

POLITICAL PARTNERS: Florida's First Ladies

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First Ladies of Florida

Territorial Period

3/10-11/66, 1821
1822-1834
1834-1835
1835-1840; 1841-1844

1840-1841

Statehood

1845-1849
1849-1853
1853-1857
1857-1861
1861-1865
4/1-5/19, 1865
7/13-12/20, 1865
1865-1868
1869-1873
1873-1874
1874-1877
1877-1881
1881-1885; 1897-1901
1885-1889
1889-1893
1893-1897
1901-1905
1905-1909
1909-1913
1913-1917
1917-1921
1921-1925
1925-1929
1929-1933
1933-1937
1937-1941
1941-1945
1945-1949
1949-1953
1/6-9/28, 1953
1953-1955
1955-1961
1961-1965
1965-1967
1967-1971
1971-1979
1979-1987
1/3-1/6, 1987
1987-1991
1991-1998
1998-1999
1999 - 2006

Rachel Donelson Jackson
Nancy Hynes DuVal
Peggy O'Neale Timberlake Eaton
Mary Letitia Kirkman Call
Mary Marth Smith Reid

(William Moseley - widower)
Elizabeth Simpson Brown
Martha Macon Hawkins Broome
Martha Starke Peay Perry
Caroline Howze Milton
Elizabeth S. Coleman Allison
Harriett Newell Marvin
Philoclea Alson Walker
Chloe Merrick Reed
Catherine Smith Campbell Hart
(Marcellus Stearns - bachelor)
Ameila Dickens Drew
Mary C. Davis Bloxham
Wathen Herbert Taylor Perry
Floride Lydia Pearson Fleming
Mary Eugenia Spencer Mitchell
May Austin Mann Jennings
Annie Isabell Douglass Broward
(Albert Gilchrest - bachelor)
Virginia Darby Trammel
Alice May Campbell Catts
Maude Randell Hardee
Lottie Wilt Pepper Martin
Nell Ray Carlton
Alice May Agee Sholtz
Mildred Victoria Thompson Cone
Mary Agnes Groover Holland
Mary Rebecca Harwood Caldwell
Barbara Manning Warren
Olie Brown McCarty
Thelma Brinson Johns
Mary Call Darby Collins
Julia Burnett Bryant
Mildred Carlyon Burns
Erika Mattfeld Kirk
Donna Lou Harper Askew
Adele Khoury Graham
Margie Grace Mixson
Mary Jane Marino Martinez
Rhea Grafton Chiles
Anne Selph McKay
Columba Garnica Gallo Bush

Introduction

In the days before Florida had a Governor's Mansion, state officials rented living quarters or stayed with friends.

Prior to becoming the 27th State of the Union, during the Territorial Period, Florida had six First Ladies. The first was Rachel Donelson Jackson. Her husband, and then Governor Andrew Jackson, would become President of the United States. Elizabeth Foort Branch was the wife of the last appointed territorial governor, John Branch.

On January 8, 1901, after the inauguration of William S. Jennings, the newly elected Governor, members of his selected cabinet, and two of their wives posed for an official photograph on the porch of an unidentified Tallahassee home along with a butter churn.

Florida has had two official governor's residences. The first mansion, completed in 1907, was torn down in 1955; two years later a grand, new mansion became the home of Florida's first families.

Before the first mansion was built, Florida's governors and their families had lived in a variety of private residences in Tallahassee. While in office, Florida's first families have used the mansion as a private residence and as a setting in which to extend the state's hospitality to tourists and official visitors.

When Napoleon Bonaparte Broward became Governor in 1905, he and his First Lady, Annie Isabell Douglass, and their eight children had to rent a large home in Tallahassee for the first two years. In 1907, when the first mansion was completed, the Browards were the first to occupy Florida's official home.

Governors and their families lead busy lives, tending to the State's business and being part of a family. Each First Family has been different in number of members, in age, party affiliation, and agenda. Each First Lady has brought different interests and talents to the Mansion and has left a special mark on the state.

