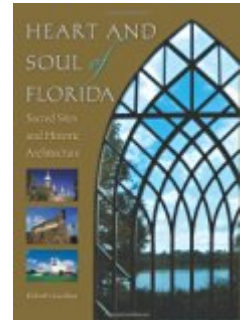


Elsbeth Gordon. *Heart and Soul of Florida: Sacred Sites and Historic Architecture.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013. Illustrations. xxii + 350 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-4400-2.



Reviewed by Jeff Donnelly

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Commissioned by Jeanine A. Clark Bremer (Northern Illinois University)

Reading Elsbeth Gordon's *Heart and Soul of Florida* from beginning to end in preparation for a review is not the way this thorough and inclusive investigation of Florida's built environment is likely to be used. More likely, the typical reader will be looking up a particular place, checking on the date of a building, preparing a class or presentation, or planning a trip to an unfamiliar part of Florida. The second style of reading is likely to be more useful and certainly more rewarding.

As a reference work, *Heart and Soul of Florida* will provide useful information about Florida's built environment to tour guides, tourists, preservationists, local governments, Florida historians, and others whose interests or work lead them to explore further what humans have created in Florida. There are more than one hundred figures—photos, drawings, and art work—amply illustrating the text. Sixty annotated color plates add to the value of the volume.

The author has divided *Heart and Soul of Florida* into three sections: "Indian Florida,"

"Colonial Florida," and "American Florida." The topic of the first section of more than sixty pages will perhaps be the least familiar to many readers. While I have been to three of the sites mentioned, I now will plan my Florida explorations better informed about opportunities throughout the state to visit the places where the work of the earliest Floridians can be viewed and appreciated. For this extensive survey of indigenous Florida alone, *Heart and Soul of Florida* more than justifies attention from anyone interested in Florida history.

The second section portrays the three centuries of European and African political and cultural influence in Florida as seen through what was built in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. As teachers of Florida history know, these structures and places have wonderful stories to tell, and Gordon provides a detailed exposition of St. Augustine, Fort Mose, and the Kingsley Plantation that will enhance and support history teaching at all levels. Because of this sec-

tion, if no other, this book should be in every school library in Florida.

The third section brings the reader from 1821 to 1950, the shortest time span but the most plentiful in extant structures. Text and images are combined and presented effectively. The selection includes both sacred and civil structures, and Gordon hopes to use them to tell “the biography of Florida” (p. 135). The scope and inclusiveness of this section is truly admirable. In this third section, however, there are some errors that detract from the work’s overall excellence. When dealing with buildings of the New Deal era, some popular sources overstate the influence of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the New Deal agency that began functioning as a Great Depression stimulus program in 1935 and ended in 1943. Gordon identifies the Bass Museum on Miami Beach and the Daytona Beach Post Office as WPA projects, even though they fall outside the WPA timeframe (p. 247). In addition, Gordon identifies the Miami Beach Post Office as a WPA project (p. 246), but John A. Stuart’s research published in 2008 clearly establishes its federal sponsor as the U.S. Department of Treasury.[1] Accounts published earlier frequently cited WPA sponsorship for the Miami Beach Post Office, but it is unfortunate that the book reviewed here repeats that error.

While these errors give a reader pause, Gordon’s work does provide an inclusive survey of Florida’s built environment through 1950. As a reference, the text is far more inclusive than any other single source, and the photos and illustrations enhance the reader’s pleasure in perusing *Heart and Soul of Florida*.

Note

[1]. John A. Stuart, “Constructing Identity: Building and Place in New Deal South Florida,” in *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933-1940*, by John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 63.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at
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