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MY ENCOUNTERS WITH PARADISE:

THE EVOLUTION OF NATURAL BEAUTY AND LUMINIST AESTHETICS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA

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Introduction

The aesthetic value of natural lands inspired the protection and preservation of Nature for the enjoyment of future generations. The awe experienced amidst the monumentalism of the American West rooted this aesthetic. Yellowstone and Yosemite, the cathedrals of the New World, solidified the American landscape as a key feature of the American cultural identity which made the young nation stand apart from Europe's built cathedrals. This appreciation of Nature was a pillar in American culture that influenced artists from the Hudson River in New York to travel across the country, landing at the St Johns and capturing the essence of the landscape in their paintings.

Figure 1. Martin Johnson Heade *The Great Florida Sunset* 1887

Our understanding of aesthetics, and in turn how humans have come to define Nature's beauty, is grounded in our primal senses. Humanization of landscape elements with menacing cliffs and calm rivers supported countless myths across cultures (de Noguiera and Flores 119).

Landscapes "such as mountain areas with plentiful vegetation and different varieties of still and running water" evoked "impressions of safety, abundance, or well-being," while "inhospitable landscapes from which it was wise to stay away" conveyed "impressions of sterility, helplessness, or aggression (de Noguiera and Flores 119-120). However, in the last few centuries, the artistic and scientific revolutions have shifted landscape legibility and appreciation of aesthetic values (de Noguiera and Flores 120). American Romanticism idealized the country's landscapes while including criticisms of its degradation. Branching from Romanticism, American Luminism showcased the interplay of light between the land and sky in expressive paintings of bays and marshes.

Additionally, the American environmental consciousness shifted from the 19th to 20th centuries. American Transcendentalists such as Thoreau or Muir of the 19th century believed Nature to be an extension of God, and, as such. part of a larger system which forced one to recognize their own insignificance. This school of thought birthed early insights in the field of ecology in the 20th century which informed the environmental movement later in the century. With ecology in mind, preserving biodiversity became a key factor for preserving Nature, especially less scenic landscapes, as with the Everglades.

Central Florida hosts a landscape not heralded for its monumentalism. Rather, its natural beauty is often recorded in accounts of magnificent flowers, spectacular flocks of roosting birds, mystic swamplands, pastoral marshes, and dazzling sunsets. Florida's Nature and climate was central to the Florida tourist and winter visitor experience, starting with the fascinations recounted in William Bartram's *Travels* extending to the Luminist paintings of dramatic sunsets that boosted tourism on the St Johns. Northerners flocked to coastal Florida towns to escape the dreary, smog ridden industrial cities. As the state developed into the 20th century, they found refuge in the tropical sublime. Aesthetics identified in landscape paintings, travel guides, and personal journals were relegated to promotional postcards. Development stripped the beauty behind this aesthetic. Fortunately, the early State Park System preserved the tropical and subtropical curiosities popular with tourists of the 1930s and 40s.

Environmental consciousness and the development of ecology as a recognized field influenced government action. Conflicts between resource demands of a booming population and the need for natural systems to regenerate from strained use and abuse were reconciled with comprehensive land and water use plans. As a result, the State Park System incorporated a new set of conservation lands which allowed a deeper understanding of Florida's ecological value, particularly its springs. These conservation areas now provide recreational opportunities for the nation's third most populous state and preserve the aesthetics that initially drew people to move to the state.

This thesis explores how State Parks in Central Florida preserve the notion of Paradise held by visitors from the 19th and early 20th centuries. I took photographs capturing the elements of Paradise identified in Luminist paintings and naturalist drawings. I focused on the inspirations behind the paintings and how these natural features are preserved. In this exploration, I answer a series of questions for each chapter. The first chapter answers the question: how did the Hudson River School develop the American appreciation for landscape and set the scene for environmental ethics? The second chapter answers the question: to what extent did Luminist painters establish the idea of Paradise in Florida. The third asks: how have Florida State Parks consolidated natural beauty endangered by development in the 20th century? The final chapter asks: how effective are Central Florida State Parks at using ecological management to maintain the aesthetic of Luminist and naturalist Paradise?

Chapter 1

Origins of the Luminist Aesthetic:

The Hudson River School

Historically, aesthetics defined American attitudes towards Nature. Florida is named for its floral splendor which struck Ponce de León during his arrival to the peninsula. Transcendentalists viewed Nature as a divine extension of God which connected themselves to a larger Paradise. Thoreau remarked this in his *Journal*, stating: “The serene and innocent beauty of the fields on a winter’s day is not to be paralleled by the most luxuriant summer . . . How near and real is that Love and Elysium of which the poets dream! – which way did the vision disappear! To the bad there is no memory of good. Young God is there.” (457). In New York, the Hudson River inspired a generation of artists and writers to forge the values that grafted Paradise onto the expanding American landscape.

