

# Reflections on the State Songs of Florida

DAVID Z. KUSHNER

According to the *Laws of the State of Florida* (Regular Session, 1913), House Government Resolution No. 24 stated, under the date of 12 May 1913,

That, Whereas, in view of the fact that many of the Public Schools of the State are now singing, as a part of their daily exercise, the song, "Florida, My Florida," a song written in 1894 by Rev. Dr. C.V. Waugh, for many years an honored Professor of Languages in the old Florida Agricultural College in Lake City, and whereas,

The said song has both metrical and patriotic merit of the kind calculated to inspire love for home and native State, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, that this song, "Florida, My Florida," be and the same is hereby declared by the Legislature of the State of Florida to be the "State Song," to be sung to the tune of "Maryland, My Maryland," and that it is recommended for use in the daily exercises of the public schools of the State of Florida, as well as at all public gatherings where singing forms a part of the program.

The following is the song:

## *FLORIDA, MY FLORIDA*

(State Patriotic Song for Schools, C.V. Waugh)

Land of my birth, bright sunkissed land,  
Florida, My Florida,  
Laded by the Gulf and Ocean grand,  
Florida, My Florida,  
Of all the States in East or West,  
Unto my heart thou art the best;  
Here may I live, here may I rest,  
Florida, My Florida.

In country, town, or hills and dells,  
Florida, My Florida,  
The rhythmic chimes of thy school bells  
Florida, My Florida,  
Will call thy children day by day  
To learn to walk the patriot's way,  
Firmly to stand for thee for aye,  
Florida, My Florida.  
The golden fruit the world outshines  
Florida, My Florida,  
Thy gardens and thy phosphate mines,  
Florida, My Florida,

Yield their rich store of good supply,  
To still the voice of hunger's cry,—  
For thee we'll live, for thee we'll die,  
Florida, My Florida.

Th' oppressors' rod can't rest on thee,  
Florida My Florida,  
Thy sons and daughters free must be,  
Florida, My Florida,  
From North and South, from East and West,  
From freezing blasts they come for rest,  
And find in thee their earnest quest,  
Florida, My Florida.

When ills betide and woes o'ertake,  
Florida, My Florida,  
Thy sons and daughters quick will make,—  
Florida, My Florida,  
The sacrifice of loves and life  
To save from woe, from ills and strife,  
To fell thy foes in danger rife,  
Florida, My Florida<sup>1</sup>

Governor Park Trammell (1876-1936)<sup>2</sup> signed the resolution on 12 May 1913. Thus, Florida, which became a state on 3 March 1845 along with Iowa, had its first state song. The lyrics were composed in 1893 by the Reverend Chastain V. Waugh (1848-1935). He appropriated the music from the German air, "*Der Tannenbaum*," known in the United States as "O Christmas Tree."

Curiously, James Ryder Randall (1839-1908) penned the nine-stanza poem, "Maryland! My Maryland," in April 1861, and set it to the same tune, known also as "*Lauriger Horatius*" (Example 1). It became Maryland's state song in 1939, by which time Florida already had an official state song. Randall, a native of Baltimore, who trained as a poet at Georgetown College, was widely traveled in the South—Florida in particular, as well as in South America and the West Indies. He settled into a professorship at Poydras College at Pointe Coupee Parish in Louisiana.<sup>3</sup> The text, set to the tune of "*Ma Normandie*" by H.C. Wagner, became a rallying cry to southerners in the early stages of the Civil War.

---

<sup>1</sup> From "House Concurrent Resolution No. 24," *Laws of the State of Florida adapted by the Legislature of Florida at its Regular Session 1913 under the Constitution of A.D. 1885*, 517-18.

<sup>2</sup> Trammell, a lawyer, fruit grower, newspaper owner and editor, and political figure, served as Florida's Governor from 1913-17. He was, thus, new in this position when he proffered his written blessing to the adoption of Florida's first state song. Trammell later served in the United States Senate from 1917-36. For further information about Trammell, see Stephen Kerber, *Park Trammell of Florida: A Political Biography*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> For further information about Randall and the Maryland state song, see "Maryland, My Maryland," in Henry E. Harman, *The History of Famous Songs and Poems* (Atlanta: Industrial Press Publishing Co., 1925), 38-42.

