

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 Rossiter House Museum and Gardens in Eau Gallie celebrating pioneer. History, the natural environment and women's history available for weddings and events at rossiterhousemuseum.org.

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, a marble statue of educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune will be unveiled in the US Capitol building on Wednesday, July.

Johnetta Betch Cole

There was nothing happening in America that had to do with the advancement, the struggle for equality of black people when Mary McLeod, with them, was not there.

Ben Brotemarkle

We'll discuss enterprising rural women.

Connie Lester

Farm women saw an opportunity to sell chickens, eggs, butter, milk and cheese to town women and developed local consumer relationships.

Ben Brotemarkle

And talk about the Quincy Coca-Cola millionaires, all that ahead on Florida Frontiers.

That's a performance by the Bethune Cookman University Choral. Mary McLeod Bethune was an educator and activist who is now remembered with an 11-foot tall, 6000-pound statue carved by Nilda Comas. She used the last piece of statuary marble taken from the same Italian quarry used by Renaissance artist Michelangelo. The statue of Mary McLeod Bethune will be on permanent display in the United States Capitol Building in Washington, DC, representing the state of Florida. Mary McLeod Bethune was born to enslaved parents and was the first in her family to be born free. In 1904 she founded a school in Daytona Beach that would become Bethune Cookman University. She was an educator and adviser to U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and an active proponent of racial equality, Johnetta Betch Cole is president and board chair of the National Council of Negro Women.

Johnetta Betch Cole

Nothing happening in America that had to do with the advancement, the struggle for equality of black people, when Mary McLeod Bethune was not there.

Ben Brotemarkle

Mary McLeod was born in 1875 on a plantation near Maysville, South Carolina. Abel Bartley is professor of history at Clemson University and Sheila Fleming is president of the Black Rose Foundation.

Abel Bartley

Maysville is a small town. It is in one of the areas of the cotton belt of South Carolina, a very retrograde area.

Sheila Fleming

Her mother and her grandmother set the tone for her.

Johnetta Betch Cole

They inculcated in her the sense of pride of her parents, Sam and Patsy MacLeod. They were enslaved people. It is said that Mary McLeod, when she was nine, could pick 250 pounds of cotton in a day.

Abel Bartley

For her intellectual ability and gave her a scholarship to leave that area and move up to higher education.

Ben Brotemarkle

Mary McLeod's Scholarship enabled her to attend Scotia Seminary in North Carolina from 1888 to 1894. In 1895, she attended and graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. After teaching at schools in Savannah, Georgia, and Palatka, Florida, she went to Daytona, where she opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls in 1904. Trudie Kibbe Reed is former president of Bethune Cookman University, Paul Ortiz is professor of history at the University of Florida, and Elaine Smith is assistant professor of history at Alabama State University.

Trudie Kibbe Reed

With five little girls, \$1.50 that she raised from selling sweet potato pies and boiled eggs, she was able to create her first school.

Sheila Fleming

She cared most deeply about children, especially black children, during a period at the turn of the century when black people were still just getting used to their freedom and needing so many things. Of course, the black community was there, ready for their children to be educated.

Paul Ortiz

Bethune teaches a very different kind of education. It's not about assimilation to the dominant society. It's about transforming that the sign and for the first time ever, making it into a democratic polity where all people are respected.

Abel Bartley

When you talk about Mary McLeod Bethune and the way she was able to navigate the racial waters of the South, you're looking at someone who really understood the mind of a Southerner. They're willing to open up part of the pie for African Americans as long as African Americans don't ask for too large of a slice.

Elaine Smith

Bethune was able to grow a school in a hostile environment because she had influential whites, both men and women, supporting her.

Sheila Flemming

James Gamble of Procter and Gamble, she asked him to be on the board of Trustees and he said a Board of trustees of what? And she says it's a dream. Starting in 1904, he was the chair of her board of trustees, he brought other people in, so she was able to develop relationships with people across boundaries.