The Hudson River begins its course at Lake Tear of the Clouds in the Adirondack Mountains then flows 315 miles south to New York City. Along its course, it passes through a landscape of picturesque, pastoral scenes of riverside towns and villages interspersed among the sublime backdrop of the Catskill Mountains, Palisades, and Hudson Highlands. Historically, the river was used as a travel route for the Mohican and Munsee indigenous groups occupying the valley. The valley also played an important role in the Revolutionary War. The Hudson River and New York City form a symbiotic relationship; as America developed through the 18th century, the Hudson Valley modernized as New York City’s population boomed. The 19th century saw a shift in productivity and industry along the valley’s fields and towns in response to New York City’s demands (Schuyler 94). The river served as a trade route supplying wheat and other agricultural staples along with timber from the valley and the Great Lakes to New York City and the rest of the nation.

The construction of the Erie Canal opened a navigable route to the Great Lakes, spurring even more trade through the Hudson. The Delaware and Hudson Canals expedited the transportation of Pennsylvania coal to New York City and new railroads drew commerce away from river towns which prompted new industries, such as steam mills and breweries, to develop. Likewise, competition from agriculture outside of the valley led to an agriculture shift to provide New York City with produce and dairy rather than staples.

The waterway was also used by tourists traveling upstream to marvel at the picturesque relief of the valley. The combination of the country's growing middle class, steamboats and rail making the river more accessible, and the development of tourist infrastructure allowed for the influx of tourists travelling the river starting in the 1820s (Schuyler 9). While America's growing landscape tourism industry was essential in forming the American national identity with landscape as a key aspect, tourists in the Hudson Valley came not to seek its wilderness, but to experience Nature as a commodity. Towns along the river were quick to integrate into the tourist economy by providing tourists with goods and services such as local guides and lodging. Guest houses amidst the spectacular landscape, notably the Catskill Mountain House, provided a retreat from New York City. The commodification of the landscape garnered criticism from the Transcendentalists of the valley, expressing heavy distaste for tourists who basked in ignorance of their surroundings while they stayed indoors and desecrated the sanctified landscape. (Schuyler 26, 37). Tourism on the Hudson promoted a consumption of scenery rather than an immersion into wilderness. Industry was followed by the growth of towns and the deterioration of Nature. This developed alongside the pervasive attitude that Nature's value was in its potential to be tamed and exploited. A dichotomy formed between the consumer ideologies of the industries and the Transcendentalist values of artists residing in the valley. Thus, artists were responsible for preserving visions of the ancient, fading wilderness before the axe of civilization swept away the relics of national heritage. (Schuyler 26).

Artists and writers living along Hudson were as much a part of the symbiotic bond between the valley and the city as industry and commerce. The work produced in the midst of a spectacular yet changing American landscape was brought to and sold in the city and given a national audience, which would define national attitudes towards Nature (Schuyler 30). Thomas Cole, in his "Essay on American Scenery" describes the American landscape as "a union of the picturesque, the sublime, and the magnificent," yet it sustains senseless destruction (Schuyler 36). Cole believed "that to every American," American scenery "ought to be of surpassing interest," and Cole worked to spread this idea through his artwork and through The Lyceum Society across the Northeast and the Midwest (Schuyler 36-37).

Thomas Cole personified the Hudson River School, the name given to the collective of artists and writers who resided in the valley. Cole arrived in New York in 1825 and worked until his death in 1848. Prior to Cole, landscape paintings, such as William Guy Wall's *The Hudson River Port Folio* and Titian R. Peale's landscapes of the Lewis and Clark expedition were forming the American appreciation for landscapes. Cole's work revived American Romantic imagery as a source of distinctly American, non-European culture focused on the wildness of the American landscape (Schuyler 28). His early paintings captivated the American Academy of Fine Arts and were described as enchanting, sparking delight, and capturing the "the savage and silent grandeur" of the Hudson (Schuyler 31).

Figure 2. Thomas Cole *A View of the Two Lakes and Mountain House, Catskill Mountains, Morning* 1844. An example of how Cole captured the majesty of the Hudson Valley and the blight of tourism.

Cole did more than record the visual appeal of the Hudson. He idealized it in a higher style of landscape painting by restoring a wild version of an anthropological and industrial valley, evoking themes of a pristine continent. Cole infused romantic and Transcendental values into his landscapes while criticizing the utilitarian destruction of the land.

