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President's Letter

For five years, Darien Andreu has done a fantastic job organizing and editing our newsletter. Thank you, Darien, for countless hours and devotion to this endeavor. She has now handed the baton to Joy Dickinson. Joy has been a longtime writer for the *Orlando Sentinel*, my hometown newspaper. Her popular column was titled "Florida Flashback," and she has also written four books based in central Florida history. Her novel *Secrets of the Flamingo Café: An Old Florida Mystery* received the Florida Historical Society's 2025 Patrick D. Smith Award. We are fortunate to have her as our new newsletter editor.

Our 37th Annual Conference in DeLand in April was a big success. Thank you to the organizers, presenters, and attendees. Each of you contributed to the success and enjoyment of another year's gathering. We could not have done it without you.



Group gathering before the boat ride Saturday.

At the conference we had a lively discussion about Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's 1955 book, *The Secret River*, published two years after her death. Earlier this spring, Jennifer Campbell organized several of our members to meet on March 6 for Opera Orlando's latest performance of the opera version, which was staged outdoors in gorgeous weather at Winter Park's Mead Botanical Gardens. Stella Sung of the University of Central Florida composed the music, and the libretto is by Mark Campbell. The March performance was in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the 2021 premiere of the opera, in Orlando.

The singers in both the premiere and this latest performance were extremely talented and brought heartfelt emotion to the story. The same beautiful puppets were again used. The crowd was large and enthusiastic, and both the professional singers and the children in the cast gave excellent interpretations.

After the performance, the main performers presented a Q&A with the audience. Both mentioned that *The Secret River* offered a great opportunity for Black opera singers. Our society was proud to sponsor the singer playing the role of Marjorie Kinnan



MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Rawlings for the 2021 premiere and also to make a \$5,000 donation to sponsor the anniversary performance. We want as many people as possible to become aware of Rawlings's work.

A highlight of the evening for us was meeting the composer, Stella Sung, who was attending the performance with a dear friend of hers. When Rawlings Society member Angela Territo asked Sung how she came up with the idea of adapting the book into an opera, she explained that her friend was the one who had read *The Secret River* and suggested it might be an interesting source for an opera. Sung said she loved the idea, because it had everything she was looking for. We invited her to our next conference in Gainesville on May 7 and 8, 2027.

Thank you for being a member. As we begin a new membership year July 1, please check to see if you need to renew; your renewal date is on your address label. We are grateful to everyone who helps keep Rawlings's work alive for new generations of readers and audiences alike.

*Paul Dunn, President
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society*



Angela Territo (from left), Susan Glaser, composer Stella Sung, Jennifer Campbell, and Paul Dunn at the March 6 performance of the Orlando Opera's production of *The Secret River*.



During the Friday night program, Flo Turcotte (left) presents Ashley Reese with the Kevin McCarthy Award "for invaluable service to the Society."



Flo Turcotte's Marjorie-themed trivia questions stumped many folks, but not David Nolan, here accepting the prize from Flo.

On Friday night, Anne Pierce (left) and Ellen Giallonardo mull over one of Flo Turcotte's totally tough trivia questions.





The Creek Almanac

Coming Up

Saturday, August 8, 10 – 11:30 a.m., Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, Cross Creek:

Celebrate the 130th birthday anniversary of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, born August 8, 1896. For details see MarjorieKinnanRawlings.org; we'll have updates on our MKR Society social media pages.

Palm Harbor Library Celebrates Rawlings

In August, the Adult Services Department of the Palm Harbor Library in Pinellas County will offer events that explore Rawlings's life, friends, and community at Cross Creek.

Wednesday, August 5, 5 – 6:45 p.m.: Award-winning author Rick Kilby speaks on "Joy Postle: The Art of the Florida Wild," about a fascinating artist of Rawlings's generation who also captured Florida's natural beauty. Presented by the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society.

The library's book club will discuss Rawlings's novel *South Moon Under* on Monday, **August 10, 11 a.m. – noon**, followed by a cooking demonstration on Tuesday, **August 11**, featuring Ginger Pear Salad from the *Cross Creek Cookbook*, also at 11 a.m. – noon. On Wednesday and Thursday, **August 26– 27**, the library's "DIY @ PHL" series invites participants to create tin dioramas highlighting the diverse ecosystems of Old Florida. For details and to register for the cooking or DIY sessions, visit PalmHarborLibrary.org. Questions? Email Peter Cannon at Peter@phlib.org.

