2008), 4-9; Richard White, “What is Spatial History?” Stanford University Spatial History Lab, February 2010, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

not always the ideal medium to convey certain thoughts or ideas. While historians have used the written word as their chosen medium for more than two thousand years, digital media offer alternative ways to present a historical argument, construct a narrative, or organize research. As a result, scholars are no longer limited to exploring historical topics in a one dimensional, sequential, linear way.<sup>47</sup>

As David Staley pointed out in his book, interactive visualizations are sometimes preferable to textual approaches because they allow the creator to convey “simultaneity, multidimensionality, pattern, and nonlinearity with a speed and efficiency that prose cannot capture.”<sup>48</sup> The groundbreaking work of Ayers, Thomas, Staley, and other noted digital historians indicate ways in which digital history can promote engagement with a mass audience, shape a narrative, uncover hidden patterns, and answer complex questions about the past. Digital approaches to historical research are promising because they bring out the spatial dynamics and uncover local perspectives that might have been overlooked otherwise. At the same time, digital media invite the public to interact with the past, to see, hear, and take part in an interactive exploration of history.<sup>49</sup>

Digital tools also provide new possibilities to convey a narrative and offer historians innovative storytelling opportunities. For that reason, the most effective way to relay the story of the folk song collecting expeditions of the Federal Writers’ Project is through an interactive website and a podcast series with several episodes. The project’s use of mapping tools, auditory

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<sup>47</sup> David Staley, *Computers, Visualization, and History: How New Technology Will Transform our Understanding of the Past*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2014), 7, 9-12, 19-22, 31, 37, 42, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Staley, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Staley, 10-13, 16-17, 26, 31; “VisualEyes”, Virginia Center for Digital History, <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes> (accessed June 1, 2018).

components, podcasting elements, and visualizations create an exploratory experience that permits a mass audience to virtually accompany the FWP on their song collecting expeditions throughout Florida. The multiple components come together to take a public audience on a cultural and musical treasure hunt with the Federal Writers' Project. The project educates the public about Florida history, gives attention to the voices of everyday people in Florida during the Depression, and uses music as a lens through which to examine history.<sup>50</sup>

One must be able to hear music to truly appreciate it. For that reason, the written word alone cannot tell the story of the Federal Writers' Project's folk song collecting expeditions in Florida. Fortunately, ideas that were once confined to the pages of books and journal articles can now be brought to life with digital tools such as podcasts, interactive visualizations, and mapping components.<sup>51</sup>

### Podcasting

Podcasting is an essential component of the digital project. Until recent decades, creating a digital thesis project with accompanying podcasts would not have been possible. In the early twenty-first century, podcasting rapidly developed into a popular medium. In 2005, the media hailed podcasting as "the future of radio". That same year, the word "podcast" was added to the *Oxford English American Dictionary*. Today, podcasts are valuable sources of knowledge and entertainment. Historians increasingly integrate them into their coursework and their research.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Staley, 10-13, 16-17, 26, 31; "VisualEyes", Virginia Center for Digital History, <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> See appendices for information about podcasts.

<sup>52</sup> Chris Kornelis, "The Podcast Resurgence: Your Definitive Listening Guide," *Wall Street Journal*, August 8, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-podcast-resurgence-your-definitive-listening-guide-1438982728> (accessed June 1, 2018); Richard Berry, "Will the iPod Kill the Radio Star? Profiling Podcasting as Radio," *Convergence*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 2006): 143-162; Gardner Campbell, "There's Something in the Air: Podcasting in Education," *Educause Review*, Vol. 40, No. 6 (November/December 2005): 33-34.

A podcast is a digital medium that is typically dispersed through computers, portable devices such as the iPod, or public radio programs. Podcasting first emerged in the 1980s when it was known as “audio blogging”. In 2004, podcasting gradually developed into a popular medium due in part to the influence of the Apple iPod. Podcast pioneers RSS creator Dave Winer and broadcaster Adam Curry played major roles in the development and popularization of podcasting.<sup>53</sup>

In a 2004 *Guardian* article called “Audible Revolution,” journalist Ben Hammersley coined the term “podcast” while referring to the new form of digital media. Hammersley touted the benefits of podcasts and pointed out that podcasts were gaining popularity because they provide freedom to the public by empowering them to listen to and create podcasts at their leisure. He emphasized that podcasts liberate listeners and creators due to the ease of use and the low costs of producing a podcast.<sup>54</sup>

In a 2005 *Educause Review* journal article, English professor Gardner Campbell called podcasting a “phenomenon” with limitless potential. According to Campbell, the podcast evolved from the traditional radio model, and the allure of podcasting is reminiscent of the initial appeal of broadcast radio when it first emerged in the 1920s.<sup>55</sup> As Campbell explained, “The endurance of radio, or the idea of radio, is the other part, and is a major reason why podcasting has such potential value in teaching and learning. There is magic in the human voice, the magic of shared awareness. Consciousness is most persuasively and intimately communicated via

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<sup>53</sup> Chris Kornelis, *Wall Street Journal*.

<sup>54</sup> Ben Hammersley, “Audible Revolution,” *The Guardian*. February 12, 2004, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/feb/12/broadcasting.digitalmedia> (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> Campbell: 33-34.

voice.”<sup>56</sup> The “power of the voice” and podcasting’s storytelling elements offer listeners a “theater of the mind” and a feeling of intimacy that is rarely found elsewhere.<sup>57</sup>

In a *Convergence* journal article from 2006, professor of Media and Cultural Studies Richard Berry called podcasting “grassroots radio”. Due to the podcast’s integrated use of audio components, Internet, and portable media devices, Berry described podcasting as a “converged” medium. He pointed out that the podcast’s egalitarian appeal stems from the fact that anyone can produce one; it is typically free or inexpensive to produce and listen to podcasts. Berry asserted that the podcast promotes the democratization of data by easily and affordably spreading information to mass audiences. Berry further praised podcasts for permitting ordinary people to “reclaim the radio” and to engage with endless topics that might be relevant or interesting to them. Like Campbell, Berry asserted that podcasting has a valuable role in the field of education. Students can create podcasts, or download and listen to lectures or educational podcast programs. Utilizing podcasts in higher education promotes dialogue between the student, the educator, and the public.<sup>58</sup>

In a 2009 *Social Education* journal article, historians Kathleen Owings Swan and Mark Hofer discussed “the power of the podcast” and how podcasts effectively engage with students about history. They referred to podcasting as “a substantive and practical reinvention of existing teaching strategies – the guest speaker, the field trip, and the primary source.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Campbell: 33-34.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Berry: 143-162.

<sup>59</sup> Kathleen Owings Swan and Mark Hofer, “Trend Alert: A History Teacher’s Guide to Using Podcasts in the Classroom.” *Social Education*. Vol. 72, No. 2 (2009): 95-102.

In a 2013 article from *The Public Historian*, history professor Dr. Anne Lindsay highlighted the significance of incorporating podcasts into public history education. She also commended digital history for allowing students new ways to interact with the past. Lindsay explained that podcasts and interactive websites are useful educational tools because they permit virtual tourists to explore and learn about historical locations, people, and events without even leaving home. While podcasts can never replace the experience of a personal visit to a historic site or museum, they provide exploration opportunities for those who lack the income, physical ability, or the time to visit the locations.<sup>60</sup>

As journalist Chris Kornelis explained in a 2015 *Wall Street Journal* article, the rise of the podcast continues. Kornelis recognized President Barack Obama's interview with a podcast show called *WTF with Marc Maron Podcast* for further validating podcasts as credible, acceptable sources of information. The current "podcast resurgence" is partly due to the popularity of the podcast series *Serial* and other recent podcast programs that attract large listening audiences.<sup>61</sup>

In a 2015 *Salon* article, author and cultural historian Paula Young Lee also examined the recent resurgence in podcasting. Lee tied the rise of podcasting to shorter attention spans, increased time in cars and other modes of transportation, and the proliferation of multicultural podcasts. Like Berry and Hammersley, Lee argued that the act of creating podcasts is a democratic endeavor because it liberates both producers and consumers from the constraints of

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<sup>60</sup> Anne Lindsay, "#VirtualTourist: Embracing Our Audience through Public History Web Experience." *The Public Historian*. Vol. 35, No. 1 (February 2013): 67-86.

<sup>61</sup> Kornelis, *Wall Street Journal*.



traditional mediums. Furthermore, Lee credited podcasts for broadcasting racially and culturally diverse perspectives on a variety of topics.<sup>62</sup>

### Storytelling through Podcasts

The potential for emotional and personal engagement through storytelling contributes to podcasting's staying power. No matter how many listeners a podcast has, the one-on-one experience feels intimate. That sense of intimacy gives podcast producers an opportunity to innovatively craft stories and relay them to an engaged audience.<sup>63</sup>

The podcast series includes a treasure hunt theme that carries the story forward in an entertaining way. While accompanying the federal folklorists on the treasure hunt, the audience learns more about Florida's history and people. The podcast series about the Federal Writers' Project celebrates the cultural variety of Florida and hopes to portray an inclusive perspective of history while providing insight into the daily lives of Floridians in communities all across the state during the Depression Era.

The auditory aspects of the project enable the audience to hear the songs, the stories, the laughter, and even the dog barking in the background as the people of Florida sing their songs for the FWP. Additionally, the music transports the listener to a specific place and time. Through the project, the audience finds themselves on a porch in Eatonville in 1935 with Zora Neale Hurston as she talks to blues musicians Gabriel Brown and Rochelle French, or in Key West in 1940 with

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<sup>62</sup> Paula Young Lee, "The Next 'Serial' Could Be Way Less White: A New Wave of Multicultural Podcasts Amplifies a Tide of Break-Out Voices," *Salon*, [http://www.salon.com/2015/08/05/the\\_next\\_serial\\_could\\_be\\_way\\_less\\_white\\_a\\_new\\_wave\\_of\\_multicultural\\_podcasts\\_amplifies\\_a\\_tide\\_of\\_break\\_out\\_voices](http://www.salon.com/2015/08/05/the_next_serial_could_be_way_less_white_a_new_wave_of_multicultural_podcasts_amplifies_a_tide_of_break_out_voices) (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Campbell: 33-34.