Course of Empire, painted while writing his "Essay on American Scenery", is a cyclical series of landscapes that represented the rise and fall of civilizations in five stages. This was Cole's biggest critique of human destruction both in history and the then present issues of industrialization and westward expansion (Schuyler 38). The first painting, *The Savage State*

(Fig. 3), depicts a scene at dawn and in the spring, symbolizing the dawn of civilization. The brutal individualism imagined to be the natural state of humans is depicted as a hunter chasing after a deer struck by his arrow. A distinct mountain which reoccurs in the subsequent paintings dominates the background. The rest of the scene features few other human impacts save for a group of people dancing around a fire and a ring of huts of an early civilization. The landscape is dominated by Nature, yet the potential for human destructiveness is present. The following landscape, *The Pastoral or Arcadian State* (Fig. 4) is Cole's ideal harmony between human needs and Nature's intrinsic value, with Cole holding an ambivalent stance on the cost to Nature by early human progress. Cole describes this summer landscape as "tamed and softened" because it depicts moderate human activity limited to art, music, trade, commerce, agriculture, war, and religion all in their infancy. The centerpiece of the series, *The Consummation of Empire* (Fig 5.), is a vivid panorama of a majestic, Roman-inspired city decorated with marble temples and gold statues. The scene is filled with celebration, wealth, and majesty as the conqueror returns to the city in an elaborate parade. Small details in the painting hint at the inevitable destruction of the overcrowded city such as a boy sinking another boy's toy boat in the foreground (Schuyler 39-41, Wilton and Barringer 98-102).

The pompous celebration of conquest is likely criticism of America's expansion in the 19th century with the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican-American War (Wilton and Barringer 102, Schuyler 93). In a response to the 1836 exhibition of the series, the *New-York Mirror* stated through "the signs of war and display of pride . . . we see that man has attained power without the knowledge of its true use: and has already abused it" (Wilton and Barringer 104). In *Destruction* (Fig. 6), apocalyptic imagery overtakes the turmoil and chaos of the scene as invaders ransack a city of burning buildings, amidst a raging tempest, turbulent waters, collapsing bridges, and falling pillars. The final canvas, *Desolation* (Fig. 7), presents the aftermath of *Destruction* in a scene at twilight where humans are banished from the landscape and “Nature ultimately triumphs over and unsympathetic Nature” (Schuyler 39). It resolves a cycle by reversing human dominion over Nature to Nature’s dominion over human ruins (Wilton and Barringer 108). By juxtaposing grandeur and beauty with the destructiveness of civilization, Cole’s artwork blended history and allegory to cultivate American tastes for scenery (Schuyler 45). They instill Transcendental beliefs in the sanctity of Nature and its therapeutic effect. Cole passed away near the mid-century, but the fundamental message of his artwork continued to influence the Hudson River School and the rest of the nation (Schuyler 46).

Fig 3. Thomas Cole

The Savage State 1836

Fig 6. Thomas Cole

Destruction 1836

Fig 5. Thomas Cole

The Consummation of Empire

1836

Fig 4. Thomas Cole

Arcadian or Pastoral State

1836

Fig 7. Thomas Cole

Desolation 1836

An extension of Cole's work can be found in Asher B. Durand's landscapes, especially in *Landscape – Scene from "Thanatopsis"* (Fig. 8) based on William Cullen Bryant's 1817 poem "Thanatopsis". The landscape is a "meditation on death and Nature," encapsulating Nature's permanence despite a funeral, ancient ruins, castles, and agriculture. The skeletal remains of a man are detailed in the foreground and allude to Cole's recent passing and legacy (Schuyler 92-93). The midcentury marked a change in the nation as the vision of an agrarian society was making way for an industrialized country, New York City was seeing an influx in immigration which further industrialized the Hudson and strained its agricultural capacity (Schuyler 94). Transcendental values persisted in the Hudson River School, but these values gave way to utilitarian principles across the country.

Figure 8. Asher B. Durand *Landscape – Scene from "Thanatopsis"* 1850

Active later in the century, Jervis McEntee captured the industrial shift in the latter era of the Hudson River School. From 1850 to 1890, McEntee worked in a period where artists of the Hudson River School "helped define the nation's cultural identity in terms of Nature" (Schuyler 110). Portraiture previously was America's dominant artform, however it was surpassed by landscapes. Paintings of the Hudson River Valley and those of the West formed two branches of landscape paintings which influenced American culture, each representing separate attitudes of the American landscape. Landscape paintings of the American West captured the majesty of the

Yosemite (Fig 10.), Yellowstone (Fig 13.), and the Grand Canyon and equated them to the "ruins and centuries of artistic achievement European nations could claim" (Schuyler 118).

