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THE TENANT HOUSE



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park

After her first husband left in 1933, Marjorie depended even more on hired hands to help her manage the orange grove, farm and daily chores that made up her life. Living alone on the 72-acre farm while also working every day on her writing took a great deal of work.

The tenant house on the property today is not the original, although it is an authentic tenant house moved over from across the road. The original was presumed to have been built in the early 1900s and was originally two stories. The current house was donated to the park by Cross Creek resident and former Alachua County Commissioner Kate Barnes, whose property was once owned by the Brice Family who Marjorie writes about in her book *Cross Creek*.



During the 25 years that Marjorie lived at Cross Creek, many different workers lived at the tenant house and worked on her grove and farm. Some of the most memorable and beloved by Marjorie were Martha and Will Mickens. In fact, when Marjorie died in 1953, she willed the tenant house to them as a life estate, by which they could both live there for the rest of their lives.



Photo of Will Mickens courtesy of Florida Memory Project

They did just that, Martha until 1960 and Will until 1964. By the late 1960s the house was in such disrepair that it was torn down and removed. Another beloved tenant was Idella Parker, whom Marjorie referred to as her "perfect maid." Idella worked for Marjorie for 10 years and later in life wrote the book *Idella - Marjorie Rawlings' Perfect Maid*. Idella passed away in 2015 at the age of 101. She visited the park many times and assisted with placement of items at the current Brice Tenant house when it was moved to the park before its dedication in 2003.



The Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm were responsible for funding a matching grant to allow the tenant house to be moved to the state park. A class from the University of Florida researched the location of the original house so that the Brice tenant house could be placed as close to the original as possible.

Numerous park staff, volunteers and visitors have since worked on and visited the tenant house, making it a major part of the historic estate that you can visit today. The next time that you visit Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, be sure to take the time to walk over to the tenant house. You never know what you might discover in this small piece of history.