

The



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society

Newsletter

Volume XXXIV, Number 3

Winter 2025

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President's Letter

Several years ago, Claire Koshar mentioned to me that we spend a lot of time talking about Rawlings, but less so about her work. Her idea was that we should start a book club. Fast forward to 2025 with Zoom meetings, and in October we had our first meeting. Many thanks to Casey Wooster and Ashley Lear for organizing and promoting, and to Professors Ashley Reese and Kenneth Kidd for leading the discussion. The book club was a big success and everyone enjoyed it. Where else but the Rawlings Society could you have a discussion with so many Florida literature scholars and enthusiasts?

Our reading assignments, all featuring children, were *The Secret River*, "*The Black Secret*," and "*A Mother in Mannville*."

For *The Secret River* the discussion points were: Which version did you read, the 1955 or the 2011 edition? How do the illustrations impact your interpretation of the story? In the story, do you think the "secret river" is magical yet temporary, or real and permanent? How does Calpurnia differ from other child characters in Rawlings' work? It was interesting hearing about the publishing history of the 1955 edition. The illustrations are ambiguous about Calpurnia's race so the book could be marketed separately to white and black audiences. The 2011 version's illustrators show black characters that their own children could identify with. Some of our participants preferred the earlier version due to the history involved while others preferred the 2011 with its magical looking illustrations.

The discussion points for *The Black Secret* were: what is the "black secret?" How does having a child protagonist influence the story's meaning? In what ways does this style of writing change how readers might interpret this story? Our moderator Ashley Reese opened the discussion by quoting from *Max and Marjorie*. Marjorie wrote that "it is not a pretty story and tormented me into being written." Max Perkins wrote back "it is very moving and beautifully told." We discussed how the child protagonist was used to talk about a difficult subject. We also talked about the power dynamics on different levels in the story, men and women, adults and children, and whites and blacks.

Kenneth Kidd led our discussion of "*A Mother in Mannville*." The discussion points were why do you think Jerry lied about his mother? What does Rawlings suggest about children or childhood? What are comparisons between Jerry and Jody (*The Yearling*)? Has anyone seen the film adaptation, *The Sun Comes Up* (1949)? We discussed Jerry's reasons for his actions and the masterful way Rawlings sprung the surprise ending on us, which looking back

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should not have been so surprising. Kenneth ended our discussion with a bonus look at Boy Books, Regional Literature and Rawlings, and Cracker Kid literature.

I encourage all our members to attend any future meetings, and we will let you know as they are scheduled. There is no quiz, and you won't be called on to speak unless you wish to. You will learn a lot and enjoy the reading and discussion. It's interesting to hear others' viewpoints.

Paul Dunn, President
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society

Marjorie in Winter Park

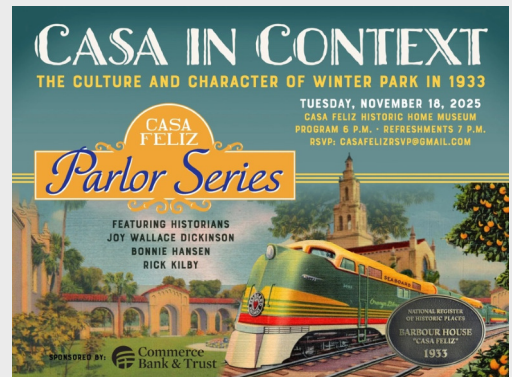
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society trustee, Joy Wallace Dickinson, presented about Rawlings' ties to Rollins College. This was part of the Casa Feliz Historic Home Museum's Parlor Series:

<https://casafeliz.us/parlor-series>

Joy Dickinson, along with two other historians, regaled an audience of 120 with stories of Marjorie's time in Winter Park during the early 1930s.



