

News from the Creek

Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Visit our website at: www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org

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Spring Quarterly 2020

President's Message

by Barbara Wingo

Looking Forward Looking Back



It is my sincere hope that you and yours are doing well at this very trying time.

Spring is a time of new life and new beginnings at the Creek. In Marjorie's chapter entitled "Spring at the Creek" in *Cross Creek*, she writes of flowers, plants, birds, and animals with such descriptive power and understanding, always with a touch of humor, wistfulness and philosophy. Never is the written word more important and revealing than during a time when we cannot experience a place or aspects of a place. Although we cannot visit Marjorie's farm, we can read her words, which can refresh and, even more significantly, enlighten us.

Looking backward, we know that Marjorie lived through the influenza pandemic during and following World War I. The influenza pandemic was raging around Marjorie in New York City as she looked for a job and waited for the end of Charles Rawlings' military service and their marriage. She took no special precautions even though Charles, quarantined at Camp Upton, was worried about her. She did worry about Charles, even having presentiments of disaster. Disaster did not befall her or Charles.

But we cannot afford to follow young Marjorie's example. Rather let us do what is necessary to stem the current pandemic. Looking again at the pandemic of 100 years ago, I am reminded of a song that my mother often played on the piano. "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise" was written in 1918, and its metaphorical message is just as relevant today. The sunrise will eventually produce the spring and the countryside that Marjorie describes so well in *Cross Creek*:

The road goes west out of the village, past pine woods and gallberry flats. An eagle's nest is a ragged cluster of sticks in a tall tree, and one of the eagles is usually black and silver against the sky. The other perches near the next, hunched and proud like a griffin. There is no magic here except the eagles. Yet the four miles to the Creek are stirring, like the bleak, portentous beginning of a good tale. The road curves sharply, the vegetation thickens, and around the bend masses into dense hammock. This hammock breaks, is pushed back on either side of the road, and set down in its brooding heart is the orange grove,

Take care so that we may celebrate Marjorie's birthday this summer in her orange grove --- also coming up are more Writer's Series programs and our annual meeting, which will feature the history of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. More details on these events will follow in our next newsletter. Please enjoy reading about the farm in this newsletter and stay well.

Sales Volunteers Needed - When the Park Reopens

Volunteers for the Friends of the MKR Farm are selling books (*Cross Creek*, *Reader's Guide to Cross Creek*, *Cross Creek Cookery*, *The Yearling*, *The Secret River*), DVDs (*Here is Home: MKR & Cross Creek*), and note cards at events and after tours on Thursday through Sunday at the Rawlings Farm. Profits are used to benefit the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. We NEED volunteers to help us with these sales. If you wish to volunteer even for a few hours occasionally, please contact Park Manager Scott Spaulding (scott.spaulding@floridadep.gov). If you wish, you may ask to be on a call list for notification of a peak time that a volunteer is needed. Even a couple of hours occasionally will help.

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Park Manager Message

by Scott Spaulding



Spring is almost here, and as Marjorie wrote in *Cross Creek*: *I wonder what spring would mean to one who was encountering it, if such a thing were conceivable, for the first time. My notion is that it would mean nothing. Spring is beautiful because it is familiar. Its implications are stirring because we understand them. We know the cold that precedes it and the hot sun that will follow it..*



Here on the Farm, spring means out with the old and in with the new, vegetables that is. Our winter garden is all but gone, except for some of the winter flowering plants that for some reason, are still hanging on. While unrecognizable to some, the plants will soon burst into their familiar form with tomatoes, eggplant, beans, watermelon and corn.

Our Writers' Talk series that we began in November has been very well received. In January, author Mallory O'Conner presented her book *Epiphany's Gift*, and in February author Susie Baxter presented her book *Pumping Sunshine*. Both presentations were wonderful and well received. The Writers' Talk series was to continue in March with Wanda Duncan and her book *Cracker Gothic* and finish for the season in April with Dorothy Weik Smiljanich and her book *Bringing Jessie Home*, but due to the COVID-19 related closure of State Parks, we will be re-scheduling both of those programs for the fall. Be sure to watch for those dates!