Figure 9. Jervis McEntee *Grey Day in Hill Country* 1874

Closely tied to Manifest Destiny and at the forefront of American culture, spectacular paintings of the West became a unique source of national identity. By contrast, artwork made on the Hudson in the second half of the 19th century, especially McEntee's, were grounded in local scenes close at hand (Schuyler 118). McEntee captured human-scaled winter and fall landscapes with dull and melancholy tones, making them distinctively remarkable. His painting *Grey Day in Hill Country* (Fig 9.) depicts a landscape in the fall with birch trees whose leaves are falling. The background is enveloped in somber shades of brown on land and dull grey skies. His paintings provided a genuine reflection of Nature which grounded an American audience in local vistas while westward expansion presented the nation with dramatic panoramas of the newly claimed land (Schuyler 118).

Artists of the Hudson River School presented the nation with visual representations of Transcendentalist and Romantic attitudes used to define American culture. Their contemporary landscape architects and writers solidified these philosophies in different mediums. John Burroughs was a naturalist writer raised on the Hudson active at the same time as John Muir. He helped develop the environmental values of the early 20th century through his publications *Wake-Robin* and *Winter Sunshine* in 1871 and 1875 along with a series of essays. His essay "Exhilaration of the Trail" expressed the idea of accessible and insightful Nature, stating that "the born naturalist is one of the most lucky [sic] men in the world. Winter or summer, rain or shine, at home or abroad, walking or riding, his pleasures are always close at hand. The great book of Nature is open before him and he only has to turn its leaves" (Burroughs 22). This sentiment of Nature close at hand reflects the same theme depicted in McEntee's paintings. Burrough's work was influenced by the Transcendental writers Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau who preceded him (Schuyler 135-137). His personable, poetry-like writing style brought "the reader to appreciate the beauty [Burroughs] discovered all around him" (Schuyler 137). Burroughs urged readers to immerse themselves in their local landscapes so that in time it becomes an extension of themselves (Schuyler 137). Scientific knowledge and accuracy were important to Burroughs, and he used his observations to decipher the natural world for his readers (Schuyler 136). He wanted his readers to be discriminate observers of the fine details of Nature, criticized anthropomorphic interpretations of Nature, and believed the most important landscapes were those easily accessible rather than far off wilderness.

Burroughs was often compared with John Muir, told apart as John O'Birds and John O'Mountains (Schuyler 145). Muir who advocated establishing Yosemite National Park to protect Hetch Hetchy Valley. Utilitarian conservation was personified in Gifford Pinchot, the first head of the United States Forest Service. The conservation ideology of the Forest Service held that land resources should be used to improve human society, while allowing those resources to be replenished. The ideology was pitted against John Muir's arguments to protect Hetch Hetchy Valley. Preserving natural resources and reforestation were chief principles for conservationists, but the practical terms of their arguments gave way to Muir's sentimentalism and Transcendental vision which best resonated with public opinion. (Fox 121).

Muir was deeply attached to the sublime of Hetch Hetchy, a valley he saw as having been meticulously put together by God through glaciers (Fox 21). Muir's activism led to the inclusion of Hetch Hetchy Valley into Yosemite National Park in 1890, however, constraints on water availability for the city of San Francisco following a devastating fire led to twelve years of debate among Transcendental preservationists, Pinchot and other utilitarian conservationists, civilians, professionals of the city, and Congress on whether to dam the valley. The final decision to build the dam in a national park was passed in 1913. Opinions on the issue were far from binary, with naturalists criticizing Muir. Burroughs' views sympathized with utilitarianism instead of supporting Muir's in the Sierra (Fox 139-147).

Figure 10. Albert Bierstadt *Looking Down Yosemite Valley, California* 1865. Landscape paintings asserted the majesty or American monumentalism.

While the two were close friends, their different locales, the Sierra and the Catskills, provided the American environmental movement with gospels of outdoor life for protecting definitive scenic Nature (Schuyler 146). Muir preached for the protection of monumental sites, and Burroughs advocated for the appreciation of accessible Nature. Burroughs was a silent, often fickle naturalist in terms of national environmental issues, such as the invention of the Model T Ford, the opening of destructive roadways, pollution of waterways, and deforestation (Schuyler 146). However, his close relationship with President Theodore Roosevelt influenced Roosevelt's decisions to expand the National Parks, National Monuments, and establish wildlife refuges (Schuyler 147). Burroughs and Muir set the groundwork for environmental values of the 20th century. Arguments to preserve the sanctity of Nature revolved around its intrinsic value and would include arguments based on ecology later in the century.