Stetson Kennedy as he interviews a Bahamian performer named Theo Rolle. The “power of the voice”, along with the songs and interviews increase the intimate experience.<sup>64</sup>

### Project Details

The main characters of the podcasts are the folklorists and writers who led the song collecting trips on behalf of the federal government, traveling throughout the state of Florida and documenting blues, fiddle tunes, jook songs, dance tunes, spirituals, work songs, and traditional music from numerous communities. The podcast series currently includes three “proof of concept” pilot episodes which follow folklorists from the Federal Writers’ Project through the state of Florida. The three episodes are rough drafts that serve to provide a sense of what the project will become with more time and training. The current quality of the episodes reflects the fact that I am still learning how to master podcast production. When the podcasts are finalized, the quality will be much improved.<sup>65</sup>

For the podcast series, I interviewed Florida Folklorist Dr. Peggy Bulger. She was the director of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress from 1999 to 2011. She also created the Florida Folklife Collection. I spoke to Dr. Tina Bucuvalas, the curator of arts and historical resources for Tarpon Springs, Florida. She was formerly the state folklorist for the Florida Folklife Program. I interviewed Blaine Waide, who also once served as the state folklorist for the Florida Folklife Program. Additionally, I spoke to Florida folklorist Merri McKenzie Belland. I also talked to Dr. Madeleine Carr. While attending Florida State University, Carr wrote a dissertation on “jooks” in Florida titled “Denying Hegemony: The

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<sup>64</sup> Library of Congress, “Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942,” American Folklife Center; State Library & Archives of Florida, “Florida Folklife Collection,” Florida Memory.

<sup>65</sup> Library of Congress, “Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942,” American Folklife Center; See appendices for more information about the individual podcasts.

Function and Place of Florida's Jook Joints during the Twentieth Century's First Fifty Years". In addition, I interviewed David Taylor who wrote *Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers Depression America* and John Szwed, author of *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded the World*.<sup>66</sup>

The first podcast episode in the series is approximately fifteen minutes long. In it, I discuss the expedition of 1935, during which folklorists Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Elizabeth Barnicle recorded blues songs, "jook" songs, and work songs in Eatonville and Belle Glade, Florida. The podcast touches upon the history of the FWP and introduces the audience to the folklorists and folk bearers. The episode features several songs in the episode, such as "John Henry", "Education Blues", and "Weeping Worry Blues". The three episodes also provide a sense of place so that the audience can learn more about the history of the communities and what it must have been like living in Florida during the Great Depression.<sup>67</sup>

Episode Two of the podcast series is thirty minutes long. The action packed episode emphasizes the 1939 and 1940 folk song collecting work of Stetson Kennedy, Robert Cook, and Zora Neale Hurston in Jacksonville, Cross City, Ybor City, and Key West. The episode focuses on traditional Cuban songs, African American spirituals, jook songs, work songs, and Bahamian songs. The podcast gives the audience a chance to listen to Zora Neale Hurston as she sings and describes work songs and jook songs that she learned in Florida throughout her life. The episode

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<sup>66</sup> Peggy Bulger, Interview by Holly Baker, October, 2015; Tina Bucuvalas, Interview by Holly Baker, 2016; Blaine Waide, Interview by Holly Baker, 2016; Merri McKenzie Belland, Interview by Holly Baker, September 2016, Madeleine Carr, Interview by Holly Baker, 2016; David Taylor, Interview by Holly Baker, 2016; John Szwed, Interview by Holly Baker, 2016.

<sup>67</sup> See Appendix A for more information about Podcast One.

also enables the audience to visit a turpentine camp in Cross City to meet several of the men who worked there in 1939. This podcast may be split into two fifteen minute long episodes.<sup>68</sup>

The third podcast of the series is also thirty minutes long and follows folklorist Alton Morris through Jacksonville, Tarpon Springs, St. Augustine, Slavia, and Masaryktown in 1939. Stetson Kennedy and Robert Cook joined Morris in Tarpon Springs to collect Greek songs there. The episode introduces the audience to Greek, Minorcan, Slavic, and Czech communities in Florida through their traditional songs.<sup>69</sup>

One of the main strengths of the podcast series is the literal inclusion of the voices of ordinary people in Florida during the Depression. In most of the song recordings, the performers introduce themselves and provide personal information such as their age, birthplace, and vocation. Not only do they sing songs, they also often describe when and where they learned the songs. While doing so, they reveal details about their daily lives.<sup>70</sup>

### Production Ideas and Challenges

The main challenge in producing a podcast series for the project was a lack of experience in audio engineering and creating podcasts. In order to learn how to make podcasts, I sought out an internship at the Florida Historical Society and produced a podcast segment for the 90.7 (WMFE) public radio program *Florida Frontiers* about bluegrass music in Florida. The episode concentrated on the Ocoee Bluegrass Jam in Ocoee, Florida and the weekly musical sessions that

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<sup>68</sup> See Appendix B for more information about Podcast Two.

<sup>69</sup> See Appendix C for more information about Podcast Three.

<sup>70</sup> Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center.

have been taking place in a parking lot there for more than twenty years. The internship was an introduction to producing podcasts, writing a podcast script, and narrating podcasts.<sup>71</sup>

The internship was also an introduction to the WPA Collection at the Library of Florida History in Cocoa, Florida, which I organized as a part of the internship. The collection inspired the thesis project because it contained many documents pertaining to the Federal Writers' Project, including information about the folk songs gathered in Florida. After the internship, I continued making podcasts for *Florida Frontiers*. Since then, I have written, narrated, and edited more than twenty podcasts for the *Florida Frontiers* radio program of the Florida Historical Society. I also produced countless other podcasts for the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, the History Department's podcast *Knights HistoryCast*, and two seasons of the podcast series of the Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Art and Humanities called *Every Tongue Got to Confess*.<sup>72</sup>

Making podcasts for the University of Central Florida and the Florida Historical Society increased my podcast production knowledge and my storytelling experience. The learning process indicated that weaving an entertaining yet educational narrative through podcasts is a skill that takes time and repetition to develop. Additionally, words written on paper may not flow as well in a podcast. I am still learning how to craft podcast scripts and narrate them effectively.

During the past year, I gained experience in audio engineering while editing podcasts with Audacity software, using version 2.2.2 of the software. The Audacity software is free and

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<sup>71</sup> Florida Historical Society, *Florida Frontiers*, Episode 228, <https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/radio/program/228> (accessed June 6, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> Florida Historical Society, *Florida Frontiers*, <https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/radio/program/list> (accessed June 6, 2018); *Knights HistoryCast*, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/knights-historycast/id1291340864?mt=2> (accessed June 6, 2018); *Every Tongue Got To Confess*, [https://scholarship.rollins.edu/confess\\_podcast](https://scholarship.rollins.edu/confess_podcast) (accessed June 6, 2018); *Florida Historical Quarterly Podcast*, <http://fhq.cah.ucf.edu/podcast> (accessed June 6, 2018).

easy to use. Like interviewing, writing scripts, and narrating, editing podcasts is a skill that develops with repetition, patience, and time. Audacity allowed the inclusion of music in the podcasts. While adding music to the podcasts increases the audience's engagement in the story, the inclusion of songs also presented a challenge. Even though there are nearly three hundred songs in the Library of Congress collection of audio recordings from Florida, the three existing episodes of the podcast series only include thirty songs. The use of music in the podcasts provides unique storytelling opportunities. Still, it takes skill and experience to successfully include music while also ensuring that the songs do not overpower the narrator or the story.<sup>73</sup>

### Interactive Website and Mapping Components

The podcast series presents the story of the FWP as a treasure hunt. Creating an interactive map of Florida for the project allowed an imaginative way to incorporate a “treasure map” into the project while providing an exploration of the spatial aspects of the Federal Writers’ Project expeditions. During two semesters in Digital History graduate level courses at the University of Central Florida, I learned how to create a digital exhibit with mapping components through the use of the VisualEyes5 platform.

Currently, there is a “proof of concept” VisualEyes5 interactive exhibit to supplement the podcast series. The website not only contains an interactive map and a story pane, it will also serve as a place to house the finalized podcasts. The exhibit employs the beta version of the VisualEyes5 mapping tool developed by Dr. Bill Ferster at the University of Virginia in consultation with Dr. Scot French at the University of Central Florida. The digital exhibit,

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<sup>73</sup> Audacity Team (2018), Audacity, Version 2.2.2. Audio Editor and Recorder, <http://audacityteam.org> (Accessed June 17, 2018).

originally titled *Mapping the Song Collecting Journeys of the Federal Writers' Project in Depression Era Florida*, is meant to engage public audiences in my historical research on the FWP by retracing their Depression Era song collecting journeys. Presently, the exhibit is called *Documenting Diversity: The Folk Song Collecting Expeditions of the Federal Writers' Project in Depression Era Florida*.<sup>74</sup> There are future plans to expand on and improve the website, which are discussed in Chapter Four.

### Conclusion to Chapter Two

Digital components offer opportunities for historians to interpret and communicate stories in innovative ways that did not exist before computers and the Internet. The project's use of auditory elements through podcasting, along with mapping components, and data visualization create a participatory, interactive experience that allows a mass audience to virtually accompany the FWP on their song collecting expeditions throughout Florida.

