

Transcript

Ben Brotemarkle

Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society, is made possible in part by the Department of State Division of Historical Resources and the State of Florida. It's also made possible by the Jessie Ball du Pont fund and by the historic Rossetter House Museum and Gardens in Eau Gallie, celebrating pioneer history, the natural environment, and women's history, available for weddings and events at rossetterhousemuseum.org.

(Music Break)

This is Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society, on the web at myfloridahistory.org. I'm Ben Brotemarkle and coming up on the program, the historic Duval High School, Jacksonville's public school, #1.

Tim Gilmore

They had a literary club. They had lots of arts activities. They put on lots of drama, including, you know, this was the norm for schools in Florida at the time, they put on vaudeville shows.

Ben Brotemarkle

We'll discuss food history as a way of understanding Florida's past.

Connie Lester

By 1935, the Keys were all but depleted of stone crabs, and Florida enacted its first limitations on the harvesting of the crustacean.

Ben Brotemarkle

And we'll talk about the new list of our state's most endangered historic sites, all that ahead on Florida Frontiers.

(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

In 1922, a group of student singers from Duval High School performed *Sally Won't You Come Back To Our Alley* on radio station WDAL. Duval High School, Jacksonville's Public School number one was established in 1877. Like many buildings in downtown Jacksonville, the school was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1901. Tim Gilmore is an author and writer for jaxpsychogeo.com. He explains that Duval High School was rebuilt in 1907 and expanded quickly.

Tim Gilmore

By 1920 and 22, the school built two additions, an addition on either side and just five years after that second edition, 1927 was Duval High School's last graduating class.

Ben Brotemarkle

During its twenty-year heyday, from 1907 to 1927, Duval High School had an active student body. In addition to having a variety of performing arts groups, Duval High School won the state football championship in 1913 and the state Basketball Championship in 1926. Tim Gilmore.

Tim Gilmore

That's really interesting to me looking at school yearbook quotes, they were very literary. You know, sometimes, you know, often grandiose. You know, you would probably refer to a lot of their selections as purple prose and, you know the young men sometimes referred to them, you know their quotes referred to them or compared them to Alexander the Great and so you can see kind of the gender norms of the time period too and what, you know, the conquest that was going to be expected of the young men. And then you know, with the young women, you know, that they should be fair as a rose in May and things like that. But they did have a literary club, they had lots of arts, activities, they put on lots of drama. Including, you know, this was the norm for schools in Florida at the time, they put on vaudeville shows. And so, you can look in some of the old yearbooks and see, you know, not only were they using songs from the biggest plays on Broadway at the time. But there's also, inevitably, minstrelsy involved then, students wearing blackface and you know things that really resonate with us now obviously but did not so much with white students at Duval High School and this Jim Crow time period.

Ben Brotemarkle

Students came to Duval High School from all over the city, but many walked to school from Springfield, an affluent neighborhood with Victorian style homes. By the mid-1920s, the demographics of downtown Jacksonville were changing.

Tim Gilmore

1931, this is just four years after Duval High School closes, but it gives context to the changing demographics in the city at the time, the comprehensive city plan of Jacksonville, referring to Springfield, said many former residents during the past four or five years have left Springfield to live in other areas where property is restricted, and that meant you know by race, and it said tenement dwellers have entered Springfield and the property, generally speaking is depreciating and when this state starts its rate of progress is rapid. So, what was happening in Springfield would happen more generally in historic center city neighborhoods in the decades to come, but kind of got an early start in some ways in Springfield.

Ben Brotemarkle

Tim Gilmore believes it's the demographic changes around Duval High School that led to its abrupt closure in 1927. Jacksonville already had what is now an historic African American high school. The Stanton School dates back to the 1860s, but its current red brick structure was built in 1917.