**Example 1. “Maryland, My Maryland,” in John W. Schaum, compiler, arranger, and editor, *Fifty Songs—Fifty States*. Milwaukee: Schaum Publications, Inc., 1971, p. 10.**

The Reverend Waugh (see Plate 1), a native of Manchester, Virginia, graduated from Richmond College in 1872; a year later he was ordained as a Baptist minister. After preaching in small communities in the Old Dominion for several years, he was called to serve the First Baptist Church in Gainesville, Florida on 22 October 1876. By 1879-80, the Church fell behind in its payments to the minister—and Waugh failed to attend important meetings.



**Plate 1. C. V. Waugh. Photo in C. Douglas Weaver, *Every Town Needs a Downtown Church*. Brentwood, TN: Southern Baptist Historical Society and Nashville, TN: Fields Publishing, Inc., 2000, p. 19.**

In January 1881, the Church reduced their pastor's salary from the original sum of \$600 per annum to \$500 per annum. One of the results of the austerity program was that the minister took a post in Suffolk, Virginia; he returned to the Gainesville pulpit in February 1883. In January 1886 he once again resigned, when the Church fell into arrears on its payments, and owed him \$254.75. By 1893, Waugh had taken up a new career, that of an academic and administrator at the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lake City, Florida, an institution which, in 1906, became the University of Florida. Skilled in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, German, French, and Spanish, he served as a professor of ancient and modern languages. It was in this year that he created "Florida, My Florida." An examination of the text indicates that, among the predictable virtues of the state, such as "sunkissed land" and "golden fruit," are "thy gardens and thy phosphate mines." The phosphate industry was indeed held by the citizenry to be important to their wealth and health, although it had been discovered only as recently as 1884 on the Peace River near Arcadia. The song maintained its popularity throughout its existence; other than the odiferous phosphate, it passed the smell test with flying colors.

One is struck immediately by the fact that Waugh's words, set to the stirring "*O Tannenbaum*" music, had already been adopted by many of the state's public schools as part of the daily regimen. The Florida legislature undoubtedly observed that the song promoted love for home and state and, consequently, recommended (but did not require) that it be sung not only in the school setting but also at "all public gatherings where singing forms part of the program." Prior to the time in which the song "officially" served the citizenry, the Florida State Flag (see Plate 2) was adopted by Joint Resolution No. 4, Legislature, 1899, and ratified in the general election of 1900. The State Flower, the orange blossom, was so designated by Concurrent Resolution No. 15, Legislature, 1909, and the State Bird, the mocking bird (see Plate 3) was so declared by Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 3, Legislature, 1927.



**Plate 2. Florida State Flag**



**Plate 3. Florida State Flower—Orange Blossom and Florida State Bird—Mocking Bird in Dorothy Dodd, *Florida, the Land of Romance*. Tallahassee: The Peninsular Publishing Co., 1956, p. 83.**

As for Waugh, he settled in Jacksonville, Florida, and taught at the YMCA as well as at his private school, essentially a college preparatory institution. The educator also worked to strengthen the work of the Baptist Church, and was a leader in the movement to bring DeLand Academy, later to become Stetson University, under the control of the Baptist denomination. His many activities included promotion of the church paper, *The Florida Baptist*. Waugh died at his home at 2123 Silver Street in Jacksonville on 16 December 1935.<sup>4</sup> His burial took place at the Evergreen Cemetery in Gainesville, Florida (see Plate 4).

---

<sup>4</sup> For further information about C.V. Waugh's early life and career, see C. Douglas Weaver, *Every Town Needs a Downtown Church* (Brentwood, TN: Southern Baptist Historical Society and Nashville, TN: Fields Publishing 2000), 18-24.