Looking Ahead

Next trustee meetings: Saturdays: **October 24**, Island Grove; **January 23**, Gainesville. **Thirty-Eighth Annual Conference**, May 7-8, 2027, Gainesville, at the University of Florida-affiliated Hilton Conference Center.

— ROCHESTER TIMES-UNION, TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE

Where "Songs Of a Housewife" Were Born



ONCE in a while somebody discovers something so obviously good that everybody else immediately says: Well, why in the world didn't I think of that? Because it is something that has been "just lying around" under everybody's nose, so to speak, for ages and ages. And when that happens, the person who thought of it first and

Rochester Girl Discovered That Something as Old as Pots and Pans Could Be Put Into Verse for Benefit of Other Housewives—Reaps Reward of Originality.

basket, full of chaff, dutifully started looking them over, and ing the best of it! When I first began housekeeping in my own home, I felt that I had entered the



A Century Ago This Summer

On June 8, 1926, the *Rochester Times-Union* debuted Marjorie Rawlings's "Songs of a Housewife," a daily newspaper column in verse that would run in the paper six days a week for the next two years. The feature introduced readers to the observations of a hard-working young writer who would turn 30 that August.

More than 70 years later, scholar Rodger L. Tarr collected 250 of the poems in *Poems by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings: Songs of a Housewife* (University Press of Florida, 1997). Stanford University Libraries describes the poems as presenting "homespun" advice in the voice of an emerging feminist. If you own a copy, count yourself fortunate; they're hard to come by.



Conference Highlights

The 37th Annual Conference of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society convened April 17-18, 2026, in historic DeLand. We salute the many members who made the weekend a success, with a special toast to conference chair Heather McPherson, master of hospitality, Old Florida style.

Here are a few highlights from the conference, followed by a photo gallery. Recordings of conference sessions are available on the Rawlings Society's YouTube channel, thanks to member Donna Green-Townsend.

Old Slewfoot Goes Online

"I'm the heavy hauntin' you feel 'neath the saw palmettos," reads the landing page of a website devoted to a famous literary character; "no hairless midget-man guided this quill."

Meet Slewfoot, the bear in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's novel *The Yearling*, speaking through a website by Rochee Bell that began as a class assignment from Prof. Ashley Lear at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University this spring.

A humanities professor and executive director of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, Lear charged her students with creating websites inspired by some aspect of *The Yearling*. Bell responded with "My Jagged Scratching," where Slewfoot can ruminate on life in the Florida scrub. In two other sites, Alan Pradhan and Yash Sanjaykumar Chaudhari made their own fictitious tour company for the Baxter and Hutto families, while Nandini Shukla and Parth Patel devised "Jody's Creek," a site where Jody Baxter invites visitors to "pull up a stump and set a spell."

Lear's conference presentation about the three websites inspired delight from attendees and kudos for the student creators. You can find them at these links:

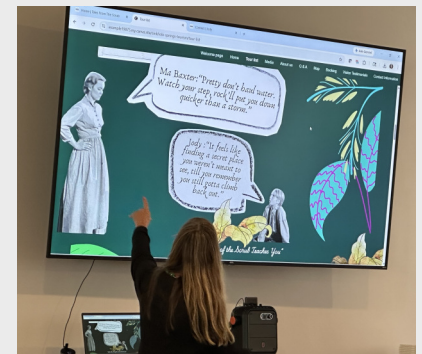
<https://bellrochee.wixsite.com/tales-from-the-scrub>

<https://example19875.my.canva.site/sinkhole-springs-tourism/>

<https://parthvpatel17.wixsite.com/jodybaxterscreek>



Ashley Lear introduces participants to Old Slewfoot's website.



Ashley Lear talks about the website her students made for Jody Baxter.

A Historic Setting



The Northwest Square Center and DeLand itself offered conference attendees a chance to experience history on the ground. The 1926 Gothic Revival building, celebrating its 100th birthday, began life as Trinity United Methodist Church before being transformed into a multiuse gathering place.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building was rescued from demolition and renovated by local owners in 2024. Original features, including stained-glass windows, brick walls, soaring ceilings, and repurposed wood from the sanctuary, help preserve its historic character while welcoming new uses.