Ben Brotemarkle

Jeanette Ford is director of the Bethune Oral History Project at Bethune Cookman University.

Jeanette Ford

It was the only place in Daytona Beach where interracial groups could meet freely, was on the campus of Bethune Cookman University. Mary McLeod Bethune did that.

Paul Ortiz

She would tell her board of Trustees very clearly again when they came to campus. Look, you have to sit with the Negro citizenry here.

Harvard Sitkoff

And John D Rockefeller might be sitting right next to his gardener.

Elaine Smith

This was eye opening. It said that black people were just as good as white people just having desegregated seating, which was against the law of Florida.

Ben Brotemarkle

When women acquired the right to vote in 1920, Bethune increased her efforts to enfranchise blacks. Those efforts were met with resistance from the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan was a formidable organization in the 1920s, and for a brief time controlled both Daytona's and Volusia counties government. Johnetta Betch Cole, Elaine Smith, and Nancy Long, author of *Mary McLeod Bethune, Her Life and Legacy*.

Johnetta Betch Cole

She believed in the right to vote and risked her own life to get black people to vote.

Elaine Smith

Becoming politically aware, participating in the mainstream of American life was a major priority.

Johnetta Betch Cole

The Ku Klux Klan had come to her campus, and they had made it clear that what she was doing in encouraging African American people to vote had to stop. They would have no more of it. She gathered the teachers near nightfall, and she said tonight is a good night for the choir to practice.

Nancy Long

And then Mrs. Bethune ordered the staff to flood the campus with light. And this just seemed to upset the KKK because all of a sudden, they're the ones being watched. And so, they're in full light now, and they're not as scary and they just all turned around and left.

Johnetta Betch Cole

She believed in a God who she said would protect her, including putting her own life in danger in the interest of her people.

Ben Brotemarkle

Through the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, Bethune became increasingly prominent among this country's top black leaders. She joined, founded, and led numerous civil rights and black advocacy organizations, always seizing opportunities to combat racism and promote democracy. Paul Ortiz, Harvard Sitkoff, professor emeritus of history from the University of New Hampshire, and Elaine Smith.

Paul Ortiz

Remember the motto of the National Association of Colored Women lifting as we. She's literally lifting people out of situations of impoverishment in 20th century slavery.

Harvard Sitkoff

She was involved with many different organizations. The National Negro Congress, the NAACP. She worked with leaders of the Urban League.

Elaine Smith

That's what she did that nobody else did can claim to do because black women did not have this ability in the National Affairs of the United States, until Mayor McLeod Bethune came along.

Paul Ortiz

She demanded that white people respect black womanhood.

Ben Brotemarkle

Bethune helped African Americans secure more citizenship rights and greater economic security with FDR's New Deal programs of the 1930s. By the end of the decade, she was the highest ranking African

American in federal government and Black America's most effective advocate for racial justice. Abel Bartley, Johnetta Betch Cole, and Jarvis Givens, assistant professor of history at Harvard University.

Abel Bartley

Eleanor Roosevelt was very impressed with Mary McLeod Bethune. Mary McLeod Bethune was able to have intimate conversations with Eleanor Roosevelt. She was able to articulate what African Americans needed. They wanted to push the envelope on what women's rights were and social justice.

Johnetta Betch Cole

When Doctor Bethune wanted to speak with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, she would just pick up the phone and say, Eleanor, I understand the President wishes to speak with me, and Eleanor Roosevelt would find her husband and say, Franklin, I think you wish to speak with Mary. That relationship between those two women, a friendship between a black and a white woman opened the doors that allowed Mary MacLeod Bethune to know President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Jarvis Givens

There are very few people that I can think of that had anywhere near the level of influence that Mary McLeod Bethune had as an advisor to multiple U.S. presidents. My understanding is the only woman of color to be at the founding of the United Nations.

