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Florida Collection

Introduction

Welcome to the premiere issue of the Jacksonville Public Library Florida Collection's electronic newsletter! Every other month we will bring you behind the ropes of the Collection and give you an insider's view of the great material that we are fortunate to own.

In this first issue you we are happy to bring you our first ideas for recurring features. Librarian Andy Barmer profiles an author that many of us have come to rely on, but know little about: T. Frederick Davis, prominent chronicler of Jacksonville history. Library Associate Catherine Currier begins an examination of our Map Collections, starting with an introduction to the Ansbacher Map Collection and one of the more notable pieces of that collection. Finally, Library Associate Gavin Lambert offers a glimpse at a work currently in process with our Digitization project.

We hope you enjoy this first issue and those to come. If you have any colleagues, family or friends that may be interested in receiving this newsletter, please forward it on to them or ask them to sign up at our web page. And of course, we welcome any feedback from you - praise or criticism. We want to provide the best possible trip into history for you and are always looking for ways to improve our production here.

Raymond W. Neal, Senior Librarian
Jacksonville Public Library Florida Collection

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Thomas Frederick Davis: A Profile

When one thinks about the history of Jacksonville, one important source comes to mind: the "bible" of Jacksonville history called *The History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity, 1513 to 1924* by T. Frederick Davis. Who was this author of our city's history and heritage? Davis wore many hats throughout his life and career. Our city's storyteller was an official of the U. S. Weather Bureau, businessman, historian, and treasurer of the Florida Historical Society . The following is a brief sketch of his life.

Thomas Frederick Davis was born in Chatham, Virginia on April 24, 1877. His parents were Judge Horatio Davis of Wilmington, N.C. and the former Parks Carter Miller of Belle Vue Plantation, Virginia. Judge Davis moved his family first to Cedar Key, Florida in 1886 and later settled in Gainesville, where he was mayor in 1908 - 1909. Thomas grew up in Gainesville and completed his education at the East Florida Seminary, which is now the University of Florida.

In 1899 T. Frederick Davis went to work for the U.S. Weather Bureau as a meteorologist. His first assignment was Galveston, Texas and then he went to Jacksonville and worked from 1899 to 1901. In 1901, he was sent to Curacao in the Dutch West Indies, as chief meteorologist. During his stay in Curacao, he contracted yellow fever, which caused him to have to resign his post in 1902. Upon his return to the U.S., he wrote articles about his experiences on the island, which were reported in the Gainesville Daily Sun and in the Gainesville News. The newspaper articles sparked an interest in research and writing for Davis, and he wrote later that was it during this particular time that "I became an author."

Davis went to work in Washington, D.C.'s Weather Bureau in 1902. During his assignment in Washington, Davis wrote a history of Curacao, which was his first published work. In 1905, he moved back to Jacksonville, where he continued researching and writing about Jacksonville's climate. The result of his research was a 15-page monograph entitled "The Climatology of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity," which contained weather data from early Spanish records to 1907.

On March 1, 1905 Davis married Annie Clarkson. He had met her before his assignment to Curacao. Annie was a native of Jacksonville; she was the daughter of Walter Bernard and Leah Ann (Hartridge) Clarkson. In 1911, he came out with his first book *The History of Early Jacksonville*, a history of the city from the earliest times to after the Civil War. The Jacksonville Board of Trade published it, printing one thousand copies. Davis made no monetary compensation for his literary efforts, because he signed away to the Board all income from the sale of the book. Years later Davis revised, made additions, and republished his earlier history, calling the work *The History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity, 1513 to 1924*. The book was published in 1925 by the Florida Historical Society.

Prior to the publication of his history, in 1914, Davis retired from the U.S. Weather Bureau to enter the insurance business, establishing his own company. During World War I, he was a member of the Duval County militia, and he was also very active in civilian war work.

