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Florida Conference of Historians Annual Meeting. Florida Conference of Historians (FCH).

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The FCH serves teaching historians at Florida colleges and universities, although participation by out-of-state institutions is encouraged. The FCH assumed its current name in 1992, having since 1962 been known as the Florida College Teachers of History. <p> This year's annual meeting was comprised of twenty-five professional panels, five undergraduate panels, and approximately seventy attendees (including fourteen undergraduate presenters). Jacksonville University hosted the meeting, with Dr. Jay Clarke in charge of local arrangements. The conference took place at the Sea Turtle Inn in Atlantic Beach (outside of Jacksonville). Out-of-state visitors expecting warm and welcoming Florida sunshine were caught unawares by a cold front that unfortunately kept temperatures and sunlight down. <p> In deference to the wide offering of papers, the conference lacked overall topical unity. Panel topics are broadly conceived to account for the rather diverse range of papers presented at the annual conferences. Panels for this year's meetings included: "Cuba and the USA, 1898 and 1959," "Politics in Florida and Elsewhere, Hot Spots in 2002 and 2003," and "The Second Reconstruction: Desegregation and Civil Rights in Florida." <p> I presented my paper, "The Best Education Provided': A Social History of School Integration in Polk County, Florida, 1963-1994," at the latter panel alongside Ph.D. candidate Gordon K. Mantler of Duke University, who presented his paper "The Failure of Desegregation in Pinellas County, Florida." One additional speaker was unable to make the panel at the last minute. This panel was the only one at the conference dedicated to a history-of-education topic. Mr. Mantler and I knew each other previously, when we were working on similar research projects. His viewpoint was that integration in Pinellas had failed to resolve the county's racial gulf. Pinellas, a

large metropolitan county, was governed by white politicians who were more interested in maintaining "face" to outsiders. Blacks perceived integration as being done at their expense to maintain a facade of good publicity for developers and newcomers. To date, the black leadership in Pinellas has remained disappointed with the way integration was implemented. <p> My thesis for Polk County contrasted with Mantler's for Pinellas. Polk County is a large county dotted with small and medium-sized cities and still quite rural. My research indicated that despite the disadvantages of integration (destruction of all-black schools, loss of black teachers), local blacks always perceived an integrated education to be better than a return to segregation. Acknowledging some degree of self-promotion, Mantler and I have been contributing to a scholarly debate that touches on the long-term effects of Brown vis-a-vis social history and trying to incorporate larger socio-political trends into the integration debate (q.v. Gary Orfield at Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, James T. Patterson, <cite>Brown v. Board of Education</cite>).[1] Too often, defenses against the methods of integration like the "neighborhood schools," alleged federal interference in local school board decisions, and desires for racial separateness by blacks have gone unchallenged. <p> In general, the Florida Conference of Historians' rather catholic approach stems from a desire to encourage scholarship and collegiality within the region's history teaching community. The approach of the FCH is to stress the traditional foundations of historical research and its practical application to the classroom, rather than the fashionable and often abstruse avant garde approach common to conferences with narrowly defined themes. Participants asked questions that reflect an attitude of mutual support. <p> The conference remains

small compared to other historical conferences, and only a couple of outside vendors were present. Organizers use the small conference size to great advantage, however. The FCH considers the fostering of undergraduate research to be an important part of its mission. Approximately ten undergraduate papers were presented. Three of the standout undergraduate presentations were given by James Green (Florida Atlantic University), "Nazi Policy in the Third Reich, 1933-1941-Emigration First;" Colleen R. Harris (Jacksonville University), "1918: The United States and the Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire," and Clara Sherley Appel (Randolph Macon Women's College), "Ambivalent Culture: Film and McCarthyism." While many of the undergraduate presenters will not enter the historical profession, they will

have benefited from close interaction with other undergraduates and their very supportive professors. The conference provides a place for teaching professors to cross-pollinate their ideas with others, and a springboard for future historians and young professionals. When resources are available, the conference publishes its Selected Annual Proceedings Of The Florida Conference Of Historians. Next year's meeting is slated for 4-6 March, 2004, in Lake City, Florida, and will be hosted by Lake City Community College. Notes: [1]. <http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/>; James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: a civil rights milestone and its troubled legacy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

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