Ben Brotemarkle

On May 18th, 1955, Mary McLeod Bethune died of a heart attack in her home on the campus of what is now Bethune Cookman University. The new marble statue of Mary McLeod Bethune will join the statues of four other prominent African Americans in the U.S. Capitol building: Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King. Bethune's statue will be the first in Statuary Hall to honor an African American who has been chosen by his state. Each state selects 2 statues to represent them in statuary hall. The other statue, representing Florida, is of inventor and scientist John Gorey, who made early advances in air conditioning and refrigeration. His statue was placed in the U.S. capital in 1914. Nancy Lohman is president of the Doctor Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary Fund, and Sheila Fleming is president of the Black Rose Foundation for Children.

Nancy Lohman

Nilda Comas will be the first Hispanic master sculptor represented in Statuary Hall. That in itself I think, is beautiful symbolism.

Sheila Flemming

I see her there as a reminder, especially during these political times, that we are all in the same boat. We are all human beings. There is a oneness that God intends for us to have, and here it is. I'm reminding you of that.

Ben Brotemarkle

Before heading to Washington, D.C., the statue of Mary McLeod Bethune was displayed in the Daytona Beach News Journal Center, where nearly 15,000 people came to see it between mid-October and mid-

December 2021. To see the statue now, go to myfloridahistory.org and find Episode 48 of Florida Frontiers Television, Mary McLeod Bethune goes to Washington. Production assistants for that program, and this one was provided by Better World Films.

This is Florida Frontiers, the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society. I'm Ben Brotemarkle, the Florida Historical Society press summer book sale is back at myfloridahistory.org with 50% off all titles, including our latest book *Box Broken Open: The Architecture of Ted Pappas* by Tim Gilmore with Mark Pappas. Find out more at myfloridahistory.org.

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's rural women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were more active in their societies than people might think.

Connie Lester

Most people imagine a nostalgic past in which rural women were silent, submissive and engaged in domestic work with few opportunities or inclinations to interact with the larger world. History paints a more complex picture of female participation in farm organizations, rural churches. Literary clubs and social activism. As William Cronin demonstrated in his study of late 19th century Chicago and the Great West, Town and country were more interdependent than originally supposed. Articles in the Florida Historical Quarterly confirmed that women engaged in a variety of activities across the supposed town and country boundaries. By the 1920s, younger women were driving cars, graduating from high school and taking jobs in town, if not quite as progressive as their city sisters. They were on the road to modernity, an important and often overlooked vehicle for modernization was the home extension service, the gendered counterpart of the cooperative Farm Extension Service, which was created in 1914 through the Federal Smith Lever Act. The Extension Service represented a cooperative partnership between the USDA, State Land grant colleges and county governments that placed college, educated, farm and home agents in every agricultural county in the United States. These agents were tasked with bringing scientific agriculture and progressive home management to American farms. While farmers learned the benefits of contour plowing, hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and mechanical planting and harvesting, their wives and daughters received instruction on sanitation and nutrition, food preservation and home management. Rural children joined 4H Clubs organized by extension agents, where they also received hands on training in modern agriculture and domestic plants. Boys raised calves and pigs and girls joined tomato and canning clubs. They competed for prizes at county fairs and learned public speaking and civics. Rule reformers believe that four age boys and girls would reinforce the information their parents received from extension agents and would use their lessons and experiences as foundations for their own futures as modern farmers and farm wives.

Ben Brotemarkle

Connie, these farm wives were hard workers in their own right and also provided additional workers for family farms, right?