Speaking of writers, we had a special visit from author Lucy Forsting back in November when she brought her three mice for a visit to the farm. She also made and brought along Marjorie's pecan pie to share with the group on tour with her. Now, I bet you are wondering about the mice. No, they aren't real mice, but they are characters out of her book *The Adventures of Miss Twiggs and Company*. This is a magical story set in rural England in 1946. Miss Twiggs, Mortimor and Penelope are three mice who risk their lives leaving Durham County, England several times a year to share their message of love with all they encounter. Lucy said that Marjorie's presence was felt while they were in the kitchen. They were so moved by the visit that the illustrator for her book, which should be out soon, included Marjorie's stove in one of the illustrations. We hope to have Lucy and her mice out for a book reading soon!

As part of the field trips during the Sunshine State Book Festival held in late January, Mimi Carr visited the farm and read excerpts from Marjorie's books and letters. Mimi did a wonderful job, as usual, and even finished her presentation by preparing in front of the audience, from scratch, one of Marjorie's favorite recipes, *Crab Ala Newburg Cross Creek*. As the smell of crab and fresh cream filled the air, our sense of smell was overwhelmed. What a wonderful presentation!

Speaking of field trips...In February we were invited to partake in the annual Cracker Days Event at Rainbow Springs State Park (RSSP) in Dunnellon. So, we loaded up a little bit of everything Marjorie and set up a display. RSSP Park Ranger Thea Knott was kind enough to set up a Baker's Tent, so we had some shade for the day. They had a great turnout, and we were thankful for the opportunity to share Marjorie's farm with the visitors. Many visitors had been to the farm before, and many more are planning a visit in the future.

In February, we also had that honor of speaking to a delegation from Serbia who were in the USA to visit several historic locations as part of their on-going research. The members of the delegation work at various historic/cultural sites and museums throughout Serbia. After a tour of the farmhouse, we had a roundtable discussion which included funding principles,

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Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings House Tour with Dr. Carson, 1970, Part 3 (Conclusion)

*Among the archival material found at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, is a recording of a house tour given by "Dr. Carson, 1970". Dr. Robert Carson and his wife Estelle were the first hosts at Marjorie's home, 1968-1971, when the University of Florida opened it to the public. Dr. Carson was a humanities professor at the University from 1946-1971. In his youth he worked as a professional musician. He also became a self-taught artist and illustrated Gordon Bigelow's *Frontier Eden: The Literary Career of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings* (University of Florida Press, 1966).*

Dr. Carson is identified as a guide (G). The visitors are identified by the letter V. These transcription excerpts are minimally edited and annotated.

G: She [Marjorie] lived quite a time with the Fiddia family near Eureka on the Ocklawaha. And there she gathered material for *South Moon Under*. The Fiddia family were moonshiners, and Marjorie heard a lot about moonshining herself. And while there she slept on this cornhusker mattress, ate their food, but every night she'd take down copious notes of their habits, their customs and their language and things about nature and, of course, picked up a lot of stories as well.

Notice that the floors are painted. All Cracker families, I would say, painted their floors different colors often. Marjorie used this green and a blue - a robin's egg blue - and a red. Now notice over here this library, partly hers and partly gifts of the American Association of University Women from Ocala and Gainesville, who gave books of the period that Marjorie was here and also some that Marjorie used. *The Yearling* has been translated into many languages. We have a Polish edition, a Portuguese edition, a Czech edition, an edition from India, a Slovak edition, and a German edition and another one from India. The *Secret River* was translated into German, and this is the German edition. I'm sorry we don't have that here. I forgot to bring it. But of course the illustrations follow pretty much the country.

V: Well, now, how far is it from this place to where *The Yearling* was filmed? It isn't far, is it?

G: It's about 35 miles.

V: We've been back in there and seen that place. [Conversation omitted.]

G: Now this block card is one done by Dr. Carson typifying sort of south moon under from the back porch of this house. Now we're going to this room here, which she used originally for a bedroom, but then she started to see how this may have been the second story of the other house that was taken down. I've heard that is true. I'm not sure. Notice the different sawing in the wall. It is called beading - B-E-A-D-I-N-G. Use this a lot on the old boats. This sofa and the love seat go back to the French Revolution/Napoleonic times. You can imagine Josephine, wife of Napoleon, sitting in their robes, costumes with . . .

