

BOOK REVIEWS



Thunder on the River: The Civil War in Northeast Florida

By Daniel L. Schafer

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012

348 pps., illustrations, maps, \$29.95 hardcover

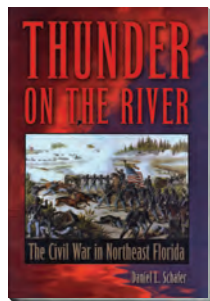
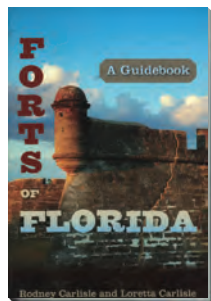
Forts of Florida: A Guidebook

By Rodney Carlisle and Loretta Carlisle

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012

262 pps., photographs, illustrations, \$19.95 paperback

Reviewed by Bob Beatty



Students of history have often overlooked the complex role Florida has played in the American story. Florida's origins as a Spanish colony and its status as the Eastern seaboard's last frontier during its first century as a territory and state have led many scholars to ignore it as a sparsely populated part of the nation where little of significance happened. These University Press of Florida books are two recent entries in the press's catalog that correct this oversight.

Daniel L. Schafer's *Thunder on the River: The Civil War in Northeast Florida*, which grew out of his contribution to the 1984 volume *Jacksonville's Ordeal by Fire: A Civil*

War History, is a scholarly look at the Civil War's impact on Jacksonville, Florida, and its surrounds. Schafer's engaging writing style and use of a variety of primary sources offer detailed insights into a heretofore little-known Civil War story in a way that appeals to academic and non-academic audiences.

Schafer arranges his narrative chronologically. He begins with the secession crisis, documenting well a multitude of viewpoints, from diehard secessionists to Unionists (from both the North and the South). Subsequent chapters cover the four Union occupations of Jacksonville, warfare along the St. John's River (giving the book its title), the impact of Union occupation and abandonment of the city of its residents, self-emancipation for the region's enslaved population, African American service in the Union army, and a mention of postwar Jacksonville.


The author's focus on the non-military aspects of Civil War-era Jacksonville makes the book particularly informative and useful. His extensive bibliography and sources provide fodder for additional research on the war's impact in other areas of the state, Reconstruction-era Jacksonville, and the memory of the Civil War in Jacksonville and throughout Florida.

Rodney and Loretta Carlisle's *Forts of Florida: A Guidebook* is an excellent examination of the physical remnants of Florida's military past. Although it features some contemporary sites, the work focuses primarily on the state's historic forts—tangible remainders of Florida's coastal and interior defense systems.

The introduction gives a succinct overview of the peninsula's role in American military history—from Spanish colonization through the 20th century. This, combined with histories of the sites they visited, offers readers a primer on Florida's military history. This work is a guidebook in the truest sense of the word.

The Carlises organized the book by region, providing a brief history of each site as well as user-friendly information such as location and driving directions, hours, fees, contact information, and what to see at the site itself and nearby.

Although it features two of the sites Schafer mentions (Fort Clinch and the Castillo de San Marcos), *Forts of Florida* offers none of Schafer's historical analysis. This is not a major concern, however, as the book's intentions are not scholarly. Instead, it is most useful to those interested in a casual look at Florida's history. (And it is not lost on this reviewer how much family visits to forts in Florida and elsewhere helped to instill his passion for history.)

In different ways, *Thunder on the River* and *Forts of Florida* both contribute much to the study of Florida's history and are useful additions to the bookshelves of students of Florida, military, Civil War, and Southern history. 

Bob Beatty is vice president for programs at the American Association for State and Local History in Nashville, Tennessee. Prior to that he directed education programs at the Orange County Regional History Center in Orlando, Florida.

Pops: The Willie Stargell Story

By Richard "Pete" Peterson

Chicago: Triumph Books, 2013

242 pp., photographs, \$24.95 hardcover

Willie Stargell: A Life in Baseball

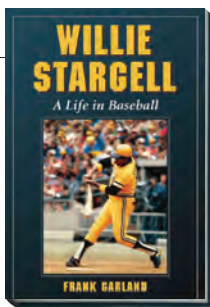
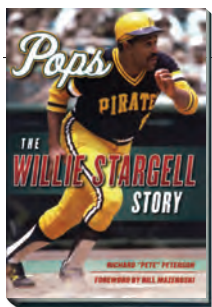
By Frank Garland

Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2013

272 pp., photographs, \$29.95 softcover

Reviewed by Craig Britcher, curatorial assistant, Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum at the Heinz History Center

Willie Stargell was a Hall of Famer both on and off the field. Manager Chuck Tanner, at



the 1979 Dapper Dan Awards, appropriately dubbed him the Most Valuable Person.

His prodigious home run clouts became legendary. Drives not only cleared fences, they left ballparks. Pitcher Don Sutton once declared that Willie “doesn’t just hit pitchers, he takes away their dignity.” Over a 21-year career, the seven-time all-star amassed a franchise record 475 home runs. “Pops,” at age 39, led the “We Are Family” 1979 Pittsburgh Pirates to a World Series title and finally earned the coveted Most Valuable Player award that eluded him in the 1971 championship season. Coincidentally, we suddenly have two fine books to learn more about the man.

In *Pops: The Willie Stargell Story*, Richard Peterson provides a well-written and entertaining narrative of the complex Pirate hero who was able to “turn adversity into motivation” while maintaining a positive attitude. Child abuse by an aunt and an absent father formed him as a child. Racism in the Southern minor leagues reared itself in a very real-life death threat. After the death of mentor Roberto Clemente, Stargell assumed leadership of the team and brought out the best play in teammates by augmenting their confidence.

Frank Garland in *Willie Stargell: A Life in Baseball* interviewed over 80 teammates, friends, and family members and his thoroughness shows. Willie clearly was a big man who inspired big stories. Garland’s efforts in providing the recollections of key individuals

and familial insights is phenomenal. Many of the seldom-seen photos are touching, particularly in youthful or candid moments provided by Willie’s sister Sandrus Collier.

Early on in his career, Stargell met and was moved by local children who were skipping school because they did not have lunch money. During the 1970 season, his daughter Wendy was diagnosed with sickle cell anemia and in the winter he toured with the USO in Vietnam, meeting wounded soldiers. These moments fueled volunteer work with Job & Youth Corps, the starting of The Black Athletes Foundation for Research in Sickle Cell Disease, and the Willie Stargell Foundation. His informal charity work and willingness to make appearances helped countless Pittsburghers.

Peterson and Garland each give a new generation of Pirates fans a good opportunity to learn about the human being as opposed to a mythical, somewhat canonized figure. Both authors explore the highs and lows of Willie’s career within an excellent historical and baseball contextual framework. The storyline is importantly continued where the 1984 autobiography left off. Details of Stargell and Tanner’s break with the new Pirate ownership in the mid-1980s and their subsequent reunion with the organization are illuminating. In his later years, Willie suffered from diabetes, heart problems, and kidney failure. Fans mourned his passing at PNC Park’s inaugural game. Pittsburghers will forever empathize with Stargell while reading the quote inscribed underneath his statue: “Last night, coming in from the airport, we came through the tunnel and the city opened up its arms and I felt at home.”



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