**Plate 4. Tomb of C. V. Waugh. Photo by Gary Galván.4**

“Florida, My Florida” had a run of twenty-two years as the state song, but, in the year of Waugh’s passing, the winds of change were strong enough to cause the state legislature and the Governor to sign off on a new state song, namely Stephen Collins Foster’s “Old Folks at Home,” known also as “The S’wanee River.” Simon Pierre Robineau, who had represented Dade County in the Florida House of Representatives since 1929 and was in his final year in this position, introduced House Concurrent Resolution No. 22, the text of which follows:

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the State of Florida, the Senate concurring:

THAT, from and after the adoption of this amendment, the official song of The State of Florida, to be sung in the schools and at all other public or official gatherings, shall be [“The S’wanee River \(Old Folks at Home\),”](#) written by Stephen Foster and entered according to an Act of Congress by Firth, Pond, & Co. in 1851, in the Clerk’s office of the District Court of the Southern District of New York. The following is the song:

#### FIRST VERSE

Way down upon de S’wanee ribber,  
Far, far away,  
Dere’s wha my heart is turning ebber,  
Dere’s wha de old folks stay.  
All up and down de whole creation.  
Sadly I roam,  
Still longing for de old plantation,  
And for de old folks at home.

---

## CHORUS

All de world am sad and dreary,  
Eb-ry where I roam,  
Oh! darkeys how my heart grows weary,  
Far from de old folks at home.

## SECOND VERSE

All round de little farm I wandered  
When I was young.  
Den many happy days I squandered,  
Many de songs I sung,  
When I was playing wid my brudder  
Happy was I.  
Oh! take me to my kind old mudder,  
Dere let me live and die.

## THIRD VERSE

One little hut among de bushes,  
One dat I love,  
Still sadly to my mem'ry rushes,  
No matter where I rove  
When will I see de bees a humming  
All round de comb?  
When will I hear de banjo tumming  
Down in my good old home?

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that House Concurrent Resolution No. 24,  
The Laws of Florida, Acts of 1913, be and the same is hereby repealed.<sup>5</sup>

On 24 May 1935, the Florida Senate adopted the House Bill and, on 29 May, it was signed into law by David Sholtz, Governor of the State of Florida. And thus it was that Waugh's text, with its "O Christmas Tree" music, was replaced by Foster's text and music. The virtues of sun, patriotism, and phosphate were replaced by a "longing for de old plantation" (see Example 2).

---

<sup>5</sup> See *Journal of the House of Representatives* (15 May 1935), 78.



**Example 2. Excerpt from Stephen Foster’s “Old Folks at Home” in Joseph E. Maddy and W. Otto Miessner, compilers and editors, *All-American Song Book*. New York: Robbins Music Corporation, 1942, p. 108.**

It was during this period that the nation suffered from the economic disasters and dislocations created by the Great Depression, the political cauldron that boiled over into World War II, and the upheavals in the national government that resulted in the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It is possible that remembrances of times past, times more placid and predictable, found their musical analogy in the sentiments expressed by Foster’s dislocated slave. The fact that those times were not as nostalgic for the descendants of the slaves who, like Foster’s protagonist, were less than enthused about life on “de old plantation” would not have occurred to them. Florida, in 1935, was a racially segregated state.

Stephen Collins Foster (1826-64), born in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania, never set foot in Florida. But he was attracted to the minstrel shows of his era and, in particular, those produced by E.P. Christy. In fact, when “Old Folks at Home” was published in 1851 by Firth, Pond & Co. of 1 Franklin Square, Pittsburgh, it was billed as an Ethiopian melody, and attribution of the words and music was rendered to Christy. This was an attempt by Foster to capitalize on the fame of the minstrel maestro. Although he later rethought this decision, and asked Christy to give him permission to use his own name as the author, Christy would not relent. As a result, the latter’s name appeared on the music until, in 1879, its copyright had expired. Foster’s other plantation songs of that time, however, soon called the public’s attention to him as the rightful composer of “Old Folks at Home.”

It was during this time that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,<sup>6</sup> took the literary world by storm. That it coincided with Foster’s home songs, or plantation songs, only helped both creators. While Foster’s conception of “Tom” is that of a pathetic figure who longs to be home, as opposed to his present place of servitude, Stowe’s Uncle Tom figure possesses an array of emotions, displays

<sup>6</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, edited by Kenneth S. Lynn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1962).



admirable character traits, and suffers martyrdom at the hands of his latest owner, the nefarious Simon Legree. Numerous staged versions of Stowe's novel included music, and "Old Folks at Home" was among those songs included to enhance the story line.