The video, *Political Partners: Florida's First Ladies*, presents a quick look at selected, contemporary First Ladies who were available at the time of production. The video may be used as a reference and a point of departure for further research on the lives and accomplishments of other First Ladies and their families.

Additional information may be found at the Museum of Florida History, 500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee, Florida, where the original exhibition, "Florida's First Families" was presented.

Selected Short Biographies: Florida's First Ladies

Columba Garnica Gallo Bush (1999-2006)

Mrs. Bush is the first Hispanic to become First Lady of Florida. Born in the city of León, Mexico, she and the future governor met while he was an exchange student in Mexico. The Bushes have been married for 25 years and have three children. While the family is bilingual, Spanish is the language most favored at home.

Mrs. Bush's interest in art and education manifested itself long before personal politics entered her family. During her years of residence in Miami, she worked diligently to bring the famous Ballet Folklórico, the national dance troupe of Mexico, to perform in 26 cities in the United States. Performances for school children are made possible through funds raised by Mrs. Bush. The cities selected are those with large Hispanic communities. More than 250,000 children have seen the Ballet Company to date. In conjunction with this activity, she helped found a children's Ballet Folklórico in the large Mexican community of Homestead.

In 2000, Mrs. Bush started the Arts Recognition Program, which honors high school seniors who have demonstrated exemplary talents in music, media, dance, theatre, or visual arts. Her personal support of this program includes traveling to schools across Florida to draw attention to the variety of arts education programs Florida's public schools have to offer.

She is a board member of Columbia University's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), the nation's foremost resource institution on the prevention of substance abuse. In addition, she is a member of the Governors' Spouses Leadership Forum, an organization that is dedicated to the reduction of youth alcohol abuse.

Anne Selph McKay (1998-1999)

Mrs. McKay and her husband Buddy grew into their marriage and the political arena at the same time. Buddy McKay was elected to the Florida House of Representatives when they had been married less than 10 years. He continued a career in politics that would take him to Tallahassee as Lieutenant Governor for Lawton Chiles and ultimately, Governor, upon the sudden death of Governor Chiles.

For years, Mrs. McKay has been involved with Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPIY), a program for three and four year olds and their parents. She is also a child care and literacy advocate.

Mrs. McKay studied botany at a Tallahassee vocational and technical school and completed a Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener program at the University of Florida. She is involved in a campaign to promote the planting of native wildflowers alongside interstates, a cause first championed by Lady Bird Johnson.

Rhea Grafton Chiles (1991-1998)

Mrs. Chiles was born in Pennsylvania and moved to Florida with her family as a young girl. She grew up in Coral Gables. In 1951, she married Lawton Mainor Chiles, and they lived in Lakeland, where Mrs. Chiles was active in church, civic, and business life. In 1971, the Chiles family established a second home near Washington, D.C., where Mr. Chiles served as a U.S. Senator. While she was living in Washington, Mrs. Chiles founded Florida House, a "home away from home" for Floridians visiting Washington, D.C. In recognition of her achievements, she received the 1974 Robert Sikes Award for Distinguished Service by a Floridian living in the Washington area, and the 1981 Florida Trust for Historic Preservation Award. The Chiles had four children.

In 1996, the Florida Board of Regents created The Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies at the University of South Florida (USF). The Chiles Center is a non-profit organization and is part of

the Health Sciences Center at USF. Although there are more than 20 centers nationwide concerned with children's issues, The Chiles Center is the only center that concentrates its efforts solely on pregnancy, infancy, and childhood up to age five. Its goal is to determine the most effective strategies, programs, and systems for reducing illness and death among mothers and babies, and promoting a healthy, productive lifestyle.

The parents of an adoptive daughter, Rhea Chiles, the Governor and his wife helped bring attention to the state's foster children. In 1998, Governor Chiles and daughter Rhea launched an adoption advertising and public relations campaign, themed "Get a Life," to encourage prospective parents to open their hearts and homes to foster children.

Governor Chiles died suddenly in 1998. Mrs. Chiles still remains active in the community.

She has authored a book, *700 North Adams*, about the Governor's Mansion. It has become a learning tool for school children and a complement to Florida history studies. A photograph of the old mansion inspired the book cover's illustration, done by Mrs. Chiles.

