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Ana Madgeigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slave-owner

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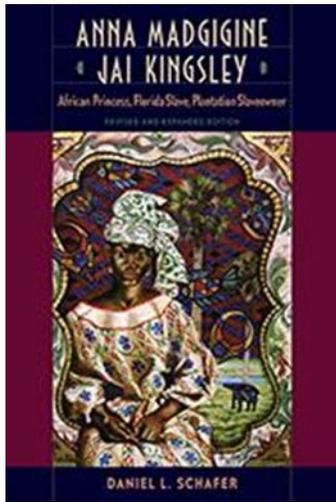
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Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slave-owner. Daniel L. Schafer. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2018. ISBN 978-0-8130-5653-1. 240 p. \$19.95.



As those who have submitted reviews to the University of Florida Press said, “A fascinating look at an extraordinary woman and the complexities of slavery beyond the common image of slavery in the South” (Book List), “An excellent biography....The book is also a chronicle of the transatlantic slave trade and its impact in both Africa and the New World, a history of slavery in Florida, a story of free blacks and a free black community and one part of the story of southern race relations prior to the Civil War”(Florida Historical Quarterly).

My reaction and reflection upon Dr. Schafer’s book centers upon his fascinating description of the slave traders between African and Caribbean countries and the provinces and shores of the American south (particularly the plantation owners who needed and bought and sold slaves to maintain strong and capable workforces). Vivid descriptions of how human beings were bought and sold, beaten and killed, drowned and taken miles from their homes in the holds of gruesome traders’ ships were recounted by Dr. Schafer.

In the book’s centerpiece is an amazing Cinderella story of a thirteen year old girl, Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley. Anna survived a trip by boat from Senegal to the Florida shore, became the wife to slave owner/trader, Zephaniah Kingsley Jr, who bought her in Senegal, who fathered her children and gave her land and eventually set her above all his slaves to be their protector and manager.

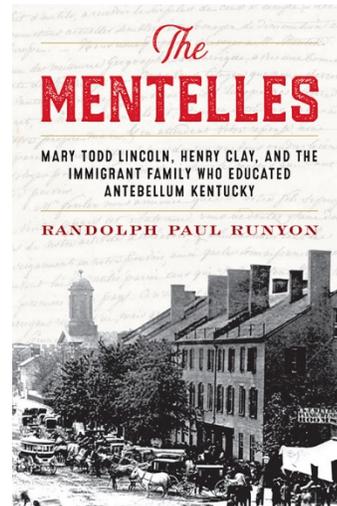
An excellent piece of research which Dr. Schafer claims covers great portions of his life’s work. It is truly a contribution that Florida can be delighted to add to its archives of women in Florida history.

The book has a rich set of Notes, a Bibliography of resources, and a good number of Illustrations to highlight

the historical sites and people of the times. Recommended for women’s studies scholars, academic libraries, and public libraries.

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The Mentelles: Mary Todd Lincoln, Henry Clay, and the Immigrant Family Who Educated Antebellum Kentucky. Randolph Paul Runyon. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2018. ISBN 978-0-8131-7538-6 (cloth); 978-0-8131-7540-9 (epub); 978-0-8131-7539-3 (web pdf). 280 p. All eds. \$40.00.



Many thanks to Randolph Paul Runyon for his vivid and engaging research on the European family history and American experiences of the Mentelles! He gives us a poignant insight when he begins the Prologue (p. 224), “the French “emigrate reluctantly, and expatriate themselves less easily, probably, than any other Europeans. Following the stories of Charlotte and Waldemar Mentelles’ lives from France to the United States, one can see that they came with little riches (basically their fine educations) but with no financial means to jump into American society and rise. It was said that if they had been afforded riches, they might well have returned to France.

Neither of the Mentelles was trained in a specific trade or profession but relied upon their clever and steadfast determination to engage society and citizens whom they met and befriended to establish themselves and make a living. From New York to Ohio to Kentucky the Mentelles found ways to make friends, and finally establish themselves as active members of society in antebellum Kentucky. Through their talents in art, music, and social graces they survived the challenges of a Kentucky society that valued Christianity, traditional mores, and historically social conservative precedents.