The podcasts and the digital exhibit showcase individual Federal Writers' Project expeditions and feature the voices of ordinary Floridians. The podcast's strength lies in the storytelling element it provides. A podcast series enables a public audience to actually listen to the songs of Floridians in the 1930s and 1940s while also allowing them to learn more about the people who took part in the folk song recording sessions. The series contributes to the goals of both podcasting and public history and enables the public to engage with the past through the songs and the stories of the FWP in Florida.

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<sup>74</sup> "VisualEyes", Virginia Center for Digital History, <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes> (accessed June 1, 2018). See also <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes/?975> for the working draft of my individual project.

Together, the podcasts and the VisualEyes5 website provide an innovative, interactive narrative structure. The digital elements of the thesis project supplement one another to engage with the public about the variety of cultures existing in Florida in the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, the project challenges the idea of the romanticized Florida Cracker as the primary actor in Florida's history. The podcast series employs a documentary style narrative in order to highlight the work of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida and to celebrate the multicultural aspects and musical traditions of the state during and directly after the Depression Era. The application of digital tools and the incorporation of podcasting allow the general public, scholars, educators, and students to explore unfamiliar aspects of Florida's culture and history.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Library of Congress, "Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942," American Folklife Center; "VisualEyes", Virginia Center for Digital History, <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes> (accessed June 1, 2018). See also <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes/?975> for the working draft of my digital exhibit; See the appendices A, B, and C for information about the individual podcasts.



## CHAPTER THREE: PUBLIC HISTORY

The field of public history emerged in the 1970s with a goal to engage more fully with everyday people about their own history. Historian James Harvey Robinson's groundbreaking 1912 book *The New History* influenced the development of public history due to its focus on recognizing the histories of ordinary people. In the 1950s and 1960s, social historians such as Fernand Braudel and E.P. Thompson continued the emphasis on the history of everyday people that has become a trademark of public historians.<sup>76</sup>

### What Is Public History?

In the 1970s, historian Robert Kelley coined the term “public history”. According to Kelley, public history refers to “the employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia: in government and private corporations, the media, historical societies and museums, even in private practice.”<sup>77</sup> In 1976, the University of California, Santa Barbara, began offering MA and PhD degrees with a concentration in public history. In 1978, the professional journal *The Public Historian* was first published. In 1979, public history's importance grew as the First National Symposium on Public History took place at La Casa de Maria in Montecito, California. Public history continued to rise in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>78</sup> In the 1980s, a grassroots public history movement intensified in America. The movement encouraged community based

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<sup>76</sup> Ronald J Grele: 40-48; Leslie H. Fishel in *Public History: An Introduction*, (Malabar: Robert E. Kreiger Publishing Company, 1986), 8-17; Charles C. Cole, Jr., “Public History: What Difference Has It Made?” *The Public Historian*. Vol. 16, No. 4 (Autumn 1994): 9-35; George G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 102-104.

<sup>77</sup> Cole, 9-35.

<sup>78</sup> Fishel, 8-17; Cole: 9-35; Conard: 105-120.

history projects and concentrated on the lives of everyday people rather than the “big men” of history.<sup>79</sup>

The 1982 book *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* by David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty echoed public history’s emphasis on local history. The authors pointed out that the immediate environment, the local community of everyday people, provides a range of possibilities pertaining to the exploration of history.<sup>80</sup> In the book, Kyvig and Marty described public history as “the various types of specialized work that people with historical training and skills can do other than teach.”<sup>81</sup> The book’s main purpose was to encourage the public to investigate their own communities in order to learn about the nearby past and to help preserve it.<sup>82</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s, historians increasingly grappled with defining and clarifying the goals of public historians. At a 1992 Organization of American Historians (OAH) panel concerning public history, several historians noted that a primary characteristic of public history is the increased attentiveness to social history and a focus on ordinary people and their communities. At the OAH meeting, historians expressed the idea that public history could empower them to break away from the confines of the academic world. Indeed, the chance to engage with the public about their history offered historians a freeing alternative to traditional approaches to traditional history.<sup>83</sup> At the OAH conference, historian Theodore Karamanski expressed that nascent sentiment of liberation when he asserted that public history had “broken

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<sup>79</sup> Fishel, 8-17; Cole: 9-35; Conard: 105-120.

<sup>80</sup> David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, (Lanham: Altamira Press, 1982), 5, 177, 232, 234.

<sup>81</sup> David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, 13.

<sup>82</sup> David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, 5.

<sup>83</sup> Cole, 9-35; Grele, 40-48.

the chains that have kept academic historians in the cave.”<sup>84</sup> More than twenty five years later, public history is firmly established as an academic field and has only become more popular over the years.<sup>85</sup>

One of the main goals of public historians is to make history more relevant in modern society by including the perspectives of previously ignored voices in history. The focus on the lives of ordinary people has been a major characteristic of public history since its beginning. Public historians often concentrate on local history and accentuate the experiences of regular people rather than celebrating elites, military leaders, or political figures.

Another hallmark of public history is collaboration. Whereas traditional historians often work on their own, public history projects usually depend on collaborative efforts. Many public history projects are community-driven or entail working with members of the public, or scholars from various disciplines. Whether one works in an archive, at a historic site, in a museum, or in a classroom setting, the main objectives of public historians is to make history relevant in modern society and to engage with the public more fully about their own local history.<sup>86</sup>

Public historians pursue a variety of career paths. Many are archivists, museum curators, exhibit designers, oral historians, teachers, authors, editors, and historic preservationists. This project combines several aspects of public history and contributes to the common goals of the field. Creating the podcasts and the exhibit entails gathering pertinent information and curating the materials. It also necessitates an understanding of effective exhibit design. Additionally, the

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<sup>84</sup> Cole, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Fishel, 8-17; Cole: 9-35; Conard: 105-120.

<sup>86</sup> Cole: 9-35; Grele: 40-48; Howe and Kemp, 1-4; Conard: 105-120.

digital project indicates an adherence to the public history focus on oral history and historic preservation.

### Podcasting and Public History

Podcasting and public history go together well because both have democratizing elements and an emphasis on the voices of everyday people. History podcasts often accentuate local history and require collaboration. Podcasting can also be seen as a form of historic preservation as podcasts allow the inclusion of stories, songs, and interviews that might otherwise be lost or forgotten. Furthermore, producing podcasts frequently requires the creator to interact with people in the local community rather than working primarily in an academic setting. Finally, podcasts allow historians to reach the public in new ways, whether through a radio program or via a website on the Internet. The potential to communicate with a mass audience about history is one of the most exciting aspects of podcasting as a public history endeavor.<sup>87</sup>

### Conclusion to Chapter Three

The future of public history, and history in general, requires creative thinking and the increased integration of digital tools and historical research. Historians can no longer approach history in a solitary manner, primarily writing books and journal articles about history for academic audiences. In order to continue to be relevant, modern historians must approach the study of history in ways that promote further engagement with the public about their own history. Historians now regularly utilize digital history projects to accomplish that objective.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cole: 9-35; Grele: 40-48; Howe and Kemp, 1-4; Conard: 105-120; Campbell: 33-34; Berry: 143-162.

<sup>88</sup> Richard White, "What is Spatial History?" Stanford University Spatial History Lab.

This digital project contributes to the goals of public history. Both public history and podcasting emphasize the value of examining oral traditions in order to reveal the voices of ordinary people. While there is a tendency for historians of Florida history to concentrate on military leaders and tycoons, public history is more concerned with the common man or woman. The project's purpose is to give agency to everyday, working class Floridians who turned to music for solace during the Depression Era.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Cole: 9-35; Grele: 40-48; Howe and Kemp, 1-4; Conard: 105-120; Campbell: 33-34; Berry: 143-162.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The folk music collectors with the Federal Writers' Project deserve recognition for preserving aspects of Florida life during the early twentieth century that might have otherwise been lost to time. The songs they recorded offer a glimpse into daily life in Florida during a particular time and place. The most effective way to tell the story of the FWP in Florida is through the use of digital media such as podcasts, mapping components, and a digital exhibit.

The Federal Writers' Project ended in 1943 along with the Works Progress Administration. America's entrance into World War II contributed to the end of the Federal Writers' Project, but another factor was the scrutiny it faced from the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The HUAC accused the *America Guide Series* of containing Communist propaganda. The HUAC saw the Federal Writers' Project as a threat because it, and the guidebooks, challenged the existing conservative vision of America. Whereas much emphasis tended to be placed on the Anglo or Celtic experiences in the past, the Federal Writers' Project invited minorities and immigrants to participate in the narrative of American history for the first time.<sup>90</sup>

In 1938, Henry Alsberg testified before the HUAC. He defended the Federal Writers' Project and the guidebooks, but the damage was done. In the 1939 report of the HUAC, they concluded, without evidence, that "communist activities were carried on openly in the Federal Writers' Project" and the FWP was "a splendid vehicle for the dissemination of class hatreds."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Demasi, 199-216.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 212.

That same year, Congress cut millions of dollars from the WPA budget. Approximately 6,000 workers were laid off from the federal arts programs, including the Federal Writers' Project.<sup>92</sup>

In 1943, staff member Merle Colby wrote the final report of the FWP for the Library of Congress. In the report, Colby expressed hope that “here and there in America some talented boy or girl will stumble on some of this material, take fire from it, and turn it to creative use.”<sup>93</sup> In the 1940s, Colby could not have foreseen the ways in which the recent digitization of items in the Library of Congress archive would breathe new life into the FWP materials.