V: You want costumes to put you up there.

G: We have more photographs of the publicity done by the Florida Development Commission. Right now they are at Rawlings Hall on display, and they will be returned here very shortly. We have photographers from the University come here all the time. And here's an article by a former student at the University that met Marjorie at a bar, which is now called Dubs, on 13th Street, Northwest. And he took her home; she had too much to drink. So now he says I wish I'd known who she was. That's Marjorie in 1942. This is 1939. Up here this is the Antioch Cemetery, and she is buried here with a tombstone - I can't quite remember the - She endeared herself through her writings - She endeared herself to the people of the world - is the inscription.

As you know, she was sued by Zelma Cason, her rival, for what Zelma claimed was libelous in [the] *Cross Creek* book. It cost Marjorie a lot of money to fight that case in 1945-46, and it also broke her heart, I think, because Zelma was supposedly a very close friend. Zelma only got a dollar by the way.

Now we go in here, and originally this was an open breezeway, but when she put in plumbing and wanted to have a shower, she enclosed this and put in some tile. I heard that this washbasin came from a barbershop in Ocala.

V: Boy, this stone didn't come from no barbershop.

G: This was brought from the North I'm sure, and this today - this marble top is a valuable piece.

V: Very valuable.



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G: Now notice – she worried about this stepping up here because you couldn't . . . [All talk as they move into another room.]

V: I declare.

G: This is her bedroom, which I think . . .

V: Is this heavy? Yes, it's as heavy as the one I had.

G: . . . which I think is a beautiful room.

V: Oh, it is.

G: Many people say why don't you shine up this brass bed, but we decided we wanted to keep things pretty much like they were.

V: Yeah, I would.

G: Of course, we've added a mattress and a bedspread.

V2: That's a bigger job than you think it is.

G: Notice the cross ventilation in all the rooms.

V: Yeah, that's what makes it so nice.

G: And notice the color of the floor. They almost decided to paint this floor, but I'm glad they didn't because it shows what it's like.

V2: You couldn't buy a bed like this.

G: This, of course, is a vanity. And in our case we call it a vanity because we are so vain. This is a powder dish right here. In the old days – this was made around 1905. It was called a chiffonier in those days. I think you hear that more up north than you would . . .

V: Yeah, you do. Then they call them chest-of-drawers down here.

G: Chest-of-drawers down here. This perhaps comes from Jamestown, New York. You don't find locks on each drawer either anymore. Notice the fireplace in each room. This is one of the illustrations for her biography.

V: This is beautiful.

G: Marjorie was 5'7, and if you look in her closet you'll see it's quite a reach up there for some[one] so tall. And she put a window in the closet for light and to cut down, I think, on the moth population. This is one of the finest antiques here, and this treasure is going to get some more things– knobs or whatever you call them.

Now we're going to a nice porch. A beautiful view here, and Marjorie's lane extended down to Orange Lake, as far as you can see those trees. And between here and Orange Lake and near the lake is a canal where she has a boat ramp. And I hope someday one will really have a nature trail going down there. She had a garden here and put in that fence in to keep out the pigs and animals. She had rose bushes there. This plant here is an angel trumpet, also scientifically called a datura plant – D-A-T-U-R-A, which is a poisonous plant. [Talking among visitors.]

V: I had one of those one time. It grew so big it had about 50 bloom on it at one time.

G: These have more two years ago. They cut them back for some reason. This is her guest room. This is completely separate from the rest of the house.

V: Look at that quilt. It looks just like what my mother made.

G: This quilt was given to us because they wanted to have it in a proper place. The bed was/is hand-made Floridian bed.

V: Look at those stitches. [Talking among visitors.]

G: This bed is a spool bed, a spindle bed. It has no nails in it, and it was given to her by Moe Sikes, who was white, but talked to her so much with bears and taking care of things. And notice that this bed over here is a typical bed you find in some of the cottages right here in Cross Creek. It's a handmade bed with an original rope underneath and I've seen the same things . . .