After the publication of *History of Jacksonville*, Davis entered into the arena of Florida history and published numerous articles, several of which were published by the Florida Historical Society, and also several monographs. His most important works, to name just a few, pertain to early Florida history, some of which are the following: "MacGregor's Invasion of 1817 - Florida Historical Society (FHQ), Vol. 7, (July 1928); "Juan Ponce De Leon's Voyages to Florida - (FHQ), Vol. 14, (July 1935); and, most importantly, his work entitled "A Digest of Florida Material in *Niles Register, 1811-1849*" - (1939). This digest is great tool for Florida researchers and historians, it being an index to articles about Florida published in the seventy-six volumes of the register. Starting in 1943, he wrote a series of articles based on "early contemporaneous sources" called "Pioneer Florida."

Davis was a member of several local and national historical and patriotic societies. He was treasurer of the Florida Historical Society from 1929 to 1935. In recognition of his long service to the society, he was made an honorary member.

Thomas Frederick Davis continued writing and researching almost up to the day of his death. He died on October 17, 1946 and is buried in Evergreen Cemetery. Davis left behind a rich historical legacy. He was a historian who simply sought the historical past, recording it in a simple readable style, not embellishing the story with his conclusions but the accurate truth as much as possible, in order to tell the events which shaped our city's historical record. According to Davis' obituary in the *Florida Times-Union*, his *History of Jacksonville and Vicinity* is "an invaluable and irreplaceable record of the history of the city," earning Davis the title of "chronicler of Jacksonville's story."

Maps, maps and more maps.

If you have not visited your Main Library, you must pay us a visit in 2009! Certainly one of the premiere highlights of this facility is our Special Collections Department and the Morris Ansbacher Map Room. Literally the centerpiece of the North wing of the 4th floor of the building, the Map Room houses a world class display of antiquarian maps that date back to 1522. While the Florida Collection division within Special Collections has long been a prime resource for historical maps, as we own some 900 original and reproduced images covering subjects mostly related to Florida and its environs, we now are truly a MAP LOVER'S DESTINATION!

Jacksonville owes a tremendous thank you to The Lewis and Sybil Ansbacher Family Foundation as well as Sybil Ansbacher, the wife of the late Mr. Ansbacher and his brother Jordan Ansbacher for their bequest of the personal collection lovingly amassed by Lewis. On permanent exhibit and attractively arranged in the Morris Ansbacher Map Room, named for the late father of Lewis and Jordan who inspired their love for learning, you will see 168 of the over 200 total maps from the Ansbacher Collection. These maps cover all 14 walls of the Map Room with an average of 12 maps per wall. Additional items from the Ansbacher Collection are available for viewing in the adjacent Gallery and wall space within the Florida Collection just off the Map Room. To whet your appetite and give you an idea of the layout of these spaces, a virtual tour is available found on the following link about our Map Collections from the [Jacksonville Public Library website](#).

In this our first edition of the Florida Collection newsletter and over the course of successive issues, we aim to feature one or more of the maps we have on hand for your exploration, your education and hopefully your enjoyment. Featured prominently on the North-Wall 3 is the map fully titled *Le Colonie Unite dell'America Settentrionle. Di Nuova Projezione Ass.Ee.Li Signori Riformatori dello Studio Padova*, published in Venice, Italy by cartographer Antonio Zatta in 1778. This the largest map in the Ansbacher Collection, measuring 64.5 inches square as framed, it is really a composite of twelve plates put together in four horizontal bands of three originally from a leather bound volume. The subject matter of the plates, the United Colonies of North America, includes portions of the Southeast of North America including North East Florida, the Eastern most part of the Panhandle and areas North to the Great Lakes, Canada (France) and beyond.

Despite distortions, it includes much detail that is surprisingly accurate. There are also inset maps of Bermuda (Bermude) on what is the title page from the bound volume, Jamaica (Giammaica) just above that and in the upper left hand corner an inset showing additional detail of Central Florida to the Keys. For a closer examination of this map's features, you may visit the [David Rumsey Map Collection](#).

Digitization Corner: Civil War Diary

"Clear + cool this morning but still very pleasant. Rode down to the saw mill this morning...The Cosmopolitan arrived, just as I was coming back + glorious news! Ol' Abe is again president! All the states gave him their votes except Kentucky+ New Jersey."