Joy Dickinson speaks of
Marjorie at Rollins College in
1938



Repping Marjorie at the Ravine

The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society was invited to set up a table at the Garden of Reading Literary Festival at the beautiful Ravine Gardens State Park in Palatka, Florida. On September 6, 2025, Ashley Lear, Executive Director; Casey Wooster, trustee; and Paul Dunn, President; enjoyed the day and successfully recruited new members.



Florida Legends Honored

On October 18, 2025 at the Tampa Bay History Center, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was fittingly honored in the inaugural class of Florida Humanities Hall of Fame inductees.

Dr. Nashid Madyun, executive director of Florida Humanities said, "The Florida Humanities Hall of Fame is more than a ceremony. It's a declaration that our state's cultural memory matters. By celebrating these legends, we ensure that Florida's story is told with depth, dignity and truth for generations to come."

The Class of 2025

Mary McLeod Bethune – Educator, civil rights activist

David Colburn – Educator, historian, author

Michael V. Gannon – Educator, historian, author

Zora Neale Hurston – Author, anthropologist, folklorist

James Weldon Johnson – Author, educator, civil rights leader

Gary Mormino, Educator, historian, author

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings – Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist

Gary Mormino was the only living inductee. Mormino, who gave the 2023 Plenary address at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society's Conference in St. Augustine, said, "When looking at the list of other inductees in the inaugural class, I am in awe of their achievements and in disbelief that my name is even mentioned in their company." Mormino joined the University of South Florida in 1977 and spent his career telling the story of Florida's distant and not-so-distant past.

"I have loved teaching Florida. The Sunshine State is seductive and infuriating. It is a dream state, but a state facing enormous challenges," Mormino said. "I hope this award will serve as a reminder that humanities have a place in Florida, making lives richer and more meaningful."

<https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/chronicles/2025/florida-humanities-designates-usf-professor-emeritus-first-ever-inductee-to-hall-of-fame.aspx>

New Coffee Table Book—for the Marjorie Collector Who has Everything Else



A beautiful, new Cross Creek coffee table book, published by the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, should be out in time for the holidays. You can purchase *Cross Creek: The Enchanted Land of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings* for \$35.00. Details here:

<https://marjoriekinnanrawlings.org/farm-news/13563360>

The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings State Park at Cross Creek hosts events on site year around. Check for upcoming gatherings, cooking demonstrations, and more here: <https://marjoriekinnanrawlings.org/events>



A New View of the Everglades in Film

Be on the lookout for a chance to see Sasha Wortzel's first full-length documentary "River of Grass," making the rounds of 2025 film festivals from Toronto to Kosovo to West Palm Beach and, of course, Miami. Marjory Stoneman Douglas herself is one of the film's stars, with powerful moments from never-before-seen footage of an interview filmed at her home in Coconut Grove when she was spry and full of attitude.

Other stand-out characters are activist Betty Osceola and Twin-Spirit Houston Cypress, both members of the Miccosukee Tribe still inhabiting the Everglades. On a haunting peace march to the very top of Lake Okeechobee Dam, the sight brought tears to my eyes, remembering a long-ago march of my own to get a glimpse of its mighty water. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings hunted deer and turkey in the Everglades with Dessie and rattlesnakes with Ross Allen, but I don't know if she ever saw Lake Okeechobee.

Unforgettable moments made the four-hour trek to the Subtropic Film Festival more than worthwhile. Another star of the film who happened to be present for the panel discussion afterwards was Kira Phillips of Belle Glade, who described the horrible health effects on the black community there as a result of the annual burning of the cane fields by U.S. Sugar, which had also been a great concern of Marjory Stoneman Douglas'. Kira told of efforts to silence her, but her voice is easily as strong as Marjory's, and she is just as determined.

Many parts of the film brought goosebumps, such as when the camera paused on the historic marker over the mass grave of more than 2,000 African Americans who died in the 1928 hurricane immortalized by Zora Neale Hurston in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, or the sight and sound of President Harry Truman making a dramatic speech in Everglades City at the dedication of Everglades National Park in December 1947, just a couple of months after Marjory Stoneman Douglas' book was finally published.