Connie Lester

Yes, the work of farm women was an intricate web of production and reproduction. The prosperity of family farms was directly related to the number of children who could provide necessary labor for planting and harvesting and the care of farm animals. Until farms were more fully mechanized, large families were the norm. Pregnancies were spaced 2 to three years apart, and older children assisted with the care of younger siblings. Women were also responsible for the production of chickens and eggs, butter and cheese, kitchen gardens, and the cooking and preservation of meats, fruits and vegetables. They sewed and washed the clothes the family wore and nursed family members through sicknesses and injuries. As rural towns grew in size and began adopting the urban reforms of larger cities, they abandoned the raising of chickens and pigs and cows within the city limits. And with these progressive reforms farm women saw an opportunity to sell chickens, eggs, butter, milk and cheese to town women and developed local consumer relationships for their farm crops. By the 1890s, as the profits from women's production increased, the USDA and rural reformers were encouraging farmers to allow their wives to manage their own earnings, an idea that initially met some resistance with the arrival of home extension agents. Farm women's production expanded and became more standardized to meet the expectations of a more discerning consumer mark. Curb markets met the local demands for farm products, but many farm communities organized production for distant markets in larger cities, creating agricultural cooperatives, negotiating with railroads for transportation and creating name brands. Seed companies took notice and marketed their chicken feed to women. Packaging it in brightly colored and patterned cotton fabric that could be washed and used to make aprons and children's clothing.

Ben Brotemarkle

And Florida farm wives had a unique opportunity to participate in the growing tourism industry.

Connie Lester

Indeed, they did. In a Florida historical quarterly article, Catherine L Beasley argues that Florida's environmental diversity and its natural agricultural and horticultural resources created economic opportunities that enabled women to tie their production to the emerging state tourism to create a mutually beneficial experience of marketing Florida, drawing on the Extension Service publications in the annual narrative reports required of each county agent. Beasley documents the development of new products, the expansion of markets and the profits farm women realized county and state fairs and farm institutes provided opportunities for women to demonstrate their innovations in the creation of preserves, ice cream flavors and refreshing fruit drinks that reflected Florida's perceived idyllic paradise. Although Florida women marketed more traditional products that could be found throughout the South. It was this production of uniquely Florida agriculture that Beasley Forefronts citrus fruits, guavas, avocados, and other tropical fruits were transformed into products that could be packaged for sale to the tin can tourists and winter visitors. Presumably, these tasty reminders of their trip to Florida could be transported home to all their neighbors. In addition to devoting time and physical space to the production of these delicacies, farm women created labels to identify their products, develop packaging to attract buyers and opened markets unique to Florida. Beasley cites several examples of women who built small sheds or outbuildings specifically for producing and packaging their preserves, jams and crystallized fruit. They also recognize the value of the sale of gift packaging that artfully arranged their products in handmade baskets. Finally, in addition to curb markets, they sold their products to hotels to be placed in gift shops.

Ben Brotemarkle

Connie did these efforts to sell goods to tourists have a significant economic impact.

Connie Lester

It did. Beasley's research indicates that a number of women were deriving a modest income from their efforts as home agents in Florida and across the South recognize the importance of this new income, they created suggestions for its use from the perspective of agents, the income could be used was beneficially through the purchase of new technologies to make farm homes and the domestic work of women more efficient. Ice boxes and refrigerators headed their lists of potential purchases, followed by electric stoves and washing machines for those who had access to electric power. Women and their families had other ideas about the order of purchases radios headed their lists. Access to the larger world with its news and entertainment, as well as its farm and marketing information, made more sense than refrigerators and stoves. Women also set aside some of their butter and egg money in Florida's case, preserve and fruit money to educate their children mid-20th century stories from college educated men and women routinely credit their mother's small savings with providing the essential funding for their college tuition.

Ben Brotemarkle

Thanks, Connie.

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.

This is Florida Frontiers in the small town of Quincy. Investment in Coca-Cola in the early 20th century created a town of millionaires. Holly Baker has more.

Holly Baker

Quincy, FL, and Gadsden County, near Tallahassee, was once the richest town per capita in the United States, thanks to a shrewd businessman named Pat Monroe, who urged his fellow townspeople to invest in shares in the Coca-Cola Company. Those shares would save the town of Quincy from the worst effects of the Great Depression. Ben DiBiase is a historian with the cultural and Heritage Resources Management company PaleoWest he told me more about Pat Monroe and the Quincy Coca-Cola Millionaires.

