

# News from the Creek

Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Volume 18 Number 4

Visit our website at: [www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org](http://www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org)

Winter Quarterly 2016

## President's Message January 2016



This past year was a busy and interesting year for the MKR Farm CSO (Citizen Support Organization). Our primary focus was on working with our partners in the community: Santa Fe College Master Artist Series, First Credit Union, South Moon Blueberry Farm in Cross Creek, Island Grove Blueberry Winery, a group of retired women lawyers from Gainesville, the University of Florida Smathers Library Special Collections, the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park and the Matheson Museum creating publicity and fundraising around the production of the play, "Invasion of Privacy" about Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings life.

During 2015 we continued to complete all of our ongoing services. Working period costumes have been provided, as well as updating our Friends website which went "live" a few months ago.

Every State park has a CSO. We are called the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc. and have 10 Board Members. The Board meets quarterly and plans and executes events for the year. We have an approved budget, meet the needs of the park for unfunded items and take an active part in all events. A good CSO is based upon a functional board, which we have (see list of Board of Directors on page two.) A very important person to the Park is Valerie Rivers, our wonderful park manager of the MKR Historic State Park. The park would not be what it is today without her dedication and love of people. A special thank you to our ranger, Carrie Todd who has been with us for a year and doing a bang-up job - "who knew she could cook!"

I am continuing as president through 2016 and I look forward to another superb year at this most significant park. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings would be proud!

## Idella Parker, Marjorie's "Perfect Maid."

By James M. Stephens



Hamaca Jim and Idella Parker

By serving as a volunteer docent at the historic Cross Creek home of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, I was fortunate to meet several of the famous author's closest Cross Creek friends, including Snow Slater, Ella May Slater, J.T. Glisson, Dorsey Townsend, Theresa Bass, Dessie Smith, and Idella Parker. While all of these deserve the attention of my pen, it is the latter, Idella Parker, whom I now wish to spot-light in this account.

Idella was born Idella Thompson on April 26, 1914 in Reddick, Florida.

This small rural community in southwest Marion County lies just a few miles from the same Orange Lake into which Cross Creek drains and in whose shore-line community of Cross Creek she was to work as Marjorie's "perfect maid" for the ten year period 1940-1950.

Her parents were John and Ethel Thompson. Only one of her six siblings, youngest sister Eliza "Liza Mae"

(Continued on page 4)

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### *Officers: 2015-2016*

President: Elaine Carson Spencer  
 Vice President: Neal Spencer  
 Treasurer: Anne Pierce  
 Secretary: Barbara Wingo

### *CSO Board of Directors*

Mickey Angell  
 Dan Anson  
 Dan Cantliffe  
 Lowell Garrett  
 Murray Laurie  
 Mary Anne Morgan  
 Anne Pierce  
 Neal and Elaine Spencer  
 Jim Stephens  
 Florence Turcotte  
 Barbara Wingo

### *Resource Advisory Members*

Roy Hunt  
 Michaelyn Luttge  
 Kay Williams

### *Newsletter Editor*

Elaine Carson Spencer

## Meet Lowell Garret, Our Newest Board Member

Like most people interested in Marjorie Rawlings, I was first drawn to her literature as a young boy. The imagery that Rawlings painted in her books was not so different from what I remembered as a native Floridian. It wasn't until I visited the Cross Creek Farmstead back in the early 80's, that I realized I had a more personal connection. In those days there was a scrapbook of Rawlings memorabilia on the table in the living room. Having a little time to kill I sat down and carefully reviewed the scrapbook only to find a picture of Marjorie, Ross Allen and my Mother on a snake hunt. I wanted to make sure that it was my Mother so the next time I spoke to her I asked if she knew anything about the photo. As was typical of my Mother she didn't make much of it and said that she did go on a snake hunt in the 1940s with Ross Allen, who was a professional associate of hers and he had Marjorie come along.

