

This talk examines a selection of Florida's First Ladies from the territorial period to the present day. As a girl, Rachel Donelson and her parents were among the first white settlers of Nashville, Tennessee. In 1821, she moved with her second husband, Andrew Jackson, to territorial Florida. First Lady Martha Starke Peay Perry witnessed the rise of secession at the dawn of the Civil War, and Caroline Howze Milton experienced the catastrophic consequences of the war in Florida, including personal tragedy. At the turn of the 20th century, May Mann Jennings moved into the Governor's mansion and used her clout to push for a variety of causes, ranging from women's suffrage to conservation. Columba Bush's path to First Lady has been called a Cinderella story. She was also known as the invisible first lady. By contrast, Ann Scott has been one of the most hands-on First Ladies since Rhea Chiles, who is remembered as an equal partner in her husband Lawton Chiles' political career. This talk delves into the fascinating stories of some of Florida's most memorable First Ladies and their impact upon the Sunshine State.

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