Ben DiBase

Quincy, FL is a small town. It's the county seat of Gadsden County in Florida's northernmost region, the northern border. It was founded in 1828. It was a fairly small town, only a few thousand people from much of the 19th century was primarily known for its agricultural exports, particularly shade tobacco. But it really became famous. In the 20th century, for another reason, and that's really its connection to Coca-Cola, it's actually still a fairly small town, but that sort of famous connection to Coca-Cola and really the investment in Coca-Cola as an entity. So, it really put Quincy on the map in the 20th century.

Now Coca-Cola is of course we know it today as a sweet sugary drink invented in the 1880s in Atlanta, GA and initially there was a lot of public skepticism. It wasn't a terribly popular item, but due to some really, I think cunning marketing techniques and an initial sort of push to overcome some of those obstacles in terms of perception, the product really became fairly popular beginning in the southeastern part of the United States, and now it's become obviously in an international entity.

Holly Baker

Atlanta pharmacist John Pemberton first introduced the soft drink Coca-Cola in the 1880s. By 1909, Coca-Cola owned more than 300 bottling companies in the United States, including one in Quincy. Even though Quincy was primarily a farming community, the Coca-Cola bottling plant employed a lot of people in town. In the 1920s, Quincy native and trusted local banker Pat Monroe bought several shares of Coca-Cola stock and encouraged others to invest as well.

Ben DiBase

So, what he did was start sort of spreading the word and became this evangelist for the product of Coca-Cola in and around Florida and the surrounding area, but also investment in that corporation as a public entity. Now keep in mind this was a small town we're talking about a few thousand people, but in 1940, just prior to World War 2, Quincy had the highest concentration of individual wealth in the United States and that was all due to the investment of local people. These are farmers and folks like that rural Floridians who invested in Coca-Cola and instantly when that stock went up in the 1920s, 1930s, they became millionaires. So, this high concentration of wealth in this tiny little rural town of Florida just outside of Tallahassee, it's a really fascinating story. And Monroe is a big part of that. Monroe was famous for leveraging his position within the community. So, if he told you, it would benefit you to purchase this stock. You would generally do that so he had a lot of influence over those who came into the bank, something you probably couldn't get away with today, you know, talking privately with folks who were looking for loans and saying, yeah, go ahead and buy a little bit of this too. I insist that you do that sort of story, and you hear a lot of that that happened over the years.

Holly Baker

Nearly 70 people in Quincy became known as Coca-Cola Millionaires. They made fortunes from their shares, which they passed down through generations of their families. As Ben DiBase explains, it all started with the wise, often unsolicited investment tip from Pat Monroe.

Ben DiBase

So many stories of people who went into the bank looking for a loan and came out buying stock in Coca-Cola. In fact, there's a great story by Bob Woodward, who was a long time Florida State representative. His father, who was a farmer, went into the bank seeking a \$2000 loan and Monroe actually convinced him to borrow \$4000 if he agreed to put \$2000 into Coca-Cola stock. He did and you know the rest was history, as they say, Woodward's father became fairly wealthy from the Coca-Cola stock, made a lot of money, and this continued for a while. So, the status of Quincy as the area in the United States with the highest concentration of wealth that's essentially been gone now. There are other parts of the United States with much higher concentrations of wealth and Coca-Cola is not the same kind of powerful entity that it once was, but the good thing, though fortunately for those who didn't invest, was that they saw

in a very short amount of time, a tremendous return on investment with the Coca-Cola success. All of these millionaires were created, and it really put Quincy on the map for a kind of an interesting reason.

Holly Baker

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.

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. You can always find us online at myfloridahistory.org and on Facebook production assistance for Florida Frontiers comes from Connie Lester and Holly Baker. The program is edited by John White. Have a great week. I've 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 DuPont Fund and by the historic Rossiter House Museum and Gardens in Eau Gallie. Celebrating Pioneer history, the natural environment and women's history available for weddings and events at rossiterhousemuseum.org.