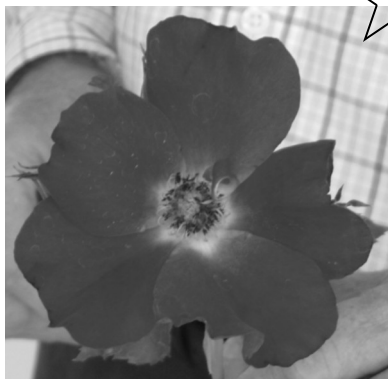


Lowell P. Garrett

You see, Marjorie was deathly afraid of snakes and living in Cross Creek, there was an abundance of all kinds of venomous and non-venomous species. Ross Allen had his reptile institute in nearby Silver Springs and my Mother had her reptile farm and anti-venom laboratory in Naranja in south Dade County. Marjorie contacted Ross Allen and the rest is documented in her short story "Rattlesnake Hunt".

The shame of it is that I didn't think much of it at the time and never returned to get a copy of the picture. I am in the process of writing a story of my Mother's work with reptiles and snakes, as well as her work with anti-venom at the University of Miami. All this at a time when we were at war in the Pacific and there was an acute need of anti-venom for the huge number of snakebites that were be experienced by our troops. Such a picture would be a welcome addition to the story. At any rate, I am still looking, which brought me back to the farm about a year ago. I realized that these personal connections, or six degrees of separation, foster interests that extend beyond academic curiosities. My association with the MKR Farm is just such a connection.

## SAVE THE DATE



MKR Rose Celebration,  
 Sunday, May 15, 2016, 10:00am-2:00pm  
 Presentation of the new Heritage Rose  
 Reception to follow at MKR Farm Cross  
 Creek

## DIGITAL MEDIA - We are thrilled that we now have an-up-to-date website!

We're in the year of 2016 and thrilled that we now have an absolutely wonderful website thanks to our creator, Stephanie Anson, wife of board member Dan Anson. It has all the "bells and whistles" to bring you up to date on either becoming a member or finding out the upcoming and special events taking place at the MKR Farm!

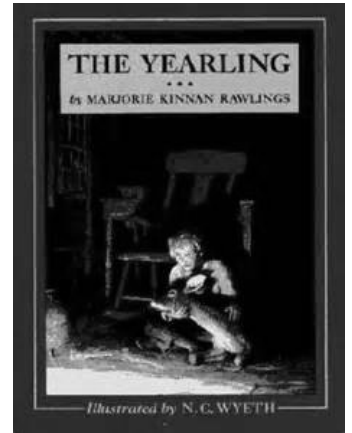
<http://mkr.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org>

## Yearling Trail Walk Saturday, March 5, 2016

The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc., will sponsor a guided walk of a portion of the Yearling Trail in the Ocala National Forest on Saturday, March 5. Anne Pierce will read passages from *The Yearling* and tell the story of the Long Family in the Big Scrub. The walk is a 3 mile loop trail that includes the sink hole mentioned in the Rawlings novel. The area is rather flat through a mostly pine forest, and the trail is well maintained but sandy in places.

Do not plan to bring dogs or kids younger than twelve please. We will meet at the Rawlings County Park adjacent to the MKR Historic State Park in Cross Creek at **8:15 AM** to carpool to the trail. If you live over that way, you may meet us at the Silver Glenn Springs parking lot at 9:30 AM. **A reservation is required. Please call the Park Farmhouse (352-466-3672) by Friday, February 27, leaving your name, number in your party, an email address and a contact number, and indicate where you will meet us (Cross Creek or Silver Glenn Springs).**

If you go, you will need to wear closed shoes that will allow you to walk a sandy or woody trail, sun protection including a hat, water for the trail, and lunch or snacks if you like. We hope to be on the trail by 10:00 AM and back to the cars by about 1:00. Since we will be near Silver Glenn Springs, we plan to eat lunch at springs (\$5.50 admission), and walk the "boils" trail (about 1 mile) with another reading from *The Yearling*. You will want to plan to come along to this part of the adventure to enjoy your picnic lunch and even a swim if you don't mind the cold water.



## Holiday Gathering in the Grove

Each year we enjoy hosting a gathering in the farm home and grove to celebrate the holidays. With homemade gingerbread cookies baked (ever so carefully!) in the wood stove, fresh squeezed orange juice picked right from the tree to excellent and heart-warming entertainment (see story page 5), this years celebration was no exception. If you were unable to join us this year, please look forward to visiting us next year!