It is of some interest to note here that Stowe responded to the plea of "The Black Swan," the stage name of the American singer Elizabeth Greenfield, to assist her in gaining engagements in London when both were in that city in the spring of 1853. The author reports in her collection of published letters, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*,<sup>7</sup> on a performance of "Old Folks at Home" by the diva at Stafford House on 23 May before a group of philanthropists with musical interests:

She sang the ballad, "Old Folks at Home," giving one verse in the soprano, and another in the tenor voice.... Lord Shaftsbury was there. He came and spoke to us after the concert. Speaking of Miss Greenfield, he said. "I consider the use of these halls for the encouragement of an outcast race, a *consecration*. This is the true use of wealth and splendor when it is employed to raise up and encourage the despised and forgotten."<sup>8</sup>

The politicians in the Florida legislature of 1935 gave no heed to the notion of elevating and ennobling the Negro race; indeed, they apparently saw nothing inappropriate about the dialect or the sentiments of the text. In this regard, the words of Alfred Bunn (1796-1860), the English theater manager, translator of operatic libretti, and commentator on English and American socio-cultural issues, offer a striking contrast with the attitudes of Stowe and Shaftsbury. Bunn, in New York, shortly after the scene in London described by Stowe, attended a performance by "The Black Swan" at the Metropolitan Hall. After noting a sign that proclaimed that no person of color will be admitted, he makes the following observations:

...Having heard, from the earliest moment we could hear and understand anything, that "a cat may look at a king," the idea of one nigger [sic] not being allowed to look at another, did strike us as the height of all human—impudence?—no, let us say, drollery. We did hear that the delicate distinction between "blackey" on the stage and "blackey" in the audience, ended by a place being set apart in the gallery of this huge assembly room for the especial accommodation of the people of Africa, who might desire to listen to the strains of their sisterhood.<sup>9</sup>

That nary a word is expended on the quality of the performance suggests that the matter of race was *the* issue.

Once "Old Folks at Home" established itself as the Florida State Song, it found relatively smooth sailing in a state whose attitudes more accurately reflected those of Alfred Bunn than those of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Foster, who may well have harbored sympathy for the cause of the abolitionists, was largely uninvolved in political movements to remedy the racial divide. By the time the Foster song became identified with Florida, its racial implications were given scant attention by politicians and opinion makers. The song's other title, "S'wanee River," and its reference to this

---

<sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Land*, 2 vols. (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1854).

<sup>8</sup> As quoted in William W. Austin, "Susanna," "Jeanie," and "The Old Folks at Home" (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 250.

<sup>9</sup> As quoted in Austin, op. cit., 251, from Bunn's *Old England and New England* (1853), 61.

body of water in the opening line of text, might have altered the course of the song's association with Florida had not the composer settled on this particular river from other choices he had considered. Morrison Foster recounts how his brother barged into his office one day, and asked him to suggest the name of a southern river with two syllables. After discarding such possibilities as Yazoo and Pedee, an atlas was consulted, and Morrison's finger stopped at "Suwannee."<sup>10</sup> That was a "eureka" moment for Stephen, and thus it was that "Uncle Tom" went from his original home in Kentucky to the banks of a "ribber" that essentially cuts off the Florida panhandle from the state as a whole; it flows, in fact, from the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia to the Gulf of Mexico in Florida (see Plate 5). Such are the strange ways in which history unfolds.

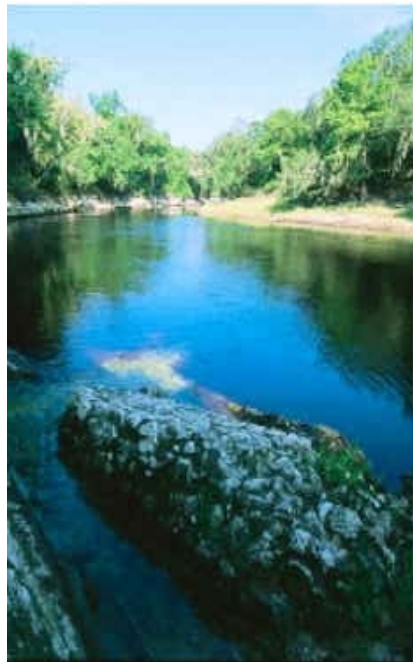


Plate 5

"Old Folks at Home" was not the only plantation song by Foster to rise to the level of a state song. The State of Kentucky adopted "My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night" as its state song in 1928, and it served the same essential functions as the Florida song. But there is one major difference with respect to the treatment of text. During the 1986 regular session of its General Assembly, Kentucky adopted a modern version of its state song via passage of House Resolution 159 and Senate Resolution 114. The word "darkies" in the opening line of the song was changed to "people," while the singular "darkey" in verse three is also changed to "people." The context makes it clear, however, whose "head must bow" and whose "back will have to bend."

