



May Mann Jennings

Top 10 Florida Women's Hall of Fame



Write emails, cards and letters to:

Governor DeSantis

Appointments Office

Appointments@eog.myflorida.com

Governor's Appointments Office

The Capitol Building

Lower Level, Suite LL-10

Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001





May Austin Elizabeth Mann Jennings

though born in New Jersey April 25, 1872, she quickly relocated to Florida just two years later. The family settled in the Crystal River area establishing themselves in Brooksville. May's mother died when she was only nine and both May and her younger sister were sent to the St. Joseph's Convent in St. Augustine for their educations. May was valedictorian of her class and graduated in 1889. Her father was Florida State Senator Austin Mann and May went to Tallahassee to serve as aide to her father. She was responsible for his appointments, correspondence, and hosting social events. May met Judge William

Sherman Jennings in their home. William followed them back to Tallahassee and the two were married on May 12, 1891. May is credited in some circles with William's meteoric rise within the state Democratic party due to her knowledge of state politics and her vast network of relationships throughout the state among the Florida Federation of Women's Club members. She was obviously no stranger to politics.

May was a prominent leader in the women's club movement serving as president of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs from 1914-1917 and then as Florida director and vice president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs from 1918-1920. She was a co founder of The Florida State League of Women Voters. active in a number of civic organizations as well as social and political groups. May championed a number of causes that she believed needed the public's attention. She was an early conservationist and used her platform as president of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs to have Royal Palm State Park established in 1915. She was appointed to the Everglades National Park Commission in the late 1930s and pushed for the creation of a national Everglades Park. During her time in the Governor's mansion she was affectionately labeled "Mother of Forestry". In addition to conservation, she was an advocate for the Seminole Indians, women's rights and suffrage, prohibition, child welfare, education, and public health.

Following their time in the Governor's mansion they moved to Jacksonville which was Florida's largest city at the time and Gov. Jennings established a law practice. They also had a farm close to Middleburg and owned timber in Clay county. He died in 1920. She lived a life of caring for others and concern for the community until at the age of 90 on April 24, 1963 May Mann Jennings was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery in Jacksonville, FL.



GFWC Florida Federation of Women's Clubs

4444 Florida National Drive

Lakeland, FL 33813

gfwcflorida.org

869-647-2642



The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor, State of Florida
Governor's Appointments Office
Lowel Level, Suite LL-10
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

May 2022

Dear Governor DeSantis,

As a member of the GFWC Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, it is my pleasure to support **May Mann Jennings** for induction into the **Florida Women's Hall of Fame**.

Her many accomplishments include:

Florida Legislative Lobbying Achievements (partial list)

Establishment of **Royal Palm State Park** (Director of Operations 1915-1936)

Establishment of **State Board of Forestry** (Florida Forestry Service)

Establishment of the **State Park Service**

Establishment of a **Reservation for Seminole Indians**

Establishment of the **Florida State Library, Tallahassee** (not FSU)

Creation of **Everglades National Park Committee** (appropriation of 135,0000 acres of State Land for ENP during 1931 and 1935 Legislative Sessions)

President, **Florida Federation of Women's Clubs**

Constitutional Amendment for **School Bonds**

Ten-Mill School Tax

Compulsory Education Law

Women as School Board Members, Jurors, Members of Boards and Commissions

Good-Roads Laws

Constitutional Amendment for Road Bonds

Compulsory dipping of cattle for **Tick Eradication**

Stock Fence Laws

Public school teaching of Nature Study, Bird Life, and Humane Treatment of Animals

Constitutional Amendment for **State Reapportionment**

Laws for Conservation and Protection of Specific Wildlife, Trees, Shrubs, and Plants

Use of Mechanical Voting Machines in Elections

Honors and Awards (partial list)

1927 – Gold Medal of Achievement, **American Forestry Association**

1929 – Honorary Doctor of Laws, **Stetson University**

1930 – **Jennings Park** (Long Branch Creek, City of Jacksonville)

1933 – Resolution of Appreciation, Jacksonville City Council, beautification work

- 1947 – **Citation for Everglades National Park work, Newton B. Drury, Director, National Park Service**
- 1952 – Citation from Florida Federation of Garden Clubs for beautification work
- 1953 – Medal and Citation for Outstanding Service to the State, **University of Florida Centennial Convocation**
- 1954 – “Mother of Forestry” citation from the **Florida Forestry Association**
- 1955 – **Outstanding Citizen of the Year**, Springfield Woman’s Club
- 1956 – **Woman of the Year**, Jacksonville Chapter, Soroptimist International
- 1958 – Citation for Beautification Work, **GFWC & Sears-Roebuck Foundation**
- 1961 – Certificate of Achievement and Lifetime Membership, **State Chamber of Commerce**
- 1961 – **Jennings Hall**, Women’s Dormitory, University of Florida, Gainesville
- 1966 – **Commemorative Highway Marker**, US 17, Yulee, Florida, State Road Department and Florida Federation of Garden Clubs

The Florida Women’s Hall of Fame recognizes women who have made a lasting contribution to the well-being of all Floridians. In Linda D. Vance’s book, “May Mann Jennings, Florida’s Genteel Activist,” it states:

“May Mann Jennings stands alone as Florida’s most impressive and successful female citizen. It was May Jennings, more than any other woman in the twentieth century, who contributed to the welfare and progress of the state.

May Jennings’s record of public service can be matched by few other figures in Florida history, male or female. Her list of achievements is staggering. Hardly a single enterprise dedicated to the public welfare escaped her notice and support.

May Jennings’s accomplishments and interests were so vast that it is difficult to single out any one as more significant than any other. But it can be agreed that her conservation work, a lifelong avocation that included the saving of the Everglades, was her primary contribution to Florida and her single most impressive achievement.”

As a member of the GFWC Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, I hope you will give serious consideration to **May Mann Jennings** for induction into the Florida Women’s Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,

Signature

City of Residence in Florida