Mary Jane Marino Martinez (1987-1991)

Governor Bob Martinez, grandson of Spanish immigrants, and Mary Jane Marino, granddaughter of Italian immigrants, settled into the Governor's mansion in 1987. Mrs. Martinez was a librarian at Tampa's King High School for 20 years before she became First Lady.

One of the first things she did was to establish a nursery at the Mansion to accommodate the visits from their identical twin granddaughters, only four months old at the time of inauguration - also the youngest children attending inaugural ceremonies.

Mrs. Martinez was especially concerned with issues related to teenagers and drug abuse. She visited shelters for runaway teens and raised funds for the shelters. She coordinated an effort with Walt Disney World to donate thousands of brochures produced by their graphics department to bring

awareness to this issue. In addition, she collaborated with IBM to update the Florida Network computer records.

Mrs. Martinez also took interest in the Governor's Mansion. Her predecessor, Mrs. Adele Graham, had made some improvements to the interior. Mrs. Martinez focused on the outside, raising more than \$100,000 in private donations to add native plants, and to build fountains and a dancing manatee sculpture reflective of her concern for preservation of the Florida environment.

Margie Grace Mixon (January 3 - January 6, 1987)

Mrs. Mixon was First Lady for only three days - possibly the shortest time on the job for any first lady.

When Governor Graham was elected to the U.S. Senate, he was sworn in three days prior to completing his term as Florida's Governor. The Lieutenant Governor, John Wayne Mixson, was sworn in, and Mrs. Mixon became First Lady of Florida.

Adele Khoury Graham (1979-1987)

Adele Khoury, of Miami Springs, married Robert (Bob) Graham in 1959. She taught history and English in the public schools of Massachusetts while her husband studied at Harvard Law School. As First Lady of Florida, Mrs. Graham promoted a variety of social issues, especially improvement of Florida's public schools and enhancement of services for elderly Floridians. With her encouragement, the State of Florida hired the first curator for the Governor's Mansion. The curator studies and preserves the Mansion's heritage and furnishings.

Mrs. Graham undertook a project that involved improvements to the interior of the Governor's Mansion to make it more representative of the Florida environment. She added an outside room to the structure by raising private funds.

In 1987, the Grahams established a home in Washington, D.C., where Bob Graham serves as a United States Senator. The Grahams have four children.

Mrs. Graham is still dedicated to youth-related issues and dropout prevention. She is a board member of the National Association of Partners in Education (NAPE); through her efforts, a book entitled, *Finish for the Future: Exemplary Partnerships for School Dropout Prevention* has been completed and distributed to schools throughout the nation.

Donna Lou Harper Askew (1971-1979)

"To me it is a wonderful privilege to be a mother, and I have learned that motherhood is really a constant, continuous effort to teach ideals, set examples, and work toward life patterns." -- First Lady Donna Askew

Mother's Day has always been an important day of celebration for the Askews, extended to both the Governor's and the First Lady's mothers. Mrs. Askew has stated that she finds great strength and inspiration in both women.

Mrs. Askew's interests in family and youth were present in all the activities she engaged in as First Lady. It was her strong belief that her job was to support her husband in his most demanding job.

One of her most memorable moments in the Governor's Mansion was to watch her husband, the Governor, teach their children how to shoot marbles, a game he had enjoyed in childhood.

Erika Mattfeld Kirk (1967-1971)

Claude Kirk became the first Republican governor of the State of Florida in 100 years. This was not his only accomplishment. He brought a "mystery lady" to his inauguration; shortly after, she would become his wife and the First Lady.

Erika Mattfeld Kirk was one of six children born in Bremen, Germany. At age 22, while working as a hotel office manager in Switzerland, she met her

first husband, a businessman from Rio de Janeiro. While the marriage did not last long, Erika remained in Brazil. A few years later, she met Claude Kirk.

The couple was married soon after inauguration and settled in the Governor's Mansion. Soon two children were added to the family. The young Mrs. Kirk was energetic and involved with her children, her husband, and her new public life. She and her husband worked closely in the area of tourism and opened up Florida to the international tourist trade.