Tim Gilmore

Stanton School in Lavilla, and which is a little bit to the West and generally people think of Lavilla as part of downtown now, it was in its time first its own town and then its own community and district. And it was a dense, people think of it as a historically black district, which it was, but it was also really diverse. There was a Syrian population there, and a Chinese population there, and a Cuban population there. But Stanton High School was, you know, the segregated black high school and this, of course, is where James

Weldon Johnson was principal for a time period, and Stanton High School is standing empty right now and not in very good shape, and its board has recently asked the City Council for help. It's hard to see exactly what might happen with Stanton at this point, but it would be an enormous loss if Jacksonville couldn't do something with it.

Ben Brotemarkle

Following its closure in 1927, the Duval High School building was repurposed several times. It was, briefly, a junior high school in the 1940s and was then used as administrative offices for Duval County Public Schools until 1971. By 1980, the former school became the Stevens Duval Apartments for the elderly.

Tim Gilmore

In 1980, it reopens as senior residential space, and what's really fascinating about this is that some of the students who had actually attended Duval High School ended up living in the building, which was at this point converted to Stevens Duval Apartments. And you know, I guess if you had great high school memories that that could be a good thing. If not, it might sound like hell, you know.

Ben Brotemarkle

High school reunions for former Duval High School students were held at Stevens Duval Apartments. Martha Wells was the last living student from the last Duval High School graduating class of 1927. She went to the University of Florida and became a teacher and principal working for Duval County Public Schools for 40 years.

Tim Gilmore

The oldest former student of Duval High School just passed away a few years ago, and she was 102 years old, and she died in 2011. And you know, it's there's something kind of haunting about looking at the final yearbook, which I use a number of images from and the recent story that I wrote about this at jaxpsychogeo.com. There's something kind of haunting and looking at their senior quotes, and the drawings of a person who later became a prominent artist and was daughter of a prominent artist. You know? And then they had these odes to the school and saying that, you know, they referred to the school as a mother, and that, you know, they were for the rest of their lives, they'd be carrying forth the memory of, you know, the mother's school. And, you know, this was the last year, 1927 and so those memories, of course, pass on when people pass on. So, 2011, 102 years old, the last dual high school student passed away.

Ben Brotemarkle

The Duval High School building lives on thanks to architect Ted Pappas, who renovated the neoclassical structure after it was saved from demolition. Tim Gilmore.

Tim Gilmore

Ted Pappas, he's a beloved figure here in Jacksonville and elsewhere. He has done some really significant modern designs in the city, but he's also done some really important historic preservation work. His career has always kind of, you know, tackled both things, went back and forth between both things. He designed a very kind of midcentury modern, but also looking that to ancient Greece, structure

for the Greek Orthodox Church here in Jacksonville. And he's probably best known for a very brutalist piece of architecture, the Singleton Retirement Center, which was done, forget the exact year right now, but it was late, late 70s, right around 1980. But he also was responsible for renovating Duval High school, Old Saint Andrews Church, which was built in the 1800s and is now used by the Jacksonville Historical Society for its meetings and its programs, the Seminole Club near the center of the city, lots and lots of buildings. It kind of feels like you can throw a baseball downtown from one of the historic structures that Ted Pappas has saved in one way or another to the next. So, his career has been prolific, and he has both looked forward with, you know, interesting modern designs and constantly focused on saving the city's historic architecture as well.

Ben Brotemarkle

Tim Gilmore is an author of books on Jacksonville history and writer for jackspychogeo.com. He spoke with us about Duval High School, Jacksonville's public school, #1.

(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

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(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

Joining us now is Connie Lester, associate professor of history at the University of Central Florida, director of the RICHES Digital Archiving project and editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly. Connie, we all know that Floridians and visitors to Florida love to eat our local cuisine. Some historians use food as a lens for understanding the past, right?

Connie Lester

Absolutely. Although academic interest in the history of food is relatively recent, food history is part of every family and culture. Recipes are handed down from generation to generation, often with the admonition not to share it outside the family. Just try to get my grandmother's roll recipe. I will happily share the rolls, but not how to make them. The academic interest in food history takes many forms. The cultural history surrounding food, gender history and food, kitchen gardens and women's work, the transition from canning to purchasing canned and frozen foods, and the environmental history of food, just to name a few. Florida's food history is similar to that of other southern states, but also very different as its food production and multicultural influence from the Caribbean and Gulf have always shaped the foodways. Two articles that have appeared in the Quarterly in recent years demonstrate the ways which historians integrated the history of food with environmental history, tourism, rural food ways, women's history, and black history to understand the importance of food and communities and households.

