

THE FLORIDA

HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

PUBLISHED BY THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RECEIVED
UCF LIBRARY

JAN 11 2010

SERIALS



South Beach - Key West Fla.

VOLUME 88

FALL 2009

NUMBER 2

The Florida Historical Quarterly

Published by the Florida Historical Society

Connie L. Lester, *Editor*

Daniel S. Murphree, *Book Review Editor*

Sponsored by the University of Central Florida

Board of Editors

Robert Cassanello, University of Central Florida
Frederick R. Davis, Florida State University
Jack Davis, University of Florida
James M. Denham, Florida Southern College
Andrew Frank, Florida State University
Elna C. Green, San Jose State University
Lu Ann Jones, National Park Service
Raymond A. Mohl, University of Alabama, Birmingham
Gregory O'Brien, University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Paul Ortiz, University of Florida
John David Smith, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Melanie Shell-Weiss, Johns Hopkins University
Irvin D.S. Winsboro, Florida Gulf Coast University

The *Florida Historical Quarterly* (ISSN 0015-4113) is published by the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, in cooperation with the Department of History, University of Central Florida, Orlando. Printed by the Sheridan Press, Hanover, Penn. Periodical postage paid. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Florida Historical Society, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922.

Subscription accompanies membership in the Society. Annual membership is \$50; student membership (with proof of status) is \$30; family membership is \$75; library and institution membership is \$75; a contributing membership is \$200 and higher; and a corporate membership is \$500 and higher. Correspondence relating to membership and subscriptions, as well as orders for back copies of the *Quarterly*, should be addressed to Dr. Benjamin D. Brotemarkle, Executive Director, Florida Historical Society, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922; (321) 690-1971; email: (Ben.Brotemarkle@myfloridahistory.org.)

Correspondence concerning contributions, books for review, and all editorial matters should be addressed to Editor, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Dept. of History, CNH 551, Univ. of Central Florida, Orlando, FL 32816-1350; (407) 823-0261; fax: (407) 823-3184; email: (flhisqtr@mail.ucf.edu.) Manuscripts should be submitted in triplicate. Guidelines for preparing manuscripts are available at (<http://www.cas.ucf.edu/history/fhq_index.php>.) The *Quarterly* is a member of the Conference of Historical Journals. The Florida Historical Society and the editor of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* disclaim responsibility for statements whether of fact or opinion made by contributors.

THE

FLORIDA

Fall 2009

HISTORICAL QUARTERLY Vol. 88, No. 2

**Inventing the Conch Republic: The Creation
of Key West as an Escape from Modern America**
William C. Barnet 139

**The Florida Fight for Equality: The Equal
Rights Amendment, Senator Lori Wilson
and Mediated Catfights in the 1970s**
Kimberly Wilmot Voss 173

**A Re-assessment of Seminoles, Africans,
and Slavery on the Florida Frontier**
Kevin Kokomoor 209

**Florida Classroom: Tea Sets, Tractors and
T-1 Lines: the Survival of a Small Town Library:
The Hastings Branch Library, Hastings, Florida**
Nancy J. Levine, George V. Minton,
Sandie A. Stratton, Sharon Cleland,
and Belinda Delzell 237

Book Reviews 277

End Notes 298

RECEIVED
UCF LIBRARY

JAN 11 2010

SERIALS

Cover Illustration: Vacationers at South Beach, Key West, Florida
in the 1950s. Image courtesy of Florida State Library and Archives,
Tallahassee, Florida.

Copyright 2009 by the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Fla.