After collecting songs with the FWP, Alton Morris wrote a dissertation on Florida folk songs while attending the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In 1950, his dissertation was published as the book *Folksongs of Florida*. Today, his book is the only collection of its kind on Florida folk songs. Even though he personally recorded Greek, Minorcan, Slavic, and Czech songs in Florida for the federal government, his book does not contain any foreign language songs. As a result, the songs have not received much attention in history. This digital project hopes to shine a light on those songs from Florida that have been overlooked in the past.<sup>94</sup>

Historians have written about Florida, the Federal Writers' Project, and even Florida folk songs, but no one else has created a podcast series and digital exhibit dedicated entirely to highlighting the song collecting efforts of the FWP in Florida in order to showcase and celebrate the multicultural social history of Florida as shown through the traditional songs of ordinary

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<sup>92</sup> Demasi, 213.

<sup>93</sup> Penkower, 237.

<sup>94</sup> Alton Morris, *Folksongs of Florida*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1950), xviii.

Floridians. The podcast series and digital platform come together to provide an immersive exploration of Florida during the Depression Era.

The digital exploration of the FWP expeditions benefits and adheres to the goals of public history, digital history, and podcasting. Public history and podcasting promote the idea of celebrating diversity, recognizing the common man and woman, and democratizing the consumption of information. Podcasts are a useful medium for engaging with the public due to the “power of the voice” and the feeling of intimacy that podcasts provide. Podcasting and public history emphasize the lives of everyday people and encourage a more inclusive perspective while digital tools enable spatial dynamics that uncover aspects of local history.<sup>95</sup>

The digital project permits the audience to go on a cultural and musical treasure hunt with the Florida Federal Writers’ Project. Through the project, the audience can explore the digital exhibit while listening to the podcast series for a truly immersive experience. They can also examine original documents and listen to audio recordings from the time period. The virtual journeys give insight into the cultural practices, lives, and experiences of Floridians through their folk songs.

#### Proposed Plan for the Project after the Thesis

The intention for the project was to experiment with producing a podcast series for storytelling purposes in order to adequately convey the significance of the Federal Writers’ Project’s folk song recordings in Florida. When the thesis project began, I had no audio engineering experience nor the ability to produce or edit podcasts, but I felt strongly that the project would benefit from podcasting. The production process required months of research,

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<sup>95</sup> Campbell: 33-34; Berry: 143-162.



interviewing, scriptwriting, and editing. While it took several semesters to learn how to create the podcasts, it was a necessary step in making the project come to life. Because the topic focuses on music, podcasting is the most appropriate medium to tell the story.

Podcast editing is a skill that increases with time and the ability to edit podcasts improves each day. The final version of the podcast series will benefit from the knowledge gained while producing and editing podcasts for the thesis project and for the National Public Radio (NPR) program *Florida Frontiers*, the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, *Knights HistoryCast*, *Every Tongue Got to Confess*, and other podcasts I have produced for the University of Central Florida this year.<sup>96</sup>

In the next year, I will improve and promote the podcast series. I intend to revise the episodes to include more detail, interpretation, and additional relevant information. I will also increase the production quality of the podcasts concerning the music, script, and narration. Podcast making is an art, and while it can be taught, the best way to master it is to spend ample time learning the intricacies on one's own.

There are specific ideas for seven or more episodes for the podcast series, with each episode featuring a different FWP expedition in Florida. One podcast episode will feature John Lomax's recordings in Raiford Prison that took place between 1936 and 1939. A future podcast will explore the song collecting of Alton Morris and John Lomax in Alachua and Columbia Counties in 1936 and 1937. Another planned episode follows Carita Doggett Corse and Robert

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<sup>96</sup> Florida Historical Society, *Florida Frontiers*, <https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/radio/program/list> (accessed June 6, 2018); *Knights HistoryCast*, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/knights-historycast/id1291340864?mt=2> (accessed June 6, 2018); *Every Tongue Got To Confess*, [https://scholarship.rollins.edu/confess\\_podcast](https://scholarship.rollins.edu/confess_podcast) (accessed June 6, 2018); *Florida Historical Quarterly Podcast*, <http://fhq.cah.ucf.edu/podcast> (accessed June 6, 2018).

Cornwall and their song collecting at the Brighton Seminole Reservation in the Everglades in 1940. During that expedition, Corse and Cornwall recorded John Josh, Naha Tiger, Barfield Johns, Robert Osceola, and Billy Bowlegs singing traditional Seminole songs such as “Horned Owl” and “Snake Song”. The next episode will explore the “Cracker” fiddle tunes collected by Corse and Cornwall in Sebring, Florida. Additionally, I would like to explore the expedition of John Filareton who collected Greek songs in Tarpon Springs in 1940. The future podcast episodes about the FWP in Florida require further research.<sup>97</sup>

The three podcasts already made only include a small amount of the interview content gathered for this project. Still, I plan to conduct more interviews for the podcast series. I will speak to local historian Judy Duda about the history of Slavia, Florida for the episode about the spiritual songs Alton Morris gathered there in 1939. It is imperative that I interview a Seminole historian, musician, or folklorist for the episode about the traditional songs collected at the Brighton Seminole Reservation. I also intend to interview Dr. Luis Martinez-Fernandez, a history professor at the University of Central Florida known for his expertise concerning Cuban history and music.

While taking digital history graduate classes at the University of Central Florida, I discovered that an interactive exhibit would supplement the podcast series quite well while also providing a place to house the podcast series online. Every respectable treasure hunt has a map, and VisualEyes5 enabled the inclusion of an interactive map of Florida. Through hyperlinks, users can explore the communities that the FWP visited and learn more about the people, places, and songs they encountered.

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<sup>97</sup> Library of Congress, “Florida Folklife from the WPA Collections, 1937-1942,” American Folklife Center.

The future goal for the digital exhibit is to include more details about each FWP expedition in Florida. Currently, the exhibit contains information about two expeditions. After completing the podcast series, it will house approximately seven podcast episodes. Users will be able to interact with the website's map and read information about each journey in the story pane as they listen to the podcasts. The interactive website allows a narrative about each expedition along with hyperlinks to the podcasts as well as documents, letters, and original audio recordings from the Library of Congress's digital archive. The digital exhibit will also include transcriptions of song lyrics for the Florida folk songs featured in the podcast series. The website may also include a textual analysis of the song lyrics. Within a year, I would like for the website to house the improved and finalized podcast series.<sup>98</sup>

After completing the podcast series, each episode will be edited to a shorter format that is more appropriate for a series on the weekly radio show of the Florida Historical Society called *Florida Frontiers*. Broadcasting the podcast series on *Florida Frontiers* would constitute a true public history endeavor because a mass audience will be able to hear the episodes on National Public Radio (NPR) stations all over the state of Florida. That, in turn, will permit the voices of the people of Depression Era Florida to continue on through the preserved songs.<sup>99</sup>

Floridian, folklorist, and human rights activist Stetson Kennedy once wrote about his folk song collecting expeditions with the Federal Writers' Project, "Whenever anyone asks me what it was like working with the WPA and recording Florida folk songs back in the 1930s for the

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<sup>98</sup> "VisualEyes", Virginia Center for Digital History, <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes> (accessed June 1, 2018). See also <http://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes/?975> for the working draft of my digital exhibit.

<sup>99</sup> Florida Historical Society, *Florida Frontiers*, <https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/radio/program/list> (accessed June 6, 2018).

Library of Congress, I tell them we were as excited as a bunch of kids on a treasure hunt.”<sup>100</sup> The ultimate goal for the digital project is for it to make the audience feel as if they are on a treasure hunt in Florida. I hope that the project conveys the kind of enthusiasm for Florida folk music and history that Stetson Kennedy felt and described in his writings.

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<sup>100</sup> Stetson Kennedy, “A Florida Treasure Hunt”, Library of Congress, American Folklife Center.

## APPENDIX A: PODCAST ONE SCRIPT

*Episode One: The Expedition of Zora Neale Hurston, Alan Lomax, and Elizabeth Barnicle in Eatonville and Belle Glade in 1935*

Length: 15 minutes

[Song: *John Henry* by Gabriel Brown, Eatonville, Florida, 1935]

This is episode one of *A Patchwork Quilt: The Federal Writers' Project's Folk Song Expeditions in Florida*. This episode, and the podcast series, begins in 1935 with the expedition of Zora Neale Hurston, Alan Lomax, and Elizabeth Barnicle. In this episode, we will visit two African American communities in Florida-Eatonville and Belle Glade. Join me, Holly Baker, as I take you on a musical treasure hunt with the folklorists from the Federal Writers' Project.

This is the story of a treasure hunt that took place in Florida in the 1930s. Instead of seeking gold or jewels, the explorers sought music and cultural diversity. They were the writers and folklorists who collected folk songs in Florida on behalf of the federal government and the Library of Congress between 1935 and 1940. The folk song collectors discussed in this series worked in one way or another for the Federal Writers' Project, a New Deal Program established in 1935 by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as part of the Works Progress Administration.

The WPA employed out of work Americans in numerous projects ranging from construction to preservation during the Great Depression, when one in four Americans were unemployed. Nearly every American felt the effects of the economic downturn after the stock market crash of 1929, including writers, historians, researchers, and artists. The preservation efforts of the Federal Writers' Project took place during a time in which American identity was thought of and celebrated as culturally Anglo or British. Folk song collector Francis James Child even asserted that all American folk songs were originally of British origin.

The findings of the FWP folklorists in Florida disproved Child's notion. Historians and authors often present Florida history through the experiences of the "Florida Cracker", the Celtic pioneer who settled in Florida before the 20th century. As a result, Florida's diversity has not been properly highlighted in history. The experiences of the black turpentine camp worker, the Greek fisherman, or the Cuban cigar roller are not given the same attention in history. Due to the efforts of the folklorists with the FWP, their voices and their cultural history are now preserved.