I kept thinking of how perfect it would be to have a screening of this film at a future Rawlings Society Conference, with Sasha herself on the panel. She grew up in Fort Myers but is now based in New York, a Guggenheim Fellow as well as a 2017 Resident Artist in the Everglades, where Marjory Stoneman Douglas came to her in a dream.

-Betty Jean Steinshouer

"Another View of Cross Creek? The Story of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' Doctor"

by Nina C. Stoyan-Rosenzweig,

Archivist for the Health Science Center Libraries at the University of Florida

If you haven't already, be sure to read this fascinating article about Dr. Turner Zeigler Carson. Not only was he Marjorie's Jacksonville physician, he was also the brother of her great legal nemesis, Zelma Cason. Dr. Cason played a vital role in bringing a College of Medicine to the University of Florida. He, too, like Marjorie and Zelma, is buried in the Antioch Cemetery.

<https://journals.flvc.org/source/article/view/140277/145308>



Finding Marjorie's Work in a British Museum

When trustee Christina Parrish Stone returned from her recent travels to the United Kingdom, she sent news of finding Marjorie Rawlings featured in one of their National Trust homes.

In September, Christina visited several historic sites during her trip to Yorkshire, including a stop by the magnificent Fountains Abbey.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/yorkshire/fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal-water-garden>

Christina wrote that the Jacobean manor house was restored in the 1920s-1930s (with Jacobean and Elizabethan architecture and decorative features), is beautifully preserved and presented as it was decorated when the family lived there in the 1930s - 1940s.

Christina said, "Imagine my surprise when I walked into the library of Fountains Hall and saw *The Yearling* displayed as an example of the most popular books of the time!"



The Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire, England



The Yearling among the Fountains Abbey's Artifacts

Marjorie as Her Muse

Janisse Ray, writer, naturalist and environmental activist, author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*: "I knew as a very young person that I wanted to be a writer. I knew that there was no other more honorable profession than for me trying to do for others what had been done for me through words. . . .

"Right now I'm [rereading] *The Yearling*, and it's so important for me to reread it because I see that as a young child when I read it, it must have been formed in my mind that I wanted to be a nature writer, because Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings is nothing if not a nature writer. She knows the names of specific ecosystems, specific species within those ecosystems, how they fit together. Her work is marvelous in looking at culture in a place."

— from YouTube Georgia Writers Hall of Fame Interview



Make Your Plans for DeLand—2026 Rawlings Conference

The 37th Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Conference will be held at the [Northwest Square](#), 238 N Clara Ave., DeLand, FL 32720. The conference will take place Friday and Saturday, April 17-18, 2026.

There is a hotel block at a discounted rate for April 16-19, 2026, at the Courtyard DeLand Historic Downtown. Book the group rate at this link by **Tuesday, March 17, 2026**.

<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1751303717822&key=GRP&app=resvlink>



Call for Auction Items

Start collecting interesting, unique and fun items to donate to our upcoming 2026 conference auction. Art, gift cards, tickets to events, services, and, of course, books, are just a few examples. Please hold onto your auction items until we collect them next spring. Make sure to include a note with the donor's name, description of the item and value. Any questions contact Angela Territo: angela@thebarnyarn.com



Marjorie
Kinnan
Rawlings
Society

37th Annual Conference
DeLand, Florida
April 17 - 18, 2026

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, an organization of 200+ members worldwide, invites paper proposals on topics related to Rawlings' life and works.

TOPICS RELATED TO RAWLINGS MAY INCLUDE:

- Rawlings' place in Modernist, American, and Southern Literature
- Her depictions of landscape, foodways, sex and gender roles, place, etc.
- *The Yearling* as a bildungsroman
- Ecocriticism and other themes found in her work
- Rawlings and Florida
- Her political attitudes and relationship with race
- Family, friends, publishers, and contemporaries of Rawlings
- Art and film, including adaptations, inspirations, etc.
- AND SO MUCH MORE . . .