Ben Brotemarkle

Now, much of Florida cuisine is seafood based. How is food related to environmental history?

Connie Lester

The first article we're talking about today *Eating the Claws of Eden: Stone Crabs, Tourism, and the Taste of Conservation in Florida and Beyond* by Nicholas Mink, appeared in spring 2008. At the time, Nicholas was a PhD student in Environmental History at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Nicholas received his PhD and entered an academic career, but today he is CEO of Sitka Salmon shares, which markets small boat, fishermen caught, salmon from Alaska. In February 2020, he appeared on the Larry Miller Show for Wisconsin Public Radio to talk about small boat fishing and a documentary film, *Last Man Fishing*. He is the executive producer of the film. His article for the Quarterly fits well with the public radio broadcast, although stone crabs have been part of the diet of Americans from North Carolina to Texas, they have become associated with South Florida and the constructed paradise of winter tourists. As Mink noted, they became part of the Edenic narrative, that created, promoted and transformed the physical landscape of Florida. He focuses his article on the iconic restaurant Joe's Stone Crabs, which was founded in 1913 by two Hungarian immigrants, Joseph and Jenny Weiss. Eating stone crabs at the restaurant became an essential part of the winter tourist experience before World War Two. A gastronomic masterpiece that had been procured in nearby Monroe County. Of course, as word spread the wonders of stone crabs, the harvest increased dramatically. By 1928, fishermen were harvesting more than 100,000 pounds of the crustacean annually. By 1935, the Keys were all but depleted of stone crabs and Florida enacted its first limitations on the harvesting of the crustacean. The post-World War Two tourists wanting the authentic Florida experience expected a stone crab meal also. Other restaurants joined Joe's in meeting that demand and the pressure on the harvest of stone crabs increased. Fishermen ranged further from Florida shores, and both state and federal agencies enacted stronger regulations on the harvest. The taste of stone crabs, which became identified with Miami, was not unique to either the city or south Florida. But the myth was stronger than the reality and useful in the creation of Paradise. It was, however, a myth, with environmental consequences that required state and federal regulation to assure the continuation of the authentic tourist experience.

Ben Brotemarkle

Now food and kitchens are an essential part of the life of a household. What does food tell us about household relations?

Connie Lester

In 2011, an article by Rebecca Sharpless titled "The Servants and Mrs. Rawlings: Martha Mickens, and African American Life at Cross Creek" is not primarily about food. Rather, as she explores the complicated relationship between Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and the women who managed her gardens, chickens, cows, hogs, and kitchen, she provides insight into the production, preparation, and serving of food at Cross Creek. Professor Sharpless is at Texas Christian University and is nationally known for her work in agricultural history and oral history. She was president of the Oral History Association in 2006. One of her books, "Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens," which was published in 2010, fits with this article. Rawlings and the two black women, Martha Mickens and Idella Parker, could not have been more different. Rawlings bridged the gap between isolated farm life and more sophisticated life with her

New York publishing friends. Mickens was a countrywoman who had the knowledge for living on the land. It was her work that enabled Rawlings to live the farm life. She raised the chickens, milked the cows, butchered the hogs, and planted and maintained the garden. She had the close environmental knowledge that permitted her to gather wild fruits and berries and prepare the meals that resulted from a day of hunting or fishing by Rawlings and her friends. She never met Rawlings expectations for setting a proper table or preparing delicate sauces. Idella Parker was college educated and had been employed as a cook for wealthy families in Boca Raton before coming to Rawlings' Kitchen, Parker had the knowledge and skills to prepare the sophisticated meals that Rawlings demanded when she entertained friends from New York. The preparation of meals and the table presentation both for daily life and entertaining were sources of frustration and conflict between the three women. In drawing our attention to the kitchen conflicts, Sharpless shows us that food is more than sustenance. Even in an isolated farm kitchen, the dynamics between the person who provides the food and the one who prepares and presents the food for consumption can be a struggle for power based on knowledge, race, and social class experiences.

