

***Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley:  
African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner***

By Daniel L. Schafer. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018. 223 pp. Paperback.  
\$19.95. ISBN 978-0-8130-5653-1.

Daniel L. Schafer's book, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner*, is the riveting story of Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley's life, an African princess captured and sold into slavery, and the history of slavery in Florida under both Spanish and American rule. Originally published in 2003, this revised and expanded edition includes new information Schafer learned from descendants of Anna Jai's family in Africa. According to Schafer's research, Anna was born in 1793 in Jolof, Senegal, to Mba Buiri Nyabu, eventual ruler of Buurba, and Madjiguène Ndiaye, a descendant of the royal Ndaiye family. In 1806, when she was thirteen years old, Anna was captured, sold to a slaver, and transported to Havana, Cuba. It was in Havana that Anna was purchased by Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr., who brought her to his Florida plantation on the St. John's River where, within the year, Anna bore the first of several of Zephaniah's children. Zephaniah, who eventually married Anna, petitioned the Spanish authorities "to issue emancipation papers for an enslaved 'black woman called Anna, around eighteen years of age'"<sup>1</sup> and her three children George, Martha, and Mary. Zephaniah also identified himself as their father.

In 1811, Anna purchased a plantation, including eleven slaves, near Zephaniah where she lived for the next twenty-five years. Anna and her children's freedom were threatened when Florida was ceded to the United States in 1821. As Schafer discusses in the book, Spain had relatively liberal policies regarding issues of race [liberal as compared to those of the United States at the same time] where enslaved people could be freed either through emancipation or by purchasing their freedom. Once Florida became part of the United States, freed people of African descent faced increasing racism and a belief that society consisted of "only two castes: free whites and enslaved blacks."<sup>2</sup> Schafer does a good job of writing about the issue of slavery—looking at the topic through the eyes of people in the story. His discussion of the difference between Spanish and American views of slavery adds another level of complexity to the book.

By October 1837, Anna and her children were forced to leave their Florida home migrating to Haiti to avoid losing their freedom. Just prior to his death in 1843, Zephaniah changed his last will and testament, bequeathing the bulk of his Florida fortune, including land, slaves, and various properties, to Anna and their children still living in Haiti. At the time of his death, Zephaniah was an extremely wealthy man. His estate encompassed over 32,000 acres including four plantations and more than 200 slaves. Anna was forced to return to Florida in 1846 to fight Zephaniah's white relatives who contested his will. Although eventually winning

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel L. Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave Plantation Slaveowner*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 81.

the legal battle, Anna lost most of the inheritance in the Civil War. From 1865 until her death in 1870, Anna lived with her daughter, the wealth she inherited from Zephaniah gone.

Schafer's book is more than just the story of Anna, Zephaniah, and their children. This book is a great introduction to Florida history, particularly northeastern Florida, in the years before and after Florida was under Spanish rule. *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner* provides insight into the history of slavery, the slave trade, and race relations in Florida under both Spanish and American rule. The work also touches on Florida plantation architecture, the history of the area around St. Augustine (including the establishment of a free black community in Duval County, Florida), and early Florida politics. One of the real strengths of this book is Schafer's use of archival sources—the book has twenty-four pages of notes and a twelve-page bibliography. He weaves his extensive use of primary resources into the story, using historical information to compel the story forward without bogging the reader down. This book requires two books marks, one to mark the place in the story and one for the notes in the back of the book.

Schafer's research into the life of Anna Jai Kingsley began in 1972 after visiting the Kingsley plantation at Fort George Island. He has been researching and writing around this topic for twenty plus years providing him with a plethora of information about Anna and Zephaniah. The complicated nature of their story and Schafer's in-depth storytelling can, at times, become confusing. Schafer introduces a number of Anna and Zephaniah's descendants into the story, often going back and forth in time from one chapter to another. This is where the endnotes and bibliography are particularly useful. This book is a page-turning look at fascinating historical figures with compelling stories that are the history, good and bad, of Florida.

David Benjamin  
Head of Special Collections & University Archives  
University of Central Florida Libraries