The work of the FWP challenged the widely held concept of what it meant to be an American during that time. In Florida, the FWP visited turpentine camps, juke joints, front porches, church gatherings, food kitchens, and a Seminole reservation. In these communities, they searched for and found authentic Floridians and everyday Americans playing their own music. This podcast series shows that the Cracker perspective long embraced by historians and authors represents but a square in the patchwork quilt that makes up Florida's cultural heritage.

By 1935, Florida native Zora Neale Hurston was already an accomplished writer. In the 1920s, she attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Barnard College in New York City where she studied Anthropology with renowned Anthropologist Franz Boas. Collecting songs for

the government allowed Zora Neale Hurston to take part in an anthropological study on the people of Florida, an undertaking that was close to her heart.

Alan Lomax, a folklorist and writer from Texas, was 20 years old during the 1935 expedition. Although young, Lomax was already an experienced song collector. In 1933, Alan Lomax accompanied his father John on folk collecting field trips for the Library of Congress throughout the South when he was just 18 years old. John Lomax was a pioneering folklorist who was also the first Folklore Editor for the Federal Writers' Project. Using a recording machine borrowed from the Library of Congress, Alan Lomax and his father documented blues and spirituals in prisons in Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. While recording in Angola Prison in Louisiana, the Lomaxes met with and recorded blues and folk musician Huddie Ledbetter, known as Lead Belly.

[Song: *Midnight Special* by Leadbelly, 1933]

Along with Zora Neale Hurston and Alan Lomax, a folklorist named Elizabeth Barnicle was also a part of the song collecting efforts in Florida in 1935. Elizabeth Barnicle was a professor at New York University, where she taught English and Folklore. She was also known in the Greenwich Village folk music circle for inviting musicians to her house. Zora Neale Hurston and Elizabeth Barnicle drove down from New York and met Alan Lomax in Brunswick, Georgia. After recording folk songs in the Georgia Sea Islands, the three of them made their way down to Florida together.

[Song: *Cold, Rainy Day* by A.B. Hicks, Eatonville, June 1935]

Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Elizabeth Barnicle made an unconventional trio. In the 1930s, in the south, and in Florida, it was provocative for young Alan Lomax to even be traveling with Zora Neale Hurston, an African American woman.

John Szwed, author of *Alan Lomax: The Man Who Recorded The World* explains.

[John Szwed: "Barnicle suggested that she could get money from NYU for a trip south if the Library of Congress could provide some money and they could rent cars and whatever and Barnicle, Zora and Alan could travel through the South and do collecting, and they set out for this in 1935. They set out together and I don't think it takes too much imagination to figure out that these two older women who would have been in their 40s at this point and this 20 year old guy are traveling together and it is cross racial. They were crossing every line that you could find in the South, and off they went doing some work there with Sea Island people and moving on to Eatonville in Florida, an all-black town that Zora Neale Hurston had been raised in and had written about extensively."]

In June of 1935, the folk song collectors traveled to Zora Neale Hurston's hometown of Eatonville, near Orlando. In 1888, Eatonville became the first incorporated black community in America. Zora knew Eatonville, and she knew where to find the music.

[Song: *Uncle Bud* by Gabriel Brown and Rochelle French, Eatonville, Florida, 1935]

In Eatonville, they met with musicians Gabriel Brown and Rochelle French who performed several songs such as *John Henry*, *Education Blues*, and *Uncle Bud*. Their recording sessions include both original compositions and traditional folk songs. During the recording session, Gabriel Brown played slide guitar with a knife.

[Song: *Education Blues/Talking in Sebastopol* by Gabriel Brown and Rochelle French]

In a 1935 letter to the Library of Congress, Alan Lomax described Gabriel Brown's musical talent as "better than Lead Belly".

After recording songs in Eatonville, Lomax, Hurston, and Barnicle traveled south to record songs in Belle Glade, Florida, a town made up primarily of migrant workers from the Bahamas located in the Everglades, right on the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee. Just seven years earlier, the impoverished community of Belle Glade suffered from a devastating hurricane which killed more than a two thousand people.

While in Belle Glade, Hurston, Barnicle, and Lomax met Booker T. Sapps, Roger Mathews, and Willy Flowers at a local labor camp. There, they performed several blues songs, including *Weeping Worry Blues*.

[Song: *Weeping Worry Blues* by Booker T. Sapps, Belle Glade, 1935]

In an August 1935 letter to Oliver Strunk of the Library of Congress, Alan Lomax described the amount of folk songs in Belle Glade as being "thick as mosquitos". After collecting songs in Florida with Lomax and Barnicle, Hurston went her own way, deciding not to accompany them on their next stop in the Bahamas.

Two of Hurston's most well-known books, *Mules and Men* from 1935 and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* from 1937, featured some of the Eatonville and Belle Glade characters that Zora met while collecting folk songs during the 1935 Expedition. Hurston wrote about people "broken from being poor" and jooks that "clanged" and "clamored" with the sound of the blues.

In 1960, Hurston died in Fort Pierce, Florida. By then, she was virtually forgotten. Her grave was unmarked until 1973, when Alice Walker, author of book *The Color Purple*, placed a gravestone for her in the Garden of Heavenly Rest. Her epitaph reads, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Genius of the South".

After the Florida expedition, Mary Elizabeth Barnicle married a union organizer and coal miner from Tennessee named Tillman Cadle. Together they settled in Tennessee and collected folk music in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Mary Elizabeth Barnicle died in 1978.

Alan Lomax worked as the gate keeper for the Archive of American Folk-Song as an archivist for the Library of Congress until 1942, when the program ended. Alan Lomax greatly influenced the folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s by "taking music out of the archive" and introducing the folk songs to a wider audience. He organized folk festivals and promoted folk musicians such as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Muddy Waters. Alan Lomax died in Sarasota, Florida in 2002, but his legacy as a folk music collector and revivalist lives on.



Alan Lomax once said that, because of the folk song collecting efforts on behalf of the Library of Congress, “for the first time, America could hear itself.”

Because of the music preservation efforts of the Library of Congress and the federal government, we can still listen to these songs today.

Join me Holly Baker on the next song collecting expedition by listening to Episode Two of *A Patchwork Quilt: The Federal Writers’ Project’s Folk Song Expeditions in Florida*.

## APPENDIX B: PODCAST TWO SCRIPT

*Episode Two: The Expedition of Stetson Kennedy, Zora Neale Hurston, and Robert Cook from Jacksonville to Key West, 1939-1940*

Length: 30 minutes

[Song: *Merce* performed by Adela Martinez, Art Pages, piano, Ramon Bermudez, and Carlos Pous, Cuban Club, Ybor City, Florida, on June 21, 1939.]

This is episode two of *A Patchwork Quilt: The Federal Writers' Project's Folk Song Expeditions in Florida*. This podcast series examines the folk song collecting journeys of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida during the Depression Era. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal introduced federal programs that provided jobs for unemployed Americans. One Works Progress Administration program, the Federal Writers' Project, allowed out of work writers and folklorists to document traditional stories and songs in an unprecedented effort to preserve American cultural traditions.

Between 1935 and 1940, the Federal Writers' Project organized several folk song collecting expeditions all across America. This episode discusses the late 1939 and early 1940 expedition of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida. During this expedition, folklorists Stetson Kennedy and Zora Neale Hurston, along with staff photographer Robert Cook, traveled throughout Florida, from Jacksonville to Key West collecting folk songs from everyday people in communities in Florida. Years after the expedition ended, Stetson Kennedy recalled the trip fondly. He said, "Whenever anyone asks me what it was like working with the Works Progress Administration and recording Florida folk songs back in the 1930s for the Library of Congress, I tell them we were as excited as a bunch of kids on a treasure hunt."

Join me Holly Baker as I take you on a musical treasure hunt through Florida with the folklorists from the Federal Writers' Project.

In 1937, Jacksonville, Florida native Stetson Kennedy dropped out of the University of Florida to become the State Director of the Federal Writers' Project unit on folklore, life history, and social ethnic studies for the Works Progress Administration. He was 20 years old.

Two years later, he embarked on a folk collecting journey through his home state for the Federal Writers' Project. Stetson Kennedy was joined on the 1939 expedition in Florida by Eatonville, Florida native, Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston was an anthropologist, a folklorist, and an author of several books including *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Mules and Men*. Four years earlier, Hurston assisted folklorist Alan Lomax in his song collecting efforts in Eatonville and Belle Glade, Florida.

### The recording machine

The folklorists working with the Federal Writers' Project documented the songs and stories they found through the use of an innovative acetate disk recorder. At about 300 pounds, the recorder was notoriously heavy and large. The folklorists who used it in Florida called it "The Thing".

In a 1981 interview with Peggy Bulger, Stetson Kennedy reminisced about the machine.

[Stetson Kennedy: "It took three persons to carry the recording equipment in those days. It was cutting disks directly onto disk and it operated with the same as an automobile, heavy batteries. So it was a rather large operation to get out onto a railroad track for example. At the place in Jacksonville, the Eartha White Mission, we discovered there...we were just starting out in the recording business, really, recording was very novel in those days, that if we would just have a chat for a couple of minutes first really without even telling them that the machine was turned on and then we'd stop and play it back. These were people who became so excited at hearing their own voices. They had never thought that they'd live to hear it."]

While bothersome to carry, without the machine, we would not be able to hear the voices of everyday Floridians as heard by the folklorists with the Federal Writers' Project.

#### Jacksonville June 18, 1939

Stetson Kennedy and Zora Neale Hurston's song collecting journey began in Jacksonville, Florida, on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1939.