Burroughs, along with other figures of the Hudson River School, brought Transcendentalist values to the forefront of the nation's artwork and literature. Repeatedly, these artists and writers established the American landscape as a pillar to the country's adolescent culture, yet they criticized the destruction done in the name of industrial progress. Thomas Cole's vivid commentaries of civilization's cycle of destruction best conveyed the budding environmental movement. His landscape *River in the Catskills* (Fig. 11) captures the sentiment of his and others' distaste for the industrialization of the Hudson. An idyllic countryside scene of a river at sunset flowing through rolling hills with a background dominated by mountains is interrupted by a steam-powered train spoiling the otherwise quiet scenery. Prior to the railroad, this specific scene was one Cole frequently sketched for other works. Expressing Cole's anger at the construction of the Canajoharie and Catskill Railroad, the foreground of the painting is littered in tree stumps and "the serenity of the landscape has been ruined" (Schuyler 43-44).

Figure 11. Thomas Cole *River in the Catskills* 1843.

Antipastoral criticism of destruction in a sanctified landscape.

As in the *Course of Empire*, The Industrial Revolution forced the United States to out of its *Arcadian or Pastoral State* towards *Destruction*. Manifest Destiny, the gospel of westward expansion, exacerbated the destructiveness of an industrial nation and shifted values away from those of the Hudson River School. By the end of the Civil War, the Hudson River School was in decline as Americans sought out European art and American ideals increasingly valued exploiting land. For a time, the Hudson River School "defined the Hudson as America's river," but its legacy "established the foundation for a modern environmental ethic" carried by Americans into newly incorporated territories (Schuyler 175).

Chapter 2

Painting in the Florida Landscape: St Johns River Valley

The explorers and settlers in America were fascinated by the natural beauty they encountered. Florida's beauty, especially along the St. Johns River, captivated the imaginations of early Europeans. The beauty they encountered was not grandiose and picturesque mountain scenery; rather, an exotic and subtropical garden. Throughout history, the St. Johns River has conjured a "vision of paradise that predates the disappointing realities of crowded beaches and thoughtless development" (Belleville, "Introduction"). The river is designated as one of the fourteen American Heritage Rivers for its significant impact on the history, culture, and economy of northeast Florida and developing its sense of place (O'Connor and Monroe xi). Its origins are in the marshes of Indian River County and Brevard County. The river flows north to Central Florida where it is fed by tributary rivers, lakes, and springs like the Econlockhatchee River, Lake Jesup, Wekiva River, Ocklawaha River, and Crescent Lake and flows through Lakes Monroe and George. In North Florida, the river widens considerably and reaches its oceanic confluence near Jacksonville.

Florida's karst topography sets the St. John's apart from other rivers on the continent. It is a relatively young river, having formed seven thousand years ago from spring runs and marshland. Following the glacial retreat, a warmer climate set off Florida's current hydrology which formed many of its wetland habitats. Despite its young age, the river hosts an impressive number of species due to its multiple habitats. Prehistoric saltwater captured in the aquifer enters the river through springs and sandy lake bottoms, allowing saltwater fish to live beyond its estuary. Additionally, the river traverses two climate zones, subtropical in its headwaters and warm temperate in the lower river, which allows a greater variety of species to exist within it compared to most American rivers (Belleville, "Introduction" 7-10).

The earliest accounts of American Nature by Christopher Columbus and Jacques Cartier, while factual, were written as dry facts which failed to ignite European imaginations (O'Connor and Monroe 94). André Thevet, a travel writer active in the Americas during the second half of the 16th century, fed the European fascination of his time for the non-natural and mystified fauna and flora encountered in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Thevet compiled accounts of American Nature that wildly exaggerated descriptions of plants and animals. His descriptions were accompanied by engravings that fascinated readers with an image, although inaccurate, of America (O'Connor and Monroe 95-96).

The Enlightenment drastically changed European approaches to documenting the natural world. Through a lens of reason, the mysticism of American wilderness replaced categorizations of sequential and mechanical natural processes (O'Connor and Monroe 97). Botanists of this period surveyed the St Johns with the intent to identify its exploitable resources. William Bartram, the first American-born artist-naturalist, bridged the ideological gaps between the Enlightenment and American Romanticism. During his visits to Florida in the 1770s, he compiled observations of Florida and Southern scenery, wildlife, and ecological interactions. Bartram's 1791 Transcendentalist book, *Travels*, re-mystified Florida wilderness through notions of communion in the cathedral that is the forests of the St Johns'. His "view of Nature as a grand and sublime expression of God's handiwork" propelled him away from the mechanical Enlightenment mindsets (O'Connor and Monroe 97).