The trajectory of the Florida state song took several unusual turns. Song collections, intended for school, church, and community use, for example, began to reflect changing public attitudes about the texts. *J. J. Robbins Suggests SING ALONG*

---

<sup>10</sup> Austin, *ibid.*, 248.

*WITH Harry Wilson*,<sup>11</sup> for example, employed the original text (although “ribber” is altered to “river”), and thus the refrain ends with the words, “Oh! darkies how my heart grows weary, Far from de old folks at home.” Three years later, *Singing Together*,<sup>12</sup> a collection of songs designed for children in the fifth grade, changes the close of the refrain to read, “O loved ones, how my heart grows weary, Far from the old folks at home.” Thus, “darkies” becomes “loved ones” and “de” becomes “the.” But both versions retain the original intent by including “Still longing for the old plantation.”

In terms of recorded versions, it is of more than passing interest that in May and June 1958, and June 1961, RCA recorded a group of Foster songs, including “Old Folks at Home,” and released them under the title *Stephen Foster Song Book*. The performance was by the Robert Shaw Chorale. Later, in a remastered release, the sonically improved performance was made available on a compact disc (RCA Victor 0902661253-2). Each of the songs retains the original text and dialect.

In 1948, the year of Harry S. Truman’s election as President of the United States, and the year of Wilson’s song book, a third party candidate, J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, ran primarily on a platform supporting the concept of segregated schools and other public venues in the wake of a burgeoning civil rights movement within the Democratic Party. His party, the States Rights’ Democratic Party, commonly known as the “Dixiecrats,” won the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Alabama with a yield of thirty-nine electoral votes. With the Democrats strongly in support of civil rights legislation in 1964, Thurmond joined the Republican Party and supported Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona for President against the Democratic nominee, President Lyndon Baines Johnson of Texas.

As a member of the party of Abraham Lincoln, he was rewarded with repeated victories in his senatorial races in South Carolina. When African-Americans in the South gained voting rights, Thurmond turned from his segregationist positions and made an effort to include them in the political process. He went so far as to support a national holiday in honor of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>13</sup>

The Florida state song was rendered at various state and more local functions over the years. When, for example, the Old Capitol was abandoned in favor of the new one, a twenty-two story edifice built at a cost of \$43 million, a dedication ceremony was held on 31 March 1978. As part of the celebratory program, the Florida state song was performed in a sanitized version by choirs drawn from Tallahassee Community College, Florida A & M University, and Florida State University accompanied by the FSU Symphony Orchestra. In more recent times, at

---

<sup>11</sup> Harry Robert Wilson, arranger, *J. J. Robbins Suggests SING ALONG with Harry Wilson* (New York: J. J. Robbins & Sons, Inc., 1948), song no. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Lilla Belle Pitts, Mabelle Glenn, and Lorrain E. Watters, *Singing Along* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1951), 70. See also Joseph E. Maddy and W. Otto Miessner, compilers and editors, *All-American Song Book* (New York: Robbins Music Corporation, 1942), 108. In this community song book, the original text with its Negro dialect is used, with the exception of the word “ribber,” which is sanitized to “river.”