(Continued from page 1)

Bickers, survives her. Idella, or “Della” as she was known by her family, passed away November 21, 2015 at the age of 101. I was glad to attend the joyous “Celebration of Life” services held at the United Missionary Baptist Church In Reddick.

Idella was well educated, having attended Fessenden Academy in Martin, Florida and Bethune-Cookman Institute in Daytona Beach, then receiving a teaching certificate in Gainesville and Miami-Dade Community College. However, it was the development of superb culinary skills which contributed the most to her earning Marjorie’s proclamation as her “perfect maid.” These skills she learned while working for five years as maid and housekeeper for a wealthy lady in West Palm Beach. There she was instructed on how to cook and serve all sorts of fancy dishes like dainty sandwiches, hors d’oeuvres, and rich desserts. She incurred a pride and enjoyment for serving foods that looked as beautiful as they tasted.

In October 1940, Idella returned home to Reddick, She sought work as a maid and cook, and thought she had found it with the Camp family in Ocala. However, Marjorie Rawlings snaked her away before she could prepare a single meal for the Camps. A mutual friend told Marjorie about Idella Parker, so Marjorie drove to Reddick and intercepted such a talented prospect for herself in Cross Creek. She drove her Oldsmobile to the Thompson home, handed Idella a two-dollar check, and demanded Idella pack her bags and be ready to go to Cross Creek when Marjorie returned from New York. Idella protested that she was to work for Mrs. Camp. Marjorie said, “Oh no, Idella. You don’t want to work for Mrs. Camp. She’s hard to get along with.” Dumbfounded, Idella could only watch helplessly as the big cream colored two-door Oldsmobile sped away. Soon, another check for two dollars arrived in the mail, and together with the other, sealed her fate.

Idella packed her foot-locker lightly in case she did not like her Cross Creek job and had to leave quickly, and awaited the return of Marjorie Rawlings. When the Oldsmobile finally arrived to pick her up, Idella climbed into the front seat with Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, thus avoiding Marjorie’s dog Pat, and was whisked away to a new home in Cross Creek . There she would become Marjorie’s “perfect maid’ and ascend to a life of notoriety and fame.

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Marjorie soon saw that Idella was well trained, as good a cook as herself, well educated, and had almost the same tastes as herself in literature and movies, Furthermore, she loved the country, Marjorie’s dog Pat, and company dinners. She disliked liquor and had no interest in men. For this gift, Marjorie praised the Lord.

The story of Idella’s life with Marjorie is best told by Idella herself in her two books: *Idella: Marjorie Rawlings’ “Perfect Maid”* (1992), and *Idella Parker: From Reddick to Cross Creek* (1999), and in Marjorie Rawlings’ many letters, plus her book *Cross Creek*.

Due to her notoriety, Idella became a much sought-after speaker at countless events. It was on one of these occasions that I first met her. Sometime around 2003 she attended a “Friends of the Farm” meeting at the Rawlings house in Cross Creek, we met there and I was fascinated by her accounts of her life and association with Mrs. Rawlings. (Later, we met again at Dessie Smith Prescott’s birthday party near Lake Rousseau).



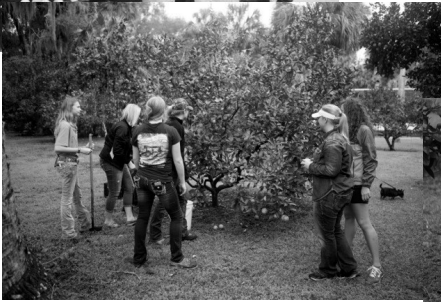
Idella telling what it was like to be MKR’s “perfect maid”, by Hamaca Jim



This floral spray for Idella was displayed at the MKR house and then transferred to funeral site.

## Holiday Pickin's

Each year we donate the citrus from Marjorie's grove to charity. Children's Table came this year. They are a North Central Florida rural food bank program. This year they fed 186,000 people (2015). The Marion County Council 4H helped with the picking this year.



## Thanks to our Holiday Party Entertainment

If you were unable to attend our holiday get together you missed some great entertainment! This brother/sister duet, provided music for our CSO holiday event. Jessie and Lee are siblings who have grown up performing music for several years. Both attended and participated in the music program at P.K. Yonge High School in Gainesville.