Ben Brotemarkle

Well, Connie, now I'm going to have to go make myself something to eat. Thanks.

Connie Lester

You're welcome.

Ben Brotemarkle

Connie Lester is associate professor of history at the University of Central Florida, director of the RICHES Digital Archiving project and editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly.

(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

This is Florida Frontiers. Each year, the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation identifies the most endangered historic sites in our state. Holly Baker has more.

(Music Break)

Holly Baker

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation recently announced 2021's 11 to Save list of the Most Threatened Historic properties and resources across Florida. Christine Dalton is an urban planning consultant and a trustee of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. She told me more about the 11 to Save program.

Christine Dalton

Each year, the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation has an 11 to Save list, which highlights the 11 most endangered properties in the state of Florida. And we announced this list at our conference each year. So, we recently announced this on July 21st, this current list. The 11 properties on the list are selected by committee after reviewing applications that are submitted to us from the general public. So applications come from all different entities, nonprofits, individuals. There's a property that is historic

and if you're concerned about it, you can apply for the property to be listed on the 11 to Save. Once the property is listed on the 11 to Save, that begins the Florida Trust advocacy and education efforts and what we do is we just try to get as much information out there about the threat to the property, the history of the property, and we try to get involved and see if we can have any plans on helping to save the property. So that is kind of the idea there behind the list.

Holly Baker

Over the next 11 months, we will feature the individual properties and resources on the Florida Trust's 11 to Save list from 2021.

Christine Dalton

This year's list represents endangered historic resources, and Florida's Duval Homes, Jackson Lake, Marion, Martin, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach and Volusia counties covering hundreds of years of history and a variety of cultural resources. This year's list has really varied properties. We have abandoned African American cemeteries statewide, downtown Bonifay Historic District. We've got Great Oaks which are in Jackson County, beautiful, beautiful structure in Jackson County. We've got the House of refuge at Gilberts Bar and Stuart, Old Stanton High School in Jacksonville, Old Town commercial district in Lake Worth, Opa-Locka City Hall, that's in Miami-Dade County, Ormond Beach Riverside Church, also South Shore Community Center, which is in Miami-Dade County, and Reddick Presbyterian Church.

Holly Baker

The 11 to Save program empowers preservationists and preservation groups and communities across Florida to protect historic resources in the state. As Christine Dalton explains, it's the members of the public who nominate the historic properties and resources on the list. Regional ambassadors with the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation assist applicants with the nomination process. Christine Dalton is a regional ambassador for Region 4, the central region of Florida.

Christine Dalton

The Florida Trust has regional councils throughout the state of Florida, and each Regional Council has a regional ambassador that covers that area. So whatever counties are in that particular region, there is a go-to person, a board member of the Florida trust. That would be the contact one of the roles of the ambassador is to. Kind of communicate throughout the year with the applicants for the 11 to Save property and to make sure that we're being updated on what's happening with the property and able to get involved to help out in any way that might be possible and we do this by education advocacy, promotion through social media in our magazine, and we also have gone and attended meetings to advocate for these buildings. So, we've gone to Council meetings and community meetings. So, there's a lot that the regional ambassadors can do to assist with these efforts.

Holly Baker

To learn more about the Florida Trust and the 11 to Save list, go to floridatrust.org. On the website, you can also nominate endangered properties and resources by clicking on the Take Action tab at the top of the page. For Florida Frontiers, I'm Holly Baker, public history coordinator for the Florida Historical Society and archivist at the Library of Florida history and Cocoa.

(Music Break)

Ben Brotemarkle

You've been listening to Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society. Please join us right here again next week. Until then, you can find us any time online at myfloridahistory.org and join the conversation on Facebook. Production assistants for Florida Frontiers comes from Holly Baker and Connie Lester. The program is edited by Jon White. Have a great week. I'm Ben Brotemarkle.

(Music Break)

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