<sup>13</sup> Thurmond’s long and colorful life included two marriages. His first wife, Jean Crouch, to whom he was married from 1947-60, died childless. In 1968, Thurmond, aged 66, married Nancy Janice Moore, a former Miss South Carolina, who was then twenty-two years old. The union produced four children, the last of which arrived in 1976 when the master politician was 76 years old. It was an extreme irony that in the year of his death, Jack Bass and Marilyn W. Thompson reported in their book, *Ol’ Strom: An Unauthorized Biography of Strom Thurmond* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003) that the Senator’s first child was actually Essie Mae Washington-Williams. She was born in 1925 to Carrie “Tunch” Butler, a black maid, and Thurmond.

the two inaugurations of Jeb Bush as Governor of Florida, the song was again a major feature of the program. Political as well as musical considerations were part of the equation on both occasions. At the first of Bush's inaugurations, on 5 January 1999, the song was sung in a sanitized version that substituted "brothers" for "darkeys," and "longing for my old connection" for "longing for the old plantation." The performance was rendered by the black singer Lisa Kemp, who is best known for her flourishing evangelical music ministry. In a promotion of her recording, *Keep the Faith*, Kemp's notes inform us that her "unique way of bringing the message in her sermons through spoken word and song, shows clearly how God has called her to spread the Good News of Jesus."<sup>14</sup> If tinkering with the text of the state song assuaged the concerns of those who objected to its racial implications, the implications of choosing Kemp to deliver the song's newer hybrid message may have escaped the program selection committee's notice. Her professional sectarian associations would immediately have raised the proverbial eyebrow of the knowing, but politics sometimes make for strange bedfellows.<sup>15</sup>

By the time of Bush's second inauguration, on 7 January 2003, Lisa Kemp's role as state song-giver was taken by Ardelia Butts, then a student at Florida A & M University in Tallahassee and later a student at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach. Her accompanist was keyboardist Wendell Reed. Ms. Butts's account of the song surprised some hearers, those who knew the original words, and who were not present at the first inauguration, because the familiar "longing for the old plantation" was again replaced with "longing for my old connection." According to the singer, she was given this version of the text by Dr. Julian E. White, chairman of the Department of Music at Florida A & M University. He, in turn, had received the text through those responsible for the inaugural program. In commenting on this aspect of the inauguration, Diane Roberts wryly noted that a young woman gave a soulful rendition of the state song of Florida, "Old Folks at Home."

Sadly, she muffed the words to one verse. The line "still longing for the old plantation" inexplicably came out "still longing for my old connection."<sup>16</sup> What the reporter took to be an error on the singer's part was, in fact, an effort to disassociate modern-day Florida with reminiscences of plantation days.

Other musical aspects of the inauguration program are worthy of mention. The national anthem, for example, was rendered by John Popper on the harmonica, while various musical interludes were provided by Michael W. Smith, the contemporary Christian singer, and by the all-black Boys' Choir of Tallahassee, directed by Earle Lee, Jr.<sup>17</sup>

As the state song has undergone textual tampering for the sake of political correctness, its Yankee composer continues to be honored at the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in White Springs. Funding for the park, and attendance at the Foster-related exhibits, have dwindled in recent years. But Elderhostelers who come to the State Park can attend a morning-long program devoted to the life, career,