Conference-goers enjoyed exploring the building's hidden corners, coffee nooks, small businesses, and gathering spaces throughout the weekend.



(Continued Conference highlights from page 4)

Finding Poetry in Rawlings

One of the conference's most memorable presentations came from poet and retired professor Antoinette Libro, who explored "found poetry" hidden within Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's prose.

Found poetry, Libro explained, takes existing text and reshapes it into poetry. Drawing on Rawlings's vivid descriptions of Florida landscapes, she identified passages that naturally lend themselves to Japanese forms such as haiku and tanka. Among the examples was a tanka fashioned from *South Moon Under*:

*a red-bird sings
from a wild plum tree
white with blossoms
then instantly flies away
too beautiful to endure*

Libro also uncovered several haiku-like passages in *Cross Creek*, demonstrating how Rawlings's keen observations of nature echo the simplicity and fleeting beauty celebrated in traditional Japanese poetry.

Literature and Music, Florida Style

A Friday evening highlight paired the music of Paul and Kay Garfinkle with the words of environmental historian Leslie K. Poole, longtime member and former executive director of the society.

The program, "A Celebration of Literature and Music," combined Poole's brief essays about Florida's natural treasures and environmental challenges with Paul Garfinkle's original folk songs. Among the songs were "The Creek," inspired by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's beloved Cross Creek, and "6,000 acres a Day," which spotlights the irreplaceable Florida wetlands and lands lost to ongoing development.



Kay and Paul Garfinkle

The performance reprised a popular program first presented at Tallahassee's Word of the South festival and reminded listeners how deeply Florida's landscapes continue to inspire both writers and musicians.

– "Conference Highlights" contributed by Ann Patton and Ashley Lear



Master storyteller and museum curator Zach Zacharias talks about Florida's Cracker culture at a DeLand conference session.



Beloved for conducting many thoughtful interviews over the years, David Nolan answers Teri Sopp's interview questions.



Ashley Reese and Casey Wooster show off the commemorative poster, featuring an illustration from *The Secret River*.



Cool Summer Comforts with Marjorie

Summer memories, homemade treats, and one unforgettable Jersey cow

Dear Reader:

We Floridians today mostly don't give a second thought to refrigeration. It isn't until hurricane season and the power goes out that Sunshine State shoppers wring their hands over all the extra ice cream steadily melting, bought during summer deals.

Any waste of ice cream feels like a lapse in character.

Have you ever noticed that when there is a storm brewing in the Gulf, your friends and neighbors seem to get it in their heads that calories and fat content from ice cream don't count – hey, it's all okay! It's all part of the storm prep along with batteries and plywood. Comfort food is on everybody's list of must-haves as we batten down the hatches.

Land of the Cool

We know about heat in Florida. It can't be a surprise our state is the birthplace of modern refrigeration and air conditioning. Beginning in the early 1800s, the Boston ice trade brought large blocks of ice cut from northern lakes by ship to ports along the East Coast. The wooden ice box for home use was invented in 1802. In the 1840s, Dr. John Gorrie of Apalachicola invented a rudimentary cooling system using northern ice for easing yellow fever patients under his care.

For thousands of years, Indigenous people had relied on Florida's many freshwater springs for gathering and preserving food. The Floridian aquifer system filters water naturally, maintaining a temperature of 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit. Early Floridians built their homes near these natural springs. My new favorite quote, from the Roman writer Juvenal is, "Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another."

We see this in wooden or stone spring houses that early settlers built over the natural springs, and in the cisterns they built next to their homes to collect rain water. Cracker architecture, Florida's wood-frame vernacular house design, protected us year round from the elements and environmental dangers. This type of design fell out of style once electricity and refrigeration were widespread, not unlike the hand-cranked ice cream freezer.

Homemade Memories

Recently, I remembered that device while talking with a friend about my family's summertime gatherings, which typically involved plenty of homemade ice cream. It was created on the spot by my dad and the uncles, who took turns spelling each other at the hand crank. Any child would be allowed to turn the crank for a few seconds only – no idling over the ultimate goal. This was nothing like cranking my younger brother's Jack-in-the box toy – this was work.

At these summer gatherings, a beloved aunt would arrive with her faithful plate of Ritz cracker sandwiches put together with a spread of peanut butter. Not a bad snack, but my 6- or 7-year-old self had to wonder why in the world couldn't she bring a plate of her delicious cookies to an ice cream party? Now I see that her goal was to offset all the sugar we were about to eat.

