Fernandina in Fiction

by Curator Jarrett Hill, AIMH Temporary Gallery,
on view until December 6, 2023

FOR AS LONG as people have lived on Amelia Island, they have told stories about the land and their fellow inhabitants. The Museum’s newest temporary exhibit, Fernandina in Fiction, explores how Amelia Island has been depicted in popular stories like Pippi Longstocking and by a myriad of authors from William Bartram to John Grisham. (Cont.’d on Page 2)
Fernandina in Fiction looks at how Fernandina Beach and Amelia Island are depicted in popular books, movies, and other fictional works. It examines how historical fiction novels by such authors as Frank Slaughter or Baynard Kendrick have spread across the United States and distinguished Fernandina as equal to St. Augustine or Jamestown in historical significance.

The exhibit also explores how a wealth of new voices have shaped fictional Fernandina’s identity. Despite bringing “outsider” perspectives, these new authors focus on many traditional topics, i.e. the island’s sublime natural surroundings, the allure of the island’s past, and of course, its murder mysteries—all which overlap with themes in Fernandina-set fiction initiated long before these “new” voices arrived on the scene.

Visual fiction—films set or shot here on Amelia Island—is also crucial to how Fernandina appears in popular culture. In fact, visual storytellers have used the unique visual aspects and aesthetics of Fernandina’s historic district in often surprising ways! Case in point, the film Lonely Hearts (2006) used Centre Street to recreate scenes set in turn-of-the-century New York City. If the cameras had panned back just a bit further, they just might have caught sight of a palm tree—far from the natural foliage of NYC! To learn more, see the exhibit’s opening video, Fernandina in Fiction by Joe Palmer on YouTube.

Cover: Bookplate marking a novel as part of Lucy Coleman Carnegie’s personal collection.

Inset: Blickensderfer No. 6 Portable Typewriter, c. 1910.

Top Right: Poster for Naked in the Sun (1957), filmed at Fort Clinch.

Bottom Right: Nun reading in Villalonga Park, c. 1900.
**Arlene Filkoff**

was born in Olympia, Washington and raised in Pass Christian, Mississippi until she left to attend college at the University of Alabama. She and her husband found Fernandina Beach quite by accident and moved there permanently in 2004.

Says Arlene, “I was a school teacher for a short time, then worked in large insurance companies in the Hartford, Connecticut area until retirement. My Museum volunteer work is a perfect fit because I love portraying characters and conducting interviews for oral history projects. My favorite Fernandina resident to portray is Mrs. Duryee, who some consider eccentric. She is known to prefer animals a bit more than people, to the extent that she acquired spectacles for her cat to improve its quality of life! I’d love to meet her!”

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**Briana Gonzalez**

was born in Escondido, California but grew up in Leesburg, VA, a quaint town like Fernandina. After graduating from Franciscan University with a dual degree in Theology and Anthropology, she relocated to Yulee, Florida in 2021.

Says Briana, “As the Museum’s Part-time Assistant Archivist, I catalogue and archive artifacts from Amelia. For me, nothing is more gratifying than the sense of discovery I feel when sifting through newspaper clippings, biographies, maps, deeds and letters. I also volunteer on weekends, helping at the Greeter’s desk when needed.” Asked why she works and volunteers at the Museum, Briana replied, “I’ve always been curious about what goes on behind the scenes at a Museum. Now, with each day spent here, I know.”

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**Barbara (Barb) Herum**

born and raised in Chicago, majored in Elementary Education and English at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. In 1997, she quit teaching and became Director of Retail Sales at Great Wolf Lodge in Dells until she retired in 2013. Barb and her husband moved to Fernandina Beach in 2016.

Barb works in the Archives where she clips, copies, labels and organizes newspaper and magazine articles about Fernandina events. In addition, she has worked on inventory, peeled shrimp, and helped at the Shrimp Shack and at the Holiday Home Tours. Says Barb, “I’ve enjoyed travelling to all seven continents and several Caribbean Islands also volunteer at the Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch.”
TOP: On September 15, 2023, local author Joe Palmer (sport jacket) meets guests who attended his lecture at the *Fernandina in Fiction* opening.

BOTTOM LEFT: Tina Taker and Katie Cimino at the *Fernandina in Fiction* opening.

BOTTOM RIGHT: AIMH volunteer Bill Birdsong chats with local author Joe Palmer.

Photos: Christopher Collins
TOP LEFT: Mary Pinkston at the *Fernandina in Fiction* opening.

TOP RIGHT: Board Trustee Rob Hull and Bill Birdsong at the *Fernandina in Fiction* opening.

BOTTOM LEFT: Greeter Pam Kuharic gives a winning smile at the Museum entry desk.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Jacqui Malone and volunteer Carey Lambert at a Museum Victorian Tea.
My career in Colorado involved working in a library system. So volunteering in the Museum of History’s archive is a natural fit for me. Just think. With our town having so much history and with so many of its vintage homes still standing, if you close your eyes, you can almost imagine what it was like to be a protagonist in some of the stories told.

Of the many reasons I enjoy working in the Museum’s archive, a major one is that I continue to be surprised by the wealth of artifacts people have kept in their basements or attics, sometimes for more than 100 years [my northern roots are showing, since homes here don’t have basements]. I am currently processing letters from 1860-1912. Just the penmanship of the earlier generations alone is amazing. Some letters are written so perfectly, one can scarcely believe they were created freehand.

What’s more, handwriting aside, the contents of these letters can be even more fascinating. I recall a letter dated 1857, written from brother to brother. One asks his sibling how to best care for a wound suffered when playing around with his knife “while Ma and Pa were away from the house.” The letter says he used an ash poultice on the wound. He goes on to inquire if his brother knew of a more effective remedy that had healed a knife wound the other brother had received prior to this accident. Unfortunately, another letter (dated three months later) indicated that the hapless brother passed away because of the wound.

Sometimes I wish there was a way to see all the correspondence between each of the parties who corresponded in the past. In effect, to uncover the whole story. I know it’s impossible. But still, it’s important that we continue to retell the snippets we know about the rich tales of people who lived in our town in bygone days.

Paraphrased, it reads: Dear E D As I am confined to the house all day I thought I would write you a few lines to inform you this matter [sic]...Yesterday about an hour before Ma & Pa got home I had my knife...and the [knife?] fell out within itself and blood spouted. I bound it up immediately with some camphor...nothing very serious about it I think. Write me word what you did with your arm when Buck(?) stuck it in your arm...The folks are all well here and hope all are well with you. Yours Very Truly W H Tracy, Traders Hill, Charlton County, Georgia
These days, that old adage “a picture is worth a thousand words,” has never been truer. *Timepiece* is published each quarter of the year and placed under the Volunteer tab on the Museum’s website. It’s created to celebrate you and each and every one of your Museum of History accomplishments. Museum staff member Christopher Collins snaps pictures of volunteers doing their thing at many events. But Christopher cannot capture all that you do. So whenever you and fellow volunteers come together for a Museum project, whether big or small, please take a moment to snap some photos. Send them to me with names and what you’re doing. Also send your constructive feedback about articles that will make *Timepiece* better to volnews@ameliamuseum.org.

Hugh Michael Brown,  
Timepiece Editor