Figure 12. William Bartram *Colocosia (Lotus and Blue Heron)* 1774

Relative to his contemporaries, Bartram was unconventionally enthusiastic and sensitive. His views on Nature led Bartram to be described as a "hopelessly sensitive and romantic free spirit wandering the Florida wilds like a lost flower child" (O'Connor and Monroe 99). Bartram viewed the exotic plants and animals of the St. Johns as a wondrous reflection of divinity (O'Connor and Monroe 99). This ideal spurred his travels across the state and earned him the name Puc Puggy, or Flower Hunter, by the Seminoles (Belleville, "Introduction" 4-6). His attitudes towards Nature were inspired by Edmund Burke's philosophies on the sublime and William Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, which provided two different yet intertwined philosophies for navigating Florida's Nature (O'Connor and Monroe 98). Furthermore, Bartram incorporated animism, likely adopted from Indigenous and African American beliefs on the potency of Nature, into his observations. He believed every animal to have a purpose deserving of respect, a belief that gave him intimate insights into the natural world that few had observed or will ever observe (O'Connor and Monroe 99). Likewise, the plants he observed were imbued with personalities that bordered on consciousness and gave Nature another dimension of complexity (O'Connor and Monroe 101). Bartram accompanied his text with pen and ink botanical field drawings, however these incorporated a surrealist element by depicting multiple subjects, often interacting with each other, with little regard for scale. His images reflected his observations and notions of animism within each individual subject yet presents a cohesive ecosystem. In the 1774 drawing, *Colocosia (Lotus and Blue Heron)* (Fig 12.), Bartram created a scene dominated by botanical drawings of lotus leaves and flowers towering over a dwarfed blue heron stalking a fish by the water's edge. Other details in the scene include a dragonfly resting on a flower with a Venus flytrap waiting in the bottom corner. In his art, Bartram reveals "to us the true extent of the complexity, and yet the oneness, of the natural world" (O'Connor and Monroe 97). Bartram, while not a landscape painter, set the framework for the next generation of naturalists and artists who would adopt his early Transcendentalist vision in an American culture that was growing independent from European attitudes.

Landscape painting took root in Florida during latter half of the 19th century following the boom of tourism along the St. Johns in the 1830s. As on the Hudson, tourism on the St. Johns increased when a growing middle class, adequate transportation in the form of steamboats, and tourism infrastructure were all present in the region (O'Connor and Monroe 189). Tourists were enthralled by the depiction of Florida's landscape by literature and art. In *The Great South*, Edward King recounts his experiences travelling across the Southern states. King found "the climate of Florida" to be "undoubtedly its chief charm" (King 398). He praised the state's winter climate for its healing properties, a point that would be heavily advertised by the river's tourism industry, with advertisements claiming Jacksonville to be the "Mecca of every health or pleasure-seeking pilgrim" (O'Connor and Monroe 191).

Before the rise of rail in the 1890s, steamboats opened the St. Johns Basin to tourism during the 1830s to 1880s. Steamboats gave life to the region by opening commerce to the rest of the South in addition to facilitating the tourist experience. Palatka, previously the center of North Florida's logging industry, became the hub of steamboat tourism with at least one hundred operating in the river during its peak (O'Connor and Monroe 189-191).

Romantic and Transcendentalist landscape artists were crucial in promoting the landscape tourism of the century. By the 1850s, the Luminist School dominated landscape paintings in Florida. The Luminist School captured sublime Florida landscapes with characteristic elements of a radiant sun, delicate clouds, iridescent reflections, and exotic vegetation (O'Connor and Monroe 193). Luminism focused on the effect of lighting on a landscape, often with a hazy atmosphere to give character to a scene. Light is the most important factor in Luminism, with parallel horizontal lines being an important part of structure. Characteristic of the style, artists blend brushstrokes to present light that is cool, hard, palpable, planar, radiant, gleaming, and suffused (Novak 23-25). The romanticization of horizontal Florida topography and spectacular sunsets allowed artists to immerse themselves in the flat topography of the St. Johns, and rouse imaginations in a locale that lacked the majesty of dramatic terrain. Luminist artists were heavily inspired by their predecessors in the Hudson River School, and, likewise, used their paintings to convey political and ideological statements. Landscape paintings of the century expressed statements of preservation in the Northeast, manifest destiny in the West, abolition in the Union, pastoral nostalgia in growing cities, and anti-urbanism in rural towns (O'Connor and Monroe. 191). Luminist paintings in Florida pushed a message that harmonized tourism and preservation by exhibiting scenes of natural beauty for a national audience that would travel to view these scenes in person (O'Connor and Monroe 191).