Lee is following in the footsteps of his grandfather Dorsey Lee Townsend, Sr. who also played guitar. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was good friends with Dorsey and mentioned him often in her book, *Cross Creek*. Lee also plays banjo and has performed at many area festivals including the Florida Folk Festival, the Will McLean Folk Festival, the Micanopy Fall Festival and the Alachua Festival to name a few. For the past two years Jessie has joined her brother on stage at the Will McLean Festival and for a variety of community events and church services.

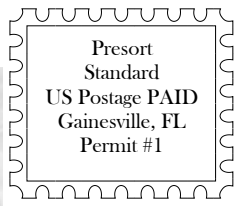
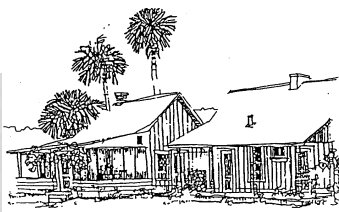
The Jessie and Lee CD Sampler is their first professional CD recorded and mixed at Gatorbone Studios. It has a variety of bluegrass favorites and two songs from two of Florida's most notable songwriters, Will McLean and Steve Blackwell. If interested, go to [donnagreentownsend.com](http://donnagreentownsend.com) and look for the direct link to the CD sampler.

## LIFETIME MEMBERS

Ginny and Gunter Arndt  
 Danny and Judy Baker  
 Sheila Barnes  
 Catherine Beazley  
 Diane E. Beck  
 Roger and Linda Blackburn  
 Sybil Ann Brennan  
 Mary W. Bridgman  
 Dan Cantliffe  
 Ginger Carter  
 Norma Davis  
 Patricia Ann Davis  
 Sheila Dickison  
 John and Balinda Ferree  
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 Judith Harris  
 Candace Henderson  
 John and Phyllis Holmgren  
 Roy Hunt  
 Deanne Clark & William H. Jeter, Jr.  
 Brenda Keith  
 Shirley Kiser  
 Richard Knellinger, P.A.  
 Angel Kwolek-Folland  
 Murray Laurie  
 Shirley Lucas  
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 Eleanor and Andy Merritt  
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 Rebecca Nullier  
 Alan Palmer  
 Spence Perry  
 John Henry & Margaret Anne Pierce  
 Liz Pooley  
 Dana Preu  
 A.L. Rhinehart  
 Art & Edda Ross  
 Shirley and Pierre Thompson  
 M. List Underwood, Jr.  
 Pamela Lydick Whiting  
 Colleen Whitlock

## Corporate Members

Alachua Conservation Trust  
 Blue Highway Restaurant  
 Horseless Carriage Club of America  
 Mansbridge Editing & Transcription



Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.  
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 Micanopy, FL 32667-0337

Website: [www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org](http://www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org)  
 Instagram: @MKRFarm  
 Facebook

**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!



**2016 Friends of MKR Calendar**

- Saturday, March 5, 2016** Annual Hike, The Yearling Trail with Anne Pierce
- Sunday, March 13, 2016** MKR Cracker Food with Stefanie Hamblen from-Hogtown Homegrown - Stefanie returns by popular demand - "Cooking Cracker Food & Sampling" Open to the Public: 1:30pm-3:30pm
- Sunday, March 27, 2016** Easter Sunday - Park Open
- Friday, April 1 and 2, 2016** 29<sup>th</sup> Annual MKR Society Conference at the Florida Yacht Club, Jacksonville, FL  
For more information visit their website: [rawlingssociety.org](http://rawlingssociety.org)
- Sunday, May 15, 2016** MKR Rose Celebration 10:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.  
Reception to follow at MKR Farm, check website for further details

<i>Membership Information</i>					
Effective July 1, 2014 new membership dues are as follows					
Type	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	Lifetime
<b>Individual</b>	\$25	\$70	\$105	\$200	\$ 450
<b>Family</b>	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550
<b>Educational</b>	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550
<b>Corporate</b>	\$55	\$155	\$255	\$500	\$1,000

Please circle type of membership and send with your check to:  
**Friends of MKRawlings Farm, Inc.**  
 P.O. Box 337  
 Micanopy, FL 32667-0337

Membership in the Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_