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Park Managers Message (Continued from page 2)

preservation practices, volunteers and support organizations, such as our very own Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm. After visiting MKR's farm, they were off to visit Dade Battlefield. The group was hosted by Friendship Force from The Villages. We are so glad that they chose MKR as one of their destinations. It is nice to have Friends...Recently, the Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm provided matching funds so that the park could purchase its very own electric utility vehicle. The vehicle is being built to order and should arrive in time for our summer chores, which include re-bedding and fertilizing the citrus trees. You most likely won't see the vehicle on tour days, but it sure will come in handy on work days. We will post pictures in the next newsletter. **THANK YOU, FRIENDS!**

Well, one can only hope and pray that by the time this newsletter is in your hands, our wonderful members, the pandemic will be under control, our lives will be back to normal and the park will be open for business as usual. These have been trying times for us all, but in a way, I have never felt closer to MKR than I have during this time of social distancing. During this solitude, the pace of life has slowed down greatly, and the things that were once held dear, but became obscured by life's hurry to get things done, are now in full view again. So, I have convinced myself to take a deep breath, and to not take for granted this slower pace of life. I know it won't last forever.

Until next time, our thoughts and prayers go out to all and we wish you all the best. Stay safe and be sure to visit us as soon as you are able.

(Continued from page 4)

V: You know my father made the first bed my father and mother ever had.

G: Really.

V: That's the truth. He did. The first bed they had he made.

G: See this piece here - I thought about 1905, not as old as the other pieces, but it's a nice piece. But over here is that closet that leads up to the attic again and there were rumors that Marjorie kept her moonshine. She did get moonshine from Leonard Fiddia and bring it over here. We tested this by getting a couple of students up the attic, and they discovered some glasses and cups up there.

V: That was all they could get in those days though.

G: Just about. Now this was the kitchen.

V: Another bathroom.

G: She wanted this bathroom added for her guests and she wanted a shower, but she had quite a time getting the bathtub. And if you read *Cross Creek*, the chapter on the evolution of comfort tells all about that. But I think the most amusing part is she had the shower put in, she had to stand in the tub to be measured. And Moe Sikes measured her, and his children watched. She said I never felt so undressed in all my life.

V: I didn't read that. I must have a different book.

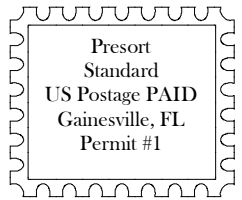
G: Notice the cross ventilation. This is separate from the rest of the house. Many important guests have stayed here: Jan Masaryk, the president of Poland [Czech foreign minister] who was later assassinated; Marcia Davenport, who wrote *The Valley of Decision*, and Robert Frost; Wendell Wilkie; and many others. And she gave them the freedom of the place. [Recording ends.]

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 P.O. Box 337
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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!



Be sure to visit us at marjoriekinnanrawlings.org Or floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings

Noteworthy . . . Check these out!

An article by Anne Pierce and Sonya Doctorian has been posted on the Florida Humanities Council website:
<https://floridahumanities.org/project/here-is-home-marjorie-kinnan-rawlings-and-cross-creek/>

An interview with our board member, Florence Turcotte, during Women's History Month:
<https://www.wcjb.com/content/news/Womens-History-Month-Marjorie-Kinnan-Rawlings-568664981.html>



Like us on Facebook at The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm. Our Facebook page shares photos, videos and events related to the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm.

<i>Membership Information</i>						Membership in the Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.
Effective July 1, 2014 new membership dues are as follows						<p>We invite you to join or renew your membership in the Citizen Support Organization (CSO) for the MKR Historic State Park. Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc., is a 501©(3) nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling 1-800-435-7352 (toll-free within Florida). Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City/State/Zip _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Comments:</p>
Type	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	Lifetime	
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Family	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550	
Educational	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550	
Corporate	\$55	\$155	\$255	\$500	\$1,000	
<p>Please circle type of membership and send with your check to:</p> <p>Friends of MKRawlings Farm, Inc. P.O. Box 337 Micanopy, FL 32667-0337</p>						