---

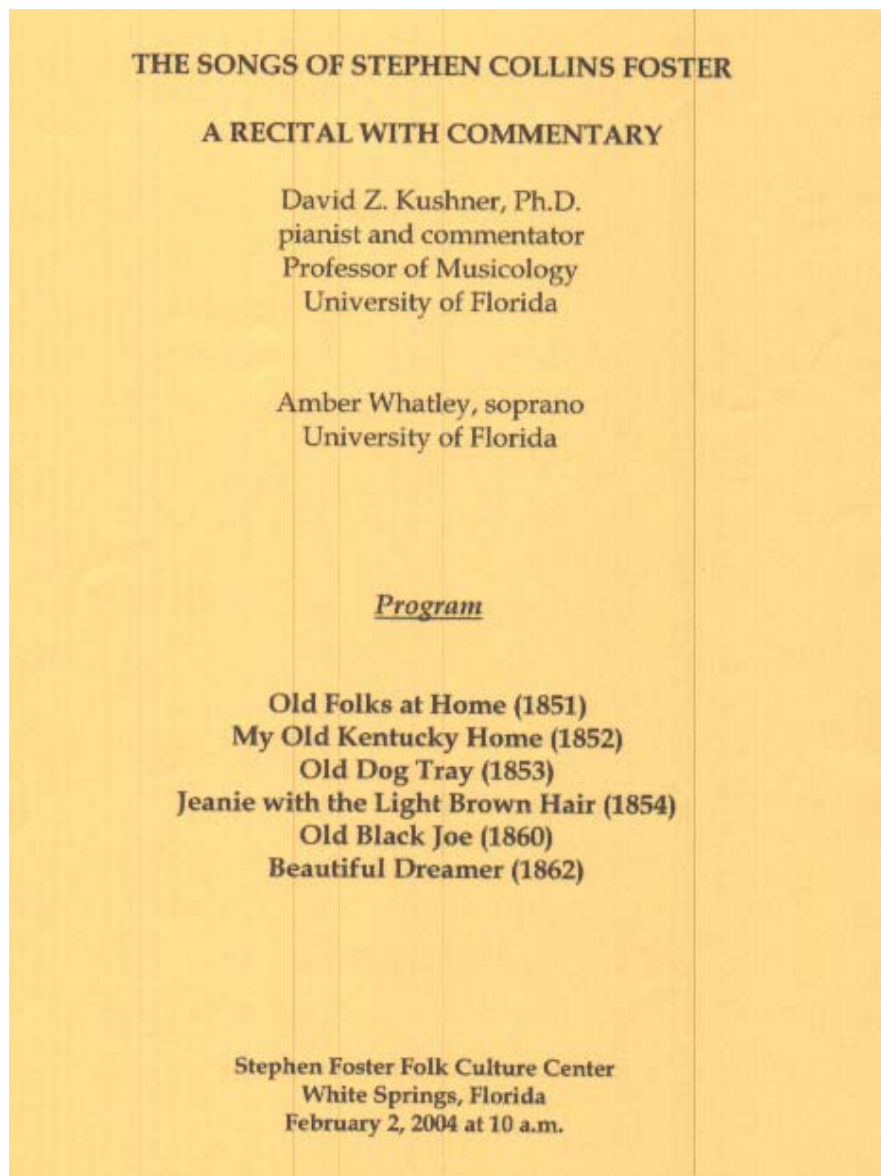
<sup>14</sup> <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/lisakemp>

<sup>15</sup> For an account of the inauguration as a whole, see "It was a cold day in Tallahassee," *Gainesville Sun* (6 January 1999), 7A

<sup>16</sup> Diane Roberts, "The Bush dynasty parties on," *Floridian, St. Petersburg Times* (10 January 2003), 1D.

<sup>17</sup> The choir, instituted by Lee in 1995, is made up of boys and young men from broken homes. Lee has molded them into a highly respected ensemble, given them a sense of worth, and brought them honor and acclaim. Among their recognitions was the "Use Your Life Award" from Oprah Winfrey's Angel Network. See [http://www.oprah.com/uyl/angel/uyl\\_angel\\_20020524\\_e.jhtml](http://www.oprah.com/uyl/angel/uyl_angel_20020524_e.jhtml)

and songs of Foster. For several years, this writer and guest sopranos, Sonya Gable-Wilson, Amber Whatley, and Samantha Barnsfather, have presented this program (see Figure 1); songs are sung in Foster's original dialect, and commentary is offered placing the music and text in historical context.



**Figure 1. Program on the “Songs of Stephen Foster” by David Z. Kushner and Amber Whatley for the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center in White Springs, Florida.**

Most of Florida's political leaders made peace of sorts with the issues related to the state song, but some sought solutions other than sanitization. Representative Willie Logan (D-Opa-Locka), for example, proposed abolishing the song and sponsoring a contest for a new state song that would take into account the modernity of present-day Florida (House Bill 1069). The House summary of the proposal follows:

Providing for the creation of an 11-member State Song Commission.  
Directs the commission to hold a statewide contest among Florida residents for the selection of an official state song.