Painters in Florida shaped national perceptions of the St. Johns. While not considered a Luminist Painter, Thomas Moran was famous for his massive panoramas of the American West and was one of the earlier artists who captured the charm of Florida wilderness. His iconic pieces, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* (Fig. 13) in 1872 and *Chasm of the Colorado* in 1873, were made from the views he saw on government survey expeditions in Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. Both paintings exaggerate the monumental grandeur of their subjects, with the Yellowstone piece featuring two small figures overlooking the canyon to further emphasize its size. These companion paintings present the American antique landscape in a style meant to parallel depictions of holy monuments in the Middle East by David Roberts in *Ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbec*, further emphasizing Transcendentalist values of the landscape movement (Wilton and Barringer 34-35). Moran's Yellowstone piece was bought by congress for ten thousand dollars, shaped American attitudes of expansion, and was later placed in the Smithsonian American Art Museum. His painting was monumental in persuading Congress and President Ulysses S. Grant to create the first national park on March 1st, 1872. Barringer notes that "aesthetic had triumphed over the forces of industrial expansion, and one of the world's great wilderness areas was saved as a direct result of its artistic representation," heralding what would seem to be an age of greater appreciation for wilderness but was rather followed rapid industrialization (62-65).

Figure 13. Thomas Moran *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* 1872

The use of persuasive aesthetics, albeit for tourism rather than preservation, was similar in Moran's Florida landscapes painted between 1877 and 1878. In *Florida Landscape (Saint Johns River)* and *Fort George Island, Florida* (Fig. 14 & 15), Moran employs the sublime to "seduce and enchant viewers" of the nation with an introduction to "the exotic charm of the Florida wilderness" (O'Connor and Monroe 191).

Figure 14. Thomas Moran *Florida Landscape (Saint Johns River)* 1877

Two towering palmettos overlook a somber marsh contrasted by the loamy clouds in a blue sky and the golden horizon of the morning.

Figure 15. Thomas Moran *Fort George Island, Florida* 1878

Other artists continued the legacy of promoting tourism with Luminism on the St. Johns. Martin Johnson Heade arrived in Florida from New England in 1883 after travelling the United States, Europe, and South America to painting those landscapes onto his canvas. In Florida, Heade was recruited by Henry Flagler to promote St. Augustine as a tourist destination (O'Connor and Monroe 192). His characteristic style in *Sunset: Tropical Marshes, Florida* (Fig. 16) and *Tropical Sunset – Florida Marsh* (Fig. 17) illuminate marshland panoramas vivified by wading waterfowl and cattle grazing with burning, cadmium sunsets. Heade's landscapes are praised by art historian Erik Robinson for his "distinction in his use of the light of sunrise and sunset to create rich, colorful effects and create moods of nostalgia and reverie" (O'Connor and Monroe 192). Heade's ability to seize the imagination of tourists who flocked to St. Augustine in the absence of lofty peaks that captivated the nation elsewhere, is likely due to his already developed taste for the "subtle beauty and mysterious charm" he found in Northern coastal marshes (O'Connor and Monroe 192).