Book Reviews

- Patterson, *The Mosquito Crusades: A History of the American Anti-Mosquito Movement from the Reed Commission to the First Earth Day.*
by George Dehner 277
- Lockley, *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record.*
by Oscar de la Torre 280
- Schultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution.*
by Michael Donoghue 282
- Zelden, *Bush v. Gore: Exposing the Hidden Crisis in American Democracy.*
by Russell Moore 285
- Fraser, Jr., *Lowcountry Hurricanes: Three Centuries of Storms at Sea and Ashore.*
by Stephen O'Neill 287
- Richardson and Jones, *Education for Liberation: The American Missionary Association and African Americans, 1890 to the Present.*
by Lewie Reece 289
- Morton, *Tabloid Valley: Supermarket News and American Culture.*
by James L. Baughman 292
- Taylor, *The History of the North Carolina Communist Party.*
by Thomas F. Jorsch 294

Inventing the Conch Republic: The Creation of Key West as an Escape from Modern America

by William C. Barnett

Key West has been a popular tourist destination for over seventy years, and visitors are struck by its distinctive sense of place and by its sense of a lingering past. Various slogans call attention to its remote island location—100 miles south of mainland Florida, but only 90 miles north of Cuba—and emphasize its geographic and cultural separation from modern America. Tourism boosters call it “America’s Southernmost City,” “Margaritaville,” “The Last Resort,” and “the Conch Republic,” and each label promises a place apart from the rest of the nation. The constant use of the words “escape” and “getaway” in tourism ads shows that many travelers seek a temporary retreat from modern society, and Key West’s name now carries this meaning. The island offers the idea of a getaway in time as well as space, as its quaint, nostalgic built environment provides a sense of traveling back into the past. But the romantic images presented to tourists hide dramatic changes in Key West’s environmental orientation and give a false sense of a community frozen in time. When the seaport was converted into a vacation destination in the 1930s, the

William C. Barnett is an Assistant Professor of History and the Coordinator of the Environmental Studies program at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. He received his B.A. from Yale University, his M.A. from the University of Texas at Austin, and his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His dissertation was a comparative environmental history of three American seaports: Key West, Florida; Galveston, Texas; and Ketchikan, Alaska. He is working on a book manuscript, to be titled *From Gateway to Getaway*, based on this research.

economy shifted from commerce and production to tourism and consumption. Key West was reinvented as a getaway, which required a reshaping of the town's popular history.

Key West is one of many communities where the past feels vividly present because layers of history remain visible in the built environment. The town's distinctive architecture and layout play a major role in its appeal to tourists, but few newcomers are aware of the combination of economic downturns and historic preservation efforts that created this urban landscape. Visitors do not often learn many details about the city's complex social and economic history, but they find the colorful waterfront, the maritime atmosphere, and the old homes with porches and shutters to be nostalgic and attractive. Tourists enjoy the picturesque seaport because it feels so different from the modern urban and suburban landscapes they left behind. The scale of the town is small, with Duval Street stretching just a mile from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic. Cars do not seem to belong in the maze of narrow one-way streets, nineteenth-century wooden houses, and tropical gardens, and the town still feels oriented to the harbor. Tourists experience Key West as a walking city, finding that its lanes and alleys, laid out long before the rise of America's car culture and little changed since then, are best navigated on foot or by bicycle. The built environment seems to be remarkably intact, particularly in Old Town, which gives many newcomers the feeling of arriving in a nineteenth-century seaport frozen in time.¹

Visitors are told stories that support this sense that Key West's past remains alive, and many travelers arrive carrying romantic ideas. Tourism has driven the economy for over seven decades, and John J. Audubon, Harry Truman, and Jimmy Buffett are all used to represent the island to outsiders, but the patron saint of Key West tourism is Ernest Hemingway. All four men were sporadic visitors, not permanent residents, but tourists are encour-

1. The best travel guide to Key West is Joy Williams, *The Florida Keys, From Key Largo to Key West* (New York: Random House, 1987). See also Sharon Wells, *The Walking & Biking Guide to Historic Key West* (Key West: Island City Heritage Press, 2000). On local architectural history, see Erick Valle, *American Urban Typologies: Key West, Florida* (Miami: Village Publishers, 1995); William Carl Shiver, "The Historical Architecture of Key West: The Triumph of the Vernacular in a Nineteenth Century Florida Town," (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1987); Susanne Hupp and Laura Stewart, *Historic Home of Florida* (Sarasota: Pineapple Press, 1995).