Our standard ice cream was vanilla – often with seasonal fruit like sliced peaches. We children also loved a drizzle of chocolate syrup on top. As A/C window units multiplied in the early 1960s and grocery stores stocked more ice cream flavors, those afternoons enjoying homemade ice cream in the shady backyard disappeared. Everyone expanded their lists of ice cream favorites. It may have been butter pecan, Neapolitan, raspberry, Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia, lime and orange sherbet, or Belgian dark chocolate – so many choices! Vanilla remained my father's choice until the end of his days.

(Continued on page 7)



(Continued from page 6)

Ice Cream at Cross Creek

After this conversation with my friend, I went on a search for frozen delights in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *Cross Creek Cookery*. It first appeared in 1942, but the edition now most readily available, and the one I quote from, was first published in 1996 by Simon & Schuster and reproduces the original, including Robert Camp's drawings.

To my delight, I learned that ice cream was a special comfort food for Marjorie, too, and for her guests (see pages 199-206). She included recipes to make with a hand-freezer as well as remarkable commentary, including a tribute to her Jersey cow Dora.

Rawlings may have quipped that Dora's disposition was "vile" and claimed that she and Dora disliked each other, but she also pointed out that Dora's cream was so thick that it had to be spooned into a bowl or pitcher because it was "impossible to pour." Her rhapsody assured Dora's fame for generations of readers, far and wide, as did her declaration that she could not "imagine living a life through, without a Dora."

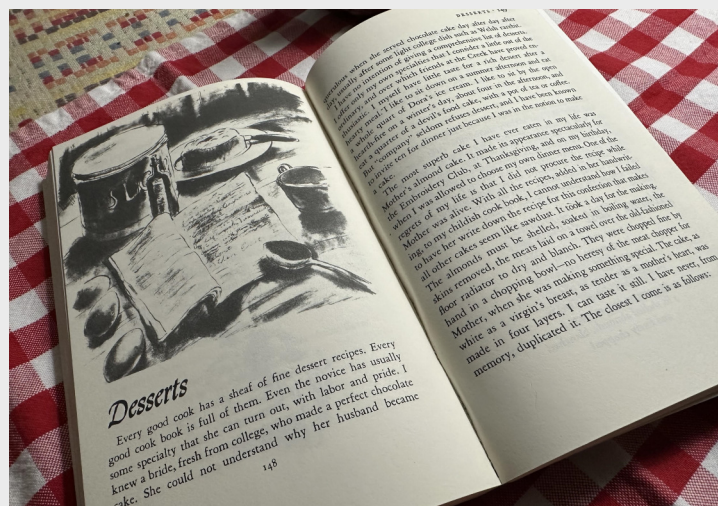
Rawlings's own mango ice cream continues to be served at the annual celebration of her birthday at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. Her recipe for tangerine sherbet declares it another "*spécialité du maison*" at her Cross Creek home. "It is to my winter what mango ice cream is to the summer," she wrote.

The 1928 Polk Gainesville Directory lists four area northern ice suppliers, including Cheves Brothers in Newbury. One of these companies most likely delivered to Cross Creek in either horse-drawn wagon or delivery truck as time passed. The ice blocks were precut in sizes ranging from 25 to 150 pounds and were often packed with sawdust, detritus from saw mills, as insulation. Customers left a preprinted red card in their window so the delivery driver would know how many pounds the household wanted. Thus were Rawlings's ice cream treats made possible, along with the contributions of one special Jersey bovine.

There is no time like summer to read or reread *Cross Creek* and *Cross Creek Cookery*. As we sit peacefully in air-conditioned comfort—reading, imagining the heat and other challenges Rawlings faced, it is good to know at least she had her ice cream. No doubt, as she refers to it, her mango ice cream, served in chilled dishes with mango slices and a small pour of fine rum, was "the last word in desserts." My last word is thank you, Marjorie, for everything.

Stay curious, and keep reading.

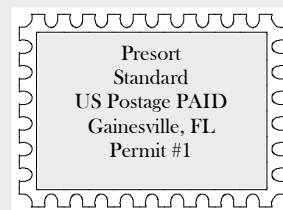
—Terri Urquhart, MKR member since 1997.



Cross Creek Cookery



PO Box 117005
Gainesville, FL 32611-7005



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**