Anthropologist and folklorist Herbert Halpert assisted in Jacksonville. They visited the Clara White Mission, a soup kitchen and humanitarian organization on Ashley Street, to record some traditional songs and spirituals. The Clara White Mission also served as the segregated headquarters for what the Federal Writers' Project called their "Negro Unit". At the Clara White Mission, Kennedy and Halpert recorded Zora Neale Hurston singing eighteen folk songs and work songs. According to her 1942 autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston heard many folk songs and stories on the porch of Joe Clark's general store while growing up in Eatonville, Florida. One song she sang was called *Uncle Bud*. Hurston called it a "jook song" not sung in front of respectable ladies.

[Zora Neale Hurston singing and explaining the origins of *Uncle Bud* by Zora Neale Hurston, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

Hurston sang several other songs, such as:

*Mule on the Mount*, a track lining song popular at railroad camps and jook joints.

[Song: *Mule on the Mount* by Zora Neale Hurston, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

Hurston sang another track lining song called, *Shove it Over*.

She said that she learned the song in 1933 at a railroad camp near Lakeland, Florida.

[Song: *Shove it Over* by Zora Neale Hurston, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

Hurston also sang a song called *Halimuhfack*, a "jook" song Hurston learned on the East coast of Florida.

[*Halimuhfack* by Zora Neale Hurston, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

She sang *Let's Shake It*, a track-lining song that Hurston heard at a railroad camp in Florida.

[*Let's Shake It* by Zora Neale Hurston, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

On the same day that Zora Neale Hurston sang for the Federal Writers' Project, Stetson Kennedy recorded Reverend Harden W. Stuckey singing several songs. South Carolina born Reverend Stuckey was an instructor for the blind and a Baptist preacher. Before singing a song called *Way Down Yonder*, Stuckey said that his church did not approve of singing, but he wanted to sing in order to help preserve the songs.

[*Way Down Yonder* by Reverend Harden W. Stuckey, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

And another song called *Fish Vendor's Cries*.

[*Fish Vendor's Cries* by Reverend Harden W. Stuckey, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

That day, the Federal Writers' Project also recorded Harold B. Hazelhurst, born in Georgia and raised in Florida. He said that he heard many of the songs when he worked at a logging camp railroad in Florida. Hazelhurst explained that learned the song Captain's Mule from muleskinners who sang to boost morale during their hard work days.

[*Captain's Mule* by Harold Hazelhurst, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

Hazelhurst also sang a folk song called *John Henry* about a mythological African American railroad worker with superhuman strength.

[*John Henry* by Harold Hazelhurst, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

Since its emergence in the late nineteenth century, the song about the tireless steel driving man who died with a hammer in his hand resonated with working class people. During the song collecting expeditions in Florida, the folklorists with the Federal Writers' Project recorded several versions of John Henry- in Eatonville, Belle Glade, Jacksonville, and even in Raiford Prison. Hazelhurst also sang a work song called *Stewboy*.

[*Stewboy* by Harold Hazelhurst, Jacksonville, Florida, 1939]

The folk song *Stewboy* or *Stewball*, was written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century about a racehorse in Ireland named Skewball. In the American South, it became a popular work song. A decade after Hazelhurst sang for the Federal Writers' Project, *Stewball* was popularized by musicians like Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, and Memphis Slim.

Ybor City, June 21, 1939

[*Guabina* by Carlos Pous, Art Pages, and Ramon, Ybor City, Florida, 1939]

In June of 1939, Stetson Kennedy and Robert Cook headed to Ybor City, near Tampa, to record Cuban songs. On June 21, 1939, at The Cuban Club in Ybor City, Stetson Kennedy recorded Carlos Pous, Art Pages, and Ramon Bermudez performing a traditional Cuban song called *Guabina*, a Cuban song from the eighteenth century. In 1885, Ybor City was founded as an independent town by Vicente Martinez-Ybor and a small group of cigar makers. In the 1930s,

Ybor City was mostly made up of Cuban and Spanish immigrants who worked in the cigar shops. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, demand for fine cigars declined and many of Ybor City's cigar factories closed. Many residents left Ybor City for better housing and economic prospects elsewhere.

While most of the evidence of the old Ybor City is gone, The Cuban Club, where the Federal Writers' Project recorded *Guabina* and several other songs, still stands.

The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and is the oldest Cuban-American association in the nation.

#### Cross City, August 1 to August 19, 1939

In August of 1939, Herbert Halpert, Stetson Kennedy, and Robert Cook followed Zora Neale Hurston in Cross City, Florida, to the Aycock and Lindsey Turpentine Company, the largest turpentine industry in the world at the time. About three hundred men worked at the Aycock and Lindsey Turpentine Company from morning until night. At the turpentine camp, the Federal Writers' Project workers set up a night-time recording session around a campfire and documented turpentine camp culture and work songs. One of the performers was Fred Lee Fox, a 20 year old turpentine worker originally from Georgia. Fox told them about some songs he learned in the Dixie County Prison Camp.

[Song: *All You Rounders Better Lie Down* by Fred Lee Fox at Cross City, Florida, August 1, 1939]

They also met James Griffin who performed several songs at the Office of the Aycock & Lindsey Turpentine Camp. Griffin, a 21-year-old Tennessee-born turpentine worker, told the folks from the Federal Writers' Project that he wrote the song *Right Back in Jail Again* while at the Dixie County Prison Camp.

[Song: *Right Back in Jail Again* by James Griffin, Cross City, Florida, on August, 1939]

Griffin also sang a song called *Worked All Summer Long*.

[Song: *Worked All Summer Long* by James Griffin, Cross City, Florida, August, 1939]

Stetson Kennedy told Peggy Bulger in a 1981 interview that during her time at the turpentine camp, Zora Neale Hurston became concerned for the welfare of the men who worked there.

[Stetson Kennedy: "Hurston incidentally was on this Cross City turpentine recording thing and she went and came out with very cryptic notes about someone being buried in the woods last week and the sheriff has blockades set up on all the highways. These were turpentine workers who left the county without paying the camp for alleged debts at the commissary. Most of them stayed in perpetual debt, of course. Their earnings never equal the account they are running at the commissary and you meet interesting people in turpentine camps." ]

Zora Neale Hurston later wrote an essay called "Turpentine," about the people she met at the Aycock Lindsay Turpentine camp.

#### Ybor City, August 23 to August 27, 1939

In August of 1939, Stetson Kennedy returned to Ybor City for four days and recorded several more Cuban songs. On August 23rd, they met with 28 year old Zanaida Beuron from Tampa. She sang a traditional Cuban lullaby called *Duermate Mi Niña*.

[Song: *Duermate Mi Niña* by Zanaida Beuron, Ybor City, Florida, August 23, 1939]

The next day, In Ybor City, two young sisters, 13 year old Ziomara Andux and 11 year old Evelia Andux recited some children's songs for them. The song *Amambrocha To* accompanied a game that was played by the Cuban children of Ybor City.

[Song: *Amambrocha To* by 13 year old Ziomara Andux, Evelia Andux at Ybor City, Florida, August 24, 1939.]

#### Riviera, January 15 and 16, 1940

In January 1940, Stetson Kennedy and Robert Cook headed to South Florida, to collect songs in Riviera and Key West. In his 1942 book, *Palmetto Country*, Stetson Kennedy discussed his song collecting efforts in Riviera. He called Riviera a "fishing village" comprised of people of Bahamian descent who made their living as fishermen and spongers.

In Riviera, Stetson Kennedy recorded what he called Conch songs. He recorded Naomi Nelson singing songs at Gospel Hall in Riviera, Florida on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1940. One song she performed, an ode to an old black cat, can be found in song books from the late 1800s.

[Song: *The Old Black Cat* by Naomi Nelson at Gospel Hall, Riviera, Florida, January 15, 1940]

On January 16, 1940, they recorded Naomi Nelson's mother singing *Old Ben Tucker*. The song's lyrics and melody are similar to a popular folk song called *Old Dan Tucker*, first published in 1843.

[Song: *Old Ben Tucker* by Mary Jane Roberts at Gospel Hall, Riviera, Florida, January 16, 1940]

#### Key West January 1940

A week later, Stetson Kennedy recorded more Conch songs in Key West. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Kennedy recorded a singer from Andros Island, Bahamas named Theo Rolle, also called Tea Rolle, who was a sponge fisherman and musician. Tea Rolle sang several songs, including *Sponger Money*, a Bahamian folk song popular in Key West, where sponge fishing had long been an occupation of Bahamian settlers.

[Song: *Sponger Money* by Theo Rolle, Key West, Florida, 1940]

Tea Rolle also sang *Abaco*, a song about an island in the Bahamas.

[Song: *Abaco* by Theodore Rolle, Key West, Florida, January 23, 1940]

Theo Rolle performed *Bellamena*, a song that would later be popularized by Harry Belafonte.

[Song: *Bellamena* by Theodore Rolle, Key West, Florida, January 20, 1940]

[Song: *Hoist Up the John B Sail* by Theodore Rolle, Key West, Florida, January 20, 1940]

In his 2008 book *Grits and Grunts: Folkloric Key West*, Stetson Kennedy remembered Theodore Rolle as a “stellar performer”.

### The End of the FWP

In 1943, the Federal Writers’ Project ended.

While his preservation efforts with the Federal Writers’ Project were noteworthy, during his life, Stetson Kennedy was best known for infiltrating and exposing the Ku Klux Klan in the 1940s.

In his 1954 book, *The Klan Unmasked* or *I Rode with the Klan* he detailed how he uncovered secrets of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1952, Stetson Kennedy ran for governor of Florida. Kennedy’s close friend and frequent houseguest Woody Guthrie wrote his campaign song called *Stetson Kennedy*.