Provides that the winner shall receive a 4-year tuition waiver scholarship.  
Directs the commission to prepare legislation for introduction by a member of either house of the Legislature for submission at the next Regular Session of the Legislature amending chapter 15, Florida Statutes, declaring the official state song of Florida.<sup>18</sup>

In April 1997 he withdrew the bill when the Senate version was tied up in committee due to the opposition of such figures Senator Charles Williams (D-Live Oak). Opposition in the House was also recorded by Representative Randy Mackey (D-Plant City), whose district included the Suwannee River. Mackey, indeed, based his satisfaction with the status quo on the premise that the offensive language is now regularly replaced by more acceptable words.<sup>19</sup>

Willie Logan remained a legislator of prominence on a state-wide basis. Yet, his party, which had named him House Democratic Leader-elect in 1997, ultimately replaced him as their nominee in January 1998 with Representative Anne Mackenzie (D-Fort Lauderdale). While reasons advanced for his ouster included his alleged ineffectiveness in recruiting new Democratic candidates, a poor record in fund raising, and a voting record that was perceived as too liberal, there was an undercurrent of opinion that suggested racism as a leading cause of the demotion. Logan, nonetheless, maintained a high profile as evidenced by his selection as keynote speaker at a banquet held by the University of Florida's Black Law Student Association as part of the UF Levin College of Law's inaugural symposium, "Confronting Race: Strategies and Issues for the 21st Century." The event was hosted by the law college's Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations" on 20-21 February 1998.

In the aftermath of his experience with his party's power brokers, Logan decided to run for the United States Senate as an Independent in the 2000 election year. His opponents were Democratic Insurance Commissioner Bill Nelson and Republican Representative Bill McCollum. Nelson was victorious. Shortly thereafter, Logan's star began to wane abruptly in the wake of two headline-grabbing scandals. On 24 March 2001 he was arrested by the Miami-Dade police and charged with exposure of sexual organs, loitering in or around a bathroom, possession of marijuana, and resisting arrest with violence. Circuit Judge Manuel Crespo ruled that a police officer did not have the right to look through a peephole, by which means Logan had been observed, and, consequently, the evidence against the former political leader was essentially ruled inadmissible.<sup>20</sup> On 18 October of the same year, the Florida Commission on Ethics "found probable cause to believe that Willie Logan, former member of the Florida House of Representatives, may have wrongfully obtained and/or used State funds tied to his public office in a manner inconsistent with the proper performance of his public duties. Logan may have claimed reimbursement for rent for his district office that he had not actually paid to the corporation from which he rented the space."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> *Florida House of Representatives—1997, HB 1069*, 1-3.

<sup>19</sup> "No swan song for state song," *The (Miami) Herald* (29 April 1997), 6B.

<sup>20</sup> "Prosecutors to appeal suppressed evidence ruling in Logan case," *Naples Daily News* (14 September 2001), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Press Release, *State of Florida Commission on Ethics* (23 October 2001), 2.

The case was settled when the former political figure agreed to receive a public reprimand and to pay a fine of \$8000 for the inappropriate use of state funds.<sup>22</sup>

The saga of the Florida state song is currently on hold awaiting the next episode to be written. While the messenger for change has been derailed from his mission, the stopgap measures that bowdlerize the original text do a disservice both to those who want a genuine change of song and to those who, for reasons of historical accuracy, prefer the words and music as Foster wrote them. Tinkering with the text while maintaining the music is not a long-term solution, as the associations with the original version remain in the collective memory of many; indeed, even were those original verses to be totally forgotten, there is the permanent reminder of them in the State Constitution.

The winds of change, however, are a'coming. On 2 January 2007, at the inauguration ceremony for Florida's new Governor, Charles Crist, there was neither sight nor sound of the Florida state song. It was replaced by "Florida's Song," a composition written by Charles Atkins, a blind blues musician based in Tallahassee. At the present time, State Senator Anthony C. "Tony" Hill and State Representative Ed Homan are leading an effort to replace the current state song with a new one, assisted by the Florida Music Educators' Association. As of 15 May 2007, Florida's musical community has been invited to send submissions to the following web address: [www.justsingflorida.org](http://www.justsingflorida.org) and to follow a set of guidelines listed there. The competition is to close on October 1, 2007, and the top three finalists will be announced in December. Suggestions regarding the selection of the winner include a vote by eligible state voters following a television performance of the leading contenders, and selection of a panel of musical authorities to render the verdict.

In the meantime, the Suwannee River just keeps rolling along.

---

<sup>22</sup> Heidi Otway, "Willie Logan Fined by Ethics Commission," *Capitol News Service* (25 July 2002), 1.

Copyright of *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* is the property of Israel Musicological Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.



Copyright of *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* is the property of Israel Musicological Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.