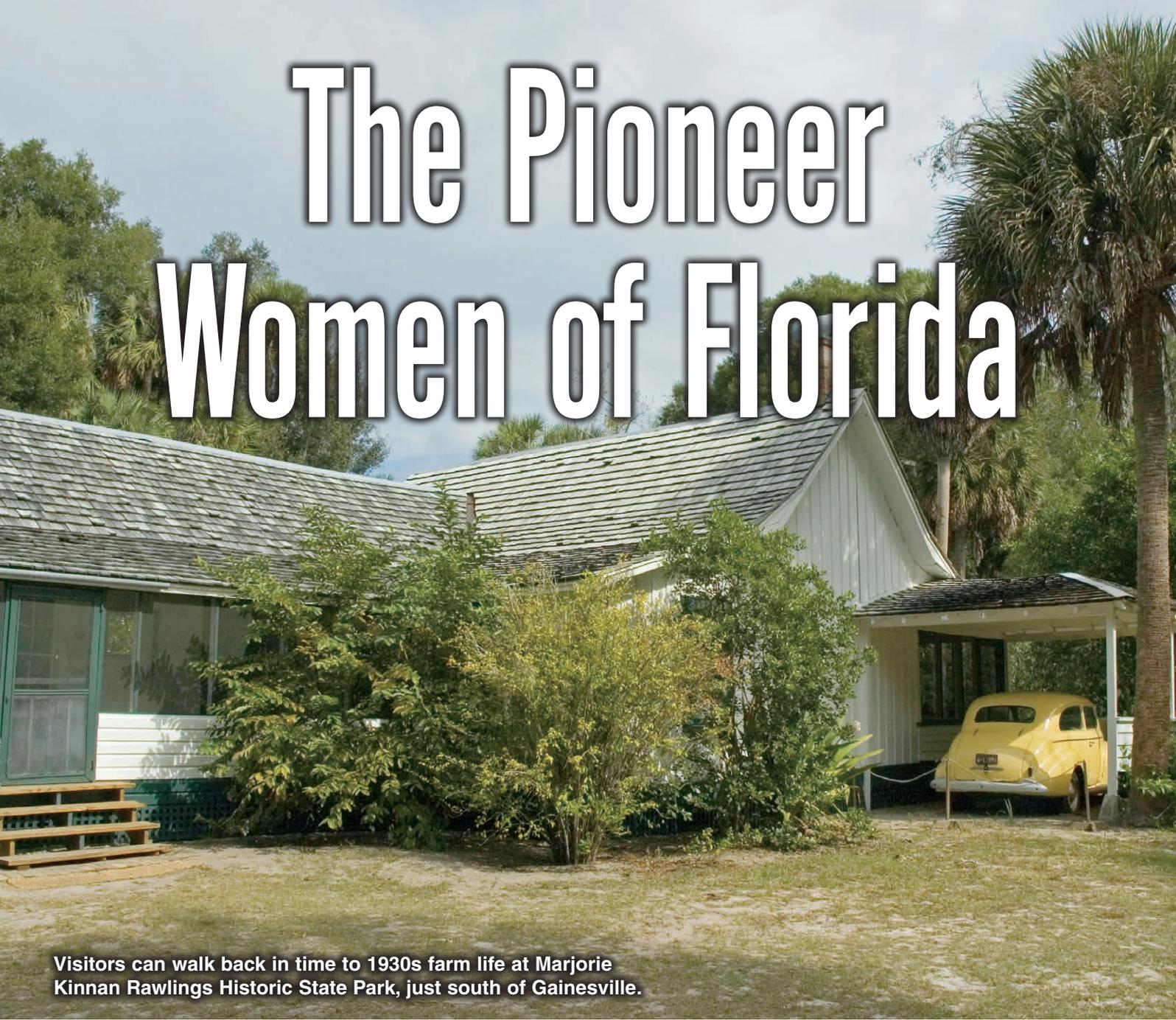


The Pioneer Women of Florida



Visitors can walk back in time to 1930s farm life at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, just south of Gainesville.

Not every pioneer uses a plow – some use an ink pen.

Years ago, three courageous women used the power of the pen to change perceptions of what is valuable in Florida. Their pioneering work helped people understand that the state's wild places are worth protecting.

Life in the Florida frontier captured national attention in 1938 with publication of "The Yearling." Penned by **Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings**, this best-selling novel was set in the late 1800s and told the story of a boy's love for a pet deer and his family's fight for survival.

A longtime writer, Rawlings moved from New York to a remote Florida orange grove in 1928. Fame came when she began writing about the area and the families who struggled with hunger and danger. Her books from this period describe her neighbors and the area's natural beauty in lyrical detail,

including her 1942 memoir, "Cross Creek."

The 1930s homestead where she wrote her famous novels is open to visitors at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park.

Another Florida transplant was **Marjory Stoneman Douglas**. Douglas became the pre-eminent advocate for the Everglades, South Florida's vast system of wetlands. Douglas was 25 when she left New England in 1915 to work with her father at a Miami newspaper. Douglas and her father focused on regional issues and brought national attention to the importance of protecting the Everglades, which had long been regarded as a worthless swamp.

Even after leaving the paper, Douglas wrote extensively about South Florida's natural resources. In 1947, she published "The Everglades: River of Grass," a natural and political history that explained how the sheets of free-flowing water are essential

for the region's ecology and for replenishing drinking water. The book is still considered a classic.

Douglas was a forceful advocate for Florida's wild places throughout her long life. She helped lead the campaigns to establish Everglades National Park and Biscayne National Park, and in 1969 she helped form the environmental advocacy group Friends of the Everglades.

Marjorie Harris Carr was another leading voice for Florida's wild places. Born in Boston in 1915, she grew up in Florida and earned two college degrees in zoology.

One of Carr's efforts in the early 1960s led to the formation of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, a 22,000-acre wilderness of national importance.

Her most famous environmental victory followed her battle to stop construction of the Cross Florida Barge Canal, a project that would have linked the state's Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Carr co-founded a citizens group that produced a scientific report about the environmental and economic consequences of the proposed canal. After a long struggle, the project was abandoned.

In 1998, the 110-mile corridor acquired for the canal was named the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, where visitors can ride, hike, boat and play.

Venture out into Florida's great outdoors and explore what inspired these pioneering women. 🌳

By Susan Beason

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