Kennedy did not become the governor of Florida, but he still made his mark on through his books, his folklore collecting with the Federal Writers’ Project, and for his social justice activism. In 2011, Stetson Kennedy died in Jacksonville, Florida, at the age of 94.

After working for the Federal Writers’ Project, Zora Neale Hurston continued writing books and magazine articles. In the 1950s, she worked as a librarian at Patrick Air Force Base and as a substitute teacher in Fort Pierce, Florida. In 1959, she lived at the St. Lucie County Welfare Home. Zora Neale Hurston died in 1960 in Fort Pierce, Florida at the age of 69. Zora Neale Hurston was rediscovered in 1973 when author Alice Walker revived interest in Hurston’s work and legacy in her article titled “In Search of Zora Neale Hurston,” which was published in *Ms. Magazine*. Today, her hometown of Eatonville holds a popular event each year called The Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities where her legacy is celebrated.

### Legacy

Even though their work did not gain much recognition during their lives, almost one hundred years later, digitized records of the Library of Congress allow the public to rediscover and appreciate the work of the Federal Writers’ Project in Florida. David Taylor author of *Soul of a People: The WPA Writers' Project Uncovers Depression America* spoke with me about the legacy of the Federal Writers’ Project.

[David Taylor: “The songs that they collected really were sometimes the first time these people got a public voice, and so they may have been singing songs that they were confident of because they had grown up with them or maybe even made them up themselves but nobody had asked them before for these and so I think the significance is both what they give us as the public for



songs and part of life that would have otherwise disappeared but also for the people who sang them they gave a recognition that their lives mattered.”]

Federal Writers’ Project workers like Stetson Kennedy and Zora Neale Hurston were among the first to seek out the voices of previously overlooked Americans by going into the spaces of everyday working people and asking them to express themselves and to tell their own stories.

Join me, Holly Baker, on the next song collecting expedition by listening to episode three of *A Patchwork Quilt: The Federal Writers’ Project’s Folk Song Expeditions in Florida*. In episode three, I discuss the 1939 expedition of Alton Morris during which he worked alongside John Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Stetson Kennedy.

## APPENDIX C: PODCAST THREE SCRIPT

*Episode Three: The 1939 Expedition of Alton Morris and Minorcan, Greek, and Slavic Songs in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Tarpon Springs, Masaryktown, and Slavia*

Length: 20 minutes

[Song: *Soultana* by Eeve G. Anastassiou, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 1940]

This is episode three of *A Patchwork Quilt: The FWP's Folk Song Expeditions in Florida*. This podcast examines the folk song expeditions of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida during the Depression Era.

In popular history, Florida's multicultural heritage has been overshadowed by the Florida Cracker narrative. Historians and authors often romanticize the experiences of the "Florida Cracker", the Celtic pioneer who settled in Florida. Books such as *The Yearling* by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and *A Land Remembered* by Patrick Smith perpetuated the idea of the Florida Cracker as the dominant character in Florida history. The experiences of the Greek sponger, the Cuban cigar roller, the black turpentine camp worker, and the Minorcan fisherman have not been given the same attention in popular history.

This podcast series attempts to fill that gap.

The Federal Writers' Project

In the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs employed out of work Americans in various government projects ranging from construction to preservation. The Federal Writers' Project was a New Deal arts program under Federal Project Number One that employed writers and folklorists to travel across America to document and preserve American folklife including stories, music, and traditions.

Between 1935 and 1940, numerous folk song collecting expeditions took place all over America. From coastal fishing villages in California to turpentine camps in Florida, writers and folklorists with the Federal Writers' Project collected folklore from the public, including their folk songs.

One of the main goals of the Federal Writers' Project was to produce a series of books called *The American Guide Series*. Each state produced a travel guidebook for the series and around 6,000 writers worked on the project. Florida's guidebook called *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State* included information about Florida's history, geography, and culture, along with suggested tours that travelers could take across the state. Unemployed writers and folklorists such as Zora Neale Hurston, Alan Lomax, Stetson Kennedy, Robert Cook, and Alton Morris explored Florida on behalf of the federal government and the Library of Congress to collect material for the guidebooks.

This episode discusses the 1939 expedition of Alton Morris and his collection of Greek, Minorcan, Czech, and Slavic songs in Jacksonville, Tarpon Springs, St Augustine, Masaryktown, and Slavia, Florida. Alton Morris, editor of *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, conducted the recording and the interviewing. Alton Morris, a fourth-generation Floridian from the Lake Okeechobee area, began his research into Florida folklife as a field worker for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project. In 1936 and 1937, Alton Morris collected

songs in Florida with renowned folklorist John Lomax, the father of Alan Lomax who collected folk songs in Florida with anthropologist and author Zora Neale Hurston in 1935.

Floridian and folklorist Stetson Kennedy once compared his work with the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s to a treasure hunt.

Join me, Holly Baker, as I take you on a musical treasure hunt through Florida with the folklorists from the Federal Writers' Project.

#### Tarpon Springs, August 25 to August 28, 1939

In 1939, Stetson Kennedy joined Alton Morrison and staff photographer Robert Cook in Tarpon Springs to collect songs from the Greek community there. The group recorded over thirty songs in Tarpon Springs. In the 1890s, the sponge industry of Tarpon Springs began to attract Greek immigrants. Sponge divers, primarily from the Dodecanese Islands in Greece learned about the thriving sponge business through family members, newspaper articles, and even advertisements that offered free travel to Greek spongers willing to relocate. By 1910, more than 1,000 Greek sponge fishermen worked out of Tarpon Springs. By 1940, Tarpon Springs contained more than 2,500 Greek fishermen and their families.

The group met Magdaline Kavouklis who sang a Greek folk song called *The Mountaineers*.

[Song: *Oi vounisioi* by Magdaline Kavouklis, Tarpon Springs, Florida, August 25, 1939]

They also met Mary Gianèskis. She performed a song which translates as *The Fisherman's Song*. She told Alton Morris that Greek fishermen would sing the song while pulling their nets.

[Song: *To tragoudi to psara* by Mary Gianèskis, Tarpon Springs, Florida, August 25, 1939]

She also sang *Misirlou*, a Mediterranean folk song. The title means *Egyptian Girl*.

[Song: *Misirlou* by Mary Gianèskis, Tarpon Springs, Florida, on August 25, 1939]

The song *Misirlou* has a fascinating history. It was popular in the 1920s in Greek and Armenian communities in the United States. The song was first recorded in 1927 by Greek musician Tetos Demetriades.

[Song: *Misirlou* by Tetos Demetriades, 1927]

The song gained worldwide popularity with Lebanese American Dick Dale's 1962 surf rock version, which popularized the song in Western culture.

[Song: *Misirlou* by Dick Dale, 1962]

Alton Morris and Stetson Kennedy also recorded Nick Mandalou performing *Guitar Song* on August 28th, 1939.

[Song: *Guitar Song* by Nick Mandalou, Tarpon Springs, Florida, August 28, 1939]

Nick Mandalou said he learned the song in Greece.

On August 28th, 1939, they also recorded Charles Brown and the Greek Orchestra performing a song called *Maroulli*.

[Song: *Maroulli* by Charles Brown and the Greek Orchestra, Tarpon Springs, Florida, August 28, 1939]

Just a few years after this recording was made, the natural sponge industry of Tarpon Springs suffered a major blow. A so-called red tide destroyed Florida's sponge beds, and synthetic sponges replaced natural ones.

Tina Bucuvalas, Curator of Arts & Historical Resources for the City of Tarpon Springs, and previous Folklorist for the State of Florida told me more.

[Tina Bucuvalas: “At the time when the sponge companies were developing here and the Greeks came in, there were political and economic problems in Greece, so it played perfectly for people to come here and do much better economically. The sponge industry in Tarpon soon overtook that of Key West which had been the center of the sponge industry in Florida and sponges were the most valuable maritime resource in the state. So, they were doing quite well. By the early 30s, the sponge industries in Cuba and the Bahamas collapsed but it started to affect the industry here in the 30s but there wasn’t really an absolute die off until after World War II but in that time, while everyone else was feeling the Depression, things were really good here. The Greek community didn’t feel the Depression very much because sponges were in demand and that was the period in which it was the center of the world in the industry.”]

Today, Tarpon Springs has a strong Greek community, with more Greek Americans than any other city in the United States.

#### Masaryktown, August 28, 1939

On August 28th the folklorists traveled to Masaryktown, a town north of Tarpon Springs, near Tampa, to record songs in the community of Czech and Slovak farmers. In Masaryktown, they recorded about seven songs.

Masaryktown, established in 1924, was named after Tomáš Masaryk, the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia. The original plan of the settlers of Masaryktown was to raise oranges, but hard frosts occurred and destroyed the orange trees. Many residents had to abandon their farms. The quality of the recordings from Masaryktown is poor, but the songs are still worth a listen.

#### Slavia, August 31 to September 1, 1939

On September 1st, 1939, Alton Morris recorded more than 25 songs at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Slavia, Florida. Slavia, in Seminole County near Oviedo, was established in 1911 by Lutheran settlers from Slovakia. The residents of Slavia were primarily farmers, turpentine workers, and lumberers. By the 1920s, farming was the primary occupation for men in Slavia, with celery being the main crop. Religion held the community together and the heart of Slavia was St Luke's Church.

[Song: *Ked komára zenili* by Young Performers, Slavia, Florida, September 1, 1939]

They recorded a group of young singers performing a song called *The Mosquito's Wedding* that was traditionally sung at marriage ceremonies.

A group of singers also sang a song called, *My Slovak Tongue*.

[Song: *My Slovak Tongue* by Young Performers, Slavia, Florida, 1939]

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, where the songs were recorded, still exists today and continues to play an important role in the community.