-Lieutenant Cyrus W. Brown, Monday, November 14, 1864

That excerpt comes from the wartime diary of Lieutenant Cyrus W. Brown of the 3rd United States Colored Infantry regiment of the Union Army during the American Civil War, one of the prize possessions of the Florida Collection of the Jacksonville Public Library.

A diary of any kind is unique because of the intimate vantage point it offers its reader. But this one is particularly special because of its historical significance. As the excerpt above illustrates, this diary, beginning January 1 1864 and ending December 28 1864, was written during a crucial time in American history, and provides us with firsthand accounts of historical events as they unfold. Lt.

Brown's unit was stationed in Jacksonville, so this allows us a glimpse of what life was like here during the Union occupation.

It's important to preserve and improve access to this kind of primary resource, which is why the Florida Collection has entrusted the diary to the Digitization department of the library, where it has been carefully scanned, page by page, and then made into a PDF document so that digital images of the diary can be viewed without having to touch or disturb the actual document itself. Also, the contents of the diary are currently being transcribed in an effort to make them more readable.

Both the Florida Collection and the Digital Library are excited about this project, which is nearing completion and should be finished and online, ready for public access, by early March 2009. In the meantime, you can go to the [Florida Collection website](#) and view the many finished projects already available there.

Recent additions to the Florida Collection

Here are some of our more notable new acquisitions.

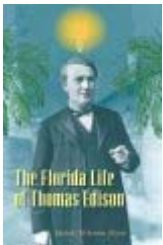
The Florida life of Thomas Edison - Albion, Michele Wehrwein

Publisher: University Press of Florida

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 09/04/2008

ISBN-13: 9780813032597

ISBN-10: 0813032598



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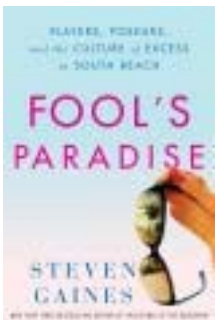
Fool's paradise : players, poseurs, and the culture of excess in South Beach - Gaines, Steven S.

Publisher: Crown Publishers

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 01/27/2009

ISBN-13: 9780307346278

ISBN-10: 0307346277



A surreal portrait of the culture of excess that marks Miami's South Beach evokes the colorful behavior of the rich, famous, beautiful, and self-indulgent in a glittering, tawdry, and reckless world of one of the world's great party cities. By the author of *Philistines at the Hedgerow*. 60,000 first printing.

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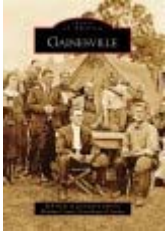
Gainesville - Hicks, Rob

Publisher: Arcadia Pub.

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 07/02/2008

ISBN-13: 9780738554020

ISBN-10: 0738554022



***If it takes all summer : Martin Luther King, the KKK, and states' rights in St. Augustine, 1964* - Warren, Dan R.**

Publisher: University of Alabama Press

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 03/01/2008

ISBN-13: 9780817315993

ISBN-10: 0817315993



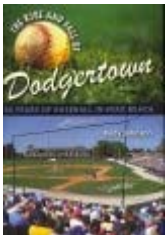
***The rise and fall of Dodgertown : 60 years of baseball in Vero Beach* - Johnson, Rody**

Publisher: University Press of Florida

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 03/02/2008

ISBN-13: 9780813031941

ISBN-10: 081303194X



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***Selling the Sunshine State : a celebration of Florida tourism advertising* - Hollis, Tim**

Publisher: University Press of Florida

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 11/02/2008

ISBN-13: 9780813032665

ISBN-10: 0813032660



***The Springs Of Florida* - Stamm, Doug**

Publisher: Pineapple Pr Inc

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 07/30/2008

ISBN-13: 9781561644223

ISBN-10: 1561644226



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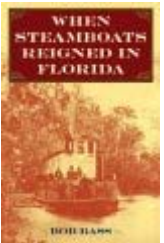
***When steamboats reign'd in Florida* - Bass, Bob**

Publisher: University Press of Florida

[Check Library Catalog](#) Pub Date: 09/14/2008

ISBN-13: 9780813032351

ISBN-10: 0813032350



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