Please send 1-2 page abstracts of 20 minute presentations to Dr. Ashley Lear, Executive Director of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, at ashley.lear@erau.edu.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: October 15, 2025

FIND US:  rawlingssociety.org   @mkr society  @rawlingssociety



Still At It!

It has been 42 years since the release of *Cross Creek*, the movie based on Marjorie Rawlings' second best-known book. But in recent weeks, two of the main actors have been audible and visible to television watchers on a regular basis.

Peter Coyote, who memorably played Norton Baskin in the movie, has since had a long gig narrating Ken Burns' series of historic documentaries – including *Hemingway* (2021) and the new six-part *The American Revolution*.

Mary Steenburgen, who played Marjorie in *Cross Creek* has just joined the second season of the popular Netflix series *A Man on the Inside*. She plays the love interest of her real-life husband, actor Ted Danson. When *Cross Creek* was filmed, Steenburgen was married to Malcolm McDowell, who portrayed Rawlings' legendary editor Maxwell Perkins in the movie. (McDowell and Steenburgen were married from 1980 to 1990.)

The *New York Times* recently reported that Steenburgen and Danson (who have been married since 1995) first met during auditions for the *Cross Creek* movie!

Danson auditioned to play Norton Baskin, but was not chosen. According to *The Times*, Steenburgen's first impression of her future husband was "I just thought that's the most ridiculous person I have ever met."

More than four decades after their memorable performances as Norton and Marjorie, Peter Coyote is now 84 years old and Mary Steenburgen is 72. (In real life, Marjorie was five years older than Norton.)

--David Nolan

Yesterday's News – May 3, 1919

Wedding Announcement for Miss Marjorie Kinnan and Charles Rawlings

Marjorie Kinnan and Charles Alfred Rawlings Jr marriage, Wisconsin State Journal Sat May 3 1919

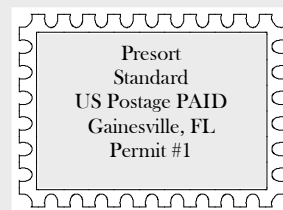
Announcement is made of the marriage of Miss Marjorie Kinnan, daughter of Mrs. Ida M. Kinnan, 625 Mendota court, to Charles A. Rawlings of New York city. The marriage took place in New York city today. Mrs. Kinnan left Madison last week to join her daughter in the east, and attend the wedding.

The bride is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin with the class of 1918, and since that time has been doing publicity work for the Y. W. C. A., in New York city. She is a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. Mr. Rawlings attended the university for several years and is a member of the Chi Psi fraternity. At present he is engaged in war bureau for reconstruction work with headquarters at New York.

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IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Please check your address label. The date that you see on the label is the date your dues are due.
If your membership is current, we thank you!

Membership and Conference Registration Prize

The Membership Year for the MKR Society is ***July through June*** corresponding with our programming, conference and publication cycle. ***Please take a good look at your mailing label to see if your renewal date has passed.*** If so, please consider renewing today using the membership form below or you can now renew on our website.

The person who signs up the most **new** members wins a FREE Registration for our next conference.

Here are some ideas to solicit members:

- Encourage friends and relatives to join;
 - Give a gift of a student membership (\$15) to children, grandchildren, or other students;
 - Speak to neighbors and those at your local library or historical society about joining.

Membership Application for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society

Name: _____	Student	\$15	Sponsor	\$100
	Individual	\$30	Patron	\$250
Address: _____	Family	\$40	Benefactor	\$500
	Sustaining	\$50	Life	\$1,000
City/State/Zip: _____	(Please circle membership level)			
E-mail address: _____	Mail to: Rawlings Society c/o Anne Pierce 249 Herman Drive Hawthorne, FL 32640			

To learn more about the Society and information on the annual conference, visit our website, **www.rawlingsociety.org**