#### St. Augustine, September 25, 26, and 27, 1939

In September of 1939, Alton Morris and Robert Cook traveled to St Augustine and recorded 10 traditional songs from the Minorcan community. Minorca, located in the Mediterranean Sea, is one of Spain's Balearic Islands.

Minorcans first came to Florida in 1768 when Scotsman Dr. Andrew Turnbull brought them as indentured servants from Minorca to New Smyrna Beach, Florida to work on his indigo plantation. In 1777, many Minorcans marched from New Smyrna to St. Augustine to protest to the governor Patrick Tonyn about poor working conditions on Turnbull's indigo plantation. Governor Tonyn provided them with shelter, and most of them decided to stay in St Augustine.

On September 25th, Alton Morris recorded Stella Burke, of St. Augustine, Florida, singing *Fromajadas*, a Minorcan folk song. On Easter Eve, Minorcans strolled the streets of St Augustine while singing the song. Cheese pastries were served to the singers, often with wine.

[Song: *Fromajadas* by Stella Burke, St. Augustine, Florida, September 25th, 1939]

Minorcan foodways and cultural traditions still live on in St Augustine, including the fromajadas Easter Eve tradition.

#### Jacksonville October 4, 1939

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1939, Alton Morris and Carita Doggett Corse recorded ten Greek songs in Jacksonville. Floridian Carita Doggett Corse was a historian who served as the Florida director of the Federal Writers' Project.

In Jacksonville, Jennie and John Castrounis sang traditional Greek songs. Jennie Castrounis sang *Misirlou*, the same song that Mary Gianèskis sang in Tarpon Springs on August 25th.

[Song: *Misirlou* by Jennie Castrounis, Jacksonville, October 4, 1939]

Jennie Castrounis described it as "a Greek Arabian love song".

John Castrounis also sang a song about a Greek wine called Retsina.

[Song: *Retsina* by John Castrounis, Jacksonville, Florida, October 4, 1939]

Jenny Castrounis also sang a song with a Greek title which means, "I leave for a foreign land".

[*Sta-Xena-Traho* by Jennie Castrounis, Jacksonville, Florida, October 4, 1939]

In a letter to Carita Doggett Corse from September of 1939, Alton Morris gave a glowing report about his expedition collecting folk songs in Florida. He wrote, "It is my sincere wish that the work will continue for I am confident that folklorists, sociologists, historians, and students of Florida culture, in general, will be able to use this material to a splendid advantage."

## Conclusion

The Federal Writers' Project ended in 1943 along with the Works Progress Administration. America's entrance into World War II contributed to the end of the Federal Writers' Project, but another factor was the scrutiny it faced from the House Un-American Activities Committee. The HUAC accused the *America Guide Series* of containing communist propaganda. The HUAC saw the Federal Writers' Project as a threat because it, and the guidebooks, challenged the existing conservative vision of America. Whereas much emphasis tended to be placed on the Anglo Saxon experience of the past, the Federal Writers' Project invited minorities and immigrants to participate in the narrative of American history.

In the 1939 report of the HUAC, they concluded, without evidence, that "communist activities were carried on openly in the Federal Writers' Project" and the project was "a splendid vehicle for the dissemination of class hatreds."

That same year, Congress cut millions of dollars from the WPA budget. Six thousand workers were laid off from the federal arts programs, including the Federal Writers' Project.

Alton Morris used his experience working with the Federal Writers' Project to complete his dissertation on Florida folk songs at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In 1950, his dissertation was published as the book *Folksongs of Florida*. Nearly 70 years later, his book is the only collection of its kind on Florida folk songs. However, Morris's book noticeably lacks foreign language songs, so most of the songs mentioned in this podcast are not even included in his book.

Alton Morris spent most of his life as a professor in the English Department at the University of Florida, where he taught classes on English and folklore. In the early 1950s, Alton Morris worked with the Florida Women's Music Club to hold the first Florida Folk Festival. The Florida Folk Festival still takes place today and is the longest continuous running folk festival in the United States.

Alton Morris passed away in 1979. Alton Morris and the Federal Writers' Project helped to document aspects of Florida that might have otherwise been lost to time. Because of their efforts to preserve facets of American culture in Florida, today we can still hear the voices of everyday people who lived in Florida nearly 100 years ago.

Florida's first state folklorist, Dr. Peggy Bulger, served as the director of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress from 1999 to 2011.

[Peggy Bulger: "The Federal Writers' Project, was the first real attempt by the federal government to collect and document the culture of everyday people across the United States to figure out what everyday people, what the culture of America really was. Most of the time, history just records what the generals and the politicians and the billionaires are doing and doesn't really get into what everyday life was like and so the folk songs would have been the soundtrack of the 1930s for every day Americans...As far as the work of the Federal Writers' Project in Florida, still to this day it's a huge body of material that has informed even scholars today, historians, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, you name it. We are very fortunate because Florida was one of the few states that was able to get the loan of the Library of Congress recording machine to record the people that they were interviewing. All over the country, the

writers on the Federal Writers' Project were interviewing people and taking notes and those manuscripts are of course very valuable but to me they are not nearly as valuable as the recorded sound.”]

This podcast series celebrates the cultural history of Florida and hopes to convey a more inclusive perspective of the state's history. The Florida Cracker perspective represents but a square in the patchwork quilt. The series also provides a glimpse into the daily lives of working class Floridians during the Depression Era through the songs that they sang. The Depression Era was a time of strife, but during hard times music provided an antidote to the rigors of daily life.

#### Acknowledgments

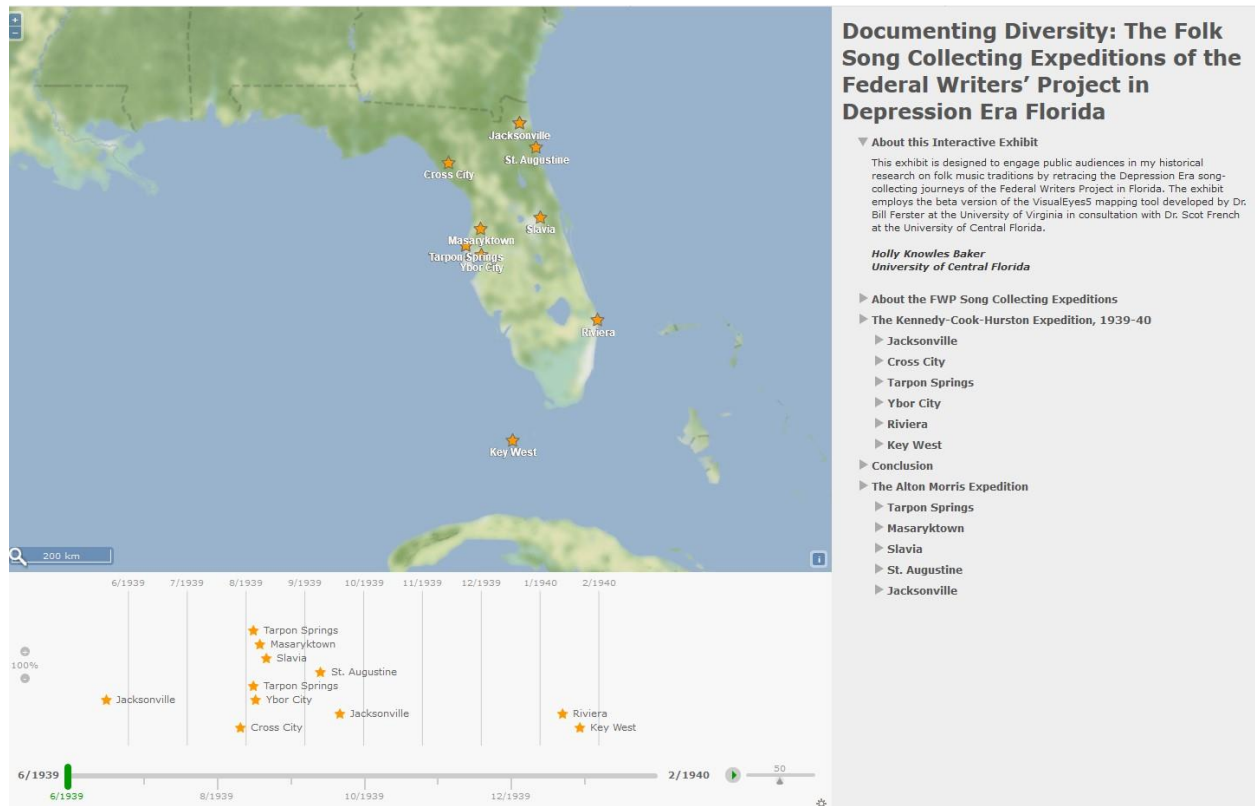
Thank you for listening to this podcast series. I would like to acknowledge the Library of Congress and Florida Memory's Florida Folklife Collection for the use of the audio recordings in their digital archives. Without those digitized audio records, this podcast series would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Tina Bucuvalas, Peggy Bulger, Madeleine Carr, Merri McKenzie Belland, David Taylor, John Swzed, and Blaine Waide for allowing me to interview them for this podcast series. Stay tuned for more episodes about the Federal Writers' Project in Florida. In future podcasts, I will discuss, among other things, John Lomax's recordings in Raiford Prison in 1936 and 1937, and Carita Doggett Corse's song collecting efforts at the Brighton Seminole Reservation in 1940.



## APPENDIX D: DIGITAL EXHIBIT

## Digital Exhibit: *Documenting Diversity: The Folk Song Collecting Expeditions of the Federal Writers' Project in Depression Era Florida* (In Progress)

<https://www.viseyes.org/visualeyes/?975>



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