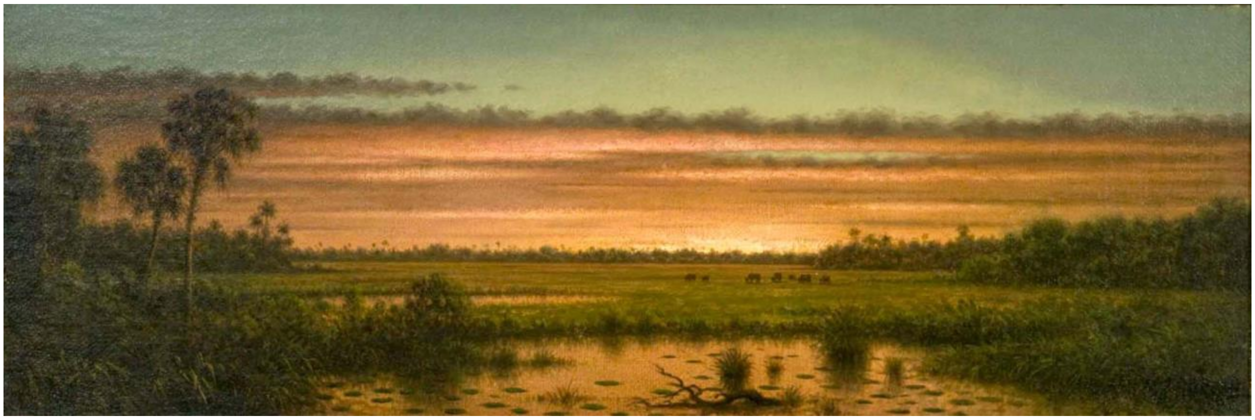

Figure 16. Martin Johnson Heade *Sunset, Tropical Marshes, Florida* 1883-89

Figure 17. Martin Johnson Heade *Tropical Sunset – Florida Marsh* 1885-1890

Similarly, Laura Woodward chose to paint landscapes in the peculiar lighting between sunset and dusk to draw tourists to Flagler's projects in St. Augustine and Palm Beach. Woodward was active originally in the Northeast, drawing influence from the Hudson River School. Her time spent in Manhattan allowed her to interact with other Luminist painters such as Heade. Woodward spent her winters in the 1880s in St. Augustine and Palm Beach, a time she spent intimately exploring her environment and pulling from it her signature twilight afterglow style (O'Connor and Monroe 194). *Afterglow: View of the St. Johns River* completed in 1890 features a mellow sky colored in purple and beige tones which reflect off the water. Marshes take up the lower quarter of the canvas with two rowboats tied to a post. Sail boats just barely illuminated in the fading light cruise along the still river beyond the marsh. Woodward publicized Florida's Nature for a national audience, created an alure for the east coast of the state, attracting tourists for Flagler's Hotel Royal Poinciana in Palm Beach, which he based on her renderings of the flowering tree of the same name (Pollack, O'Connor and Monroe 194).

The work of these Luminist artists tracks the development of Florida's landscape aesthetic to create a vision of Paradise and propel tourism. Since much of this work was promotional rather than critical, it served to commodify Florida's untamed wilderness. This form of tourism was highly dependent on the preservation of the sublime locales along the St. Johns as tourists sought health, peace, and pleasure in Paradise away from industrial cities (O'Connor and Monroe 191). As tourism grew beyond the St Johns and onto the coast, the harmony between Paradise and Nature became muddled with the reality of its commodification. Many writers and artists expressed and portrayed the dissonance between exotic retreats and stifling swamps.

The association of Paradise with Florida developed slowly. William Bartram captivated the minds of the young nation with his illustrations of Florida's flamboyant flora. The mysticism he brought to Florida’s image was coupled with the belief in the salubrious effects of subtropical climates. Florida was frequented by health seeking travelers as a result. In his 1869 “A Guidebook of Florida and the South”, Daniel Brinton lists ailments such as chronic indigestion, tuberculosis, mental exhaustion, sterility, and the grand climacteric, or old age, whose cures are found in the “equable temperature, moderate moisture, moderate and regular winds, and freedom from local disease” of the southeast coast of Florida (140). Earlier travelers were much less enthusiastic in their accounts of the peninsula. John James Audubon in his 1834 accounts was captivated by the birds and wildlife but found the low and swampy landscape along the St Johns to be unremarkable, especially compared to the Ohio River he was accustomed to (71-75). Later in the century, 1867, John Muir embarked on a thousand mile walk from Indianapolis to the Gulf Coast of Florida. His upbringing by his strict Calvinist father led him to use biblical imagery in his interpretations of Florida. In his journal “A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf,” Muir notes that his expectation of a “flowery Canaan,” quickly faded as the unusual and wet terrain carried an atmosphere of “profound strangeness” and unease he felt while navigating through the dark to find dry land to set camp (131-133).

Muir’s travel in Florida marked a new wave of visitors to the state. Following the Civil War, the Victorian era witnessed the growth of the nation from an agrarian to an industrial one. Economic growth was typically followed by farmsteads on the frontier, then land speculators, proceeded by canal and railroad builders, and finally by developers. In Florida this pattern of development was altered by the obsession of the upper middle class in the Northeast to chase physical wellbeing in the tropics. Neurasthenia, the sense of fatigue and mental exhaustion many felt in the newly industrialized standard of living, motivated Northerners to relieve their ailments in the warm Florida climate. As was the case for Luminist landscapes commissioned to attract people to the state, the dominant travel literature surrounding Florida shifted from travel accounts for the sedentary audience to the guidebooks meant to draw tourists to revitalization in Florida (O’Sullivan and Lane 129).

Travel guides written during the Victorian era romanticized Florida’s Nature, strengthening its association with Paradise. Northern travelers, like Muir, imagined Florida to be a wondrous land of stunning flowers and winter fruit, yet many left the state disappointed by the earthly reality they encountered. In the 1873 “Palmetto Leaves”, Harriet Beecher Stowe warned tourists to reconcile their visions of Paradise with Florida’s “deficiencies as a necessary shadow to certain excellences” before arriving (142). The “romantic ideas of waving palms, orange groves, flowers, and fruit” were shattered by the flat, sandy terrain, coarse grass, tall pines, scrubby underbrush, and starving cattle (Stowe 141). Expectations derived from familiarity with an orderly Northern set of seasons and predictable weather patterns contrasted heavily with Florida’s Nature which Stowe compares to a “demoralized indulgent old grandmother who has no particular time for anything, and does everything when she happens to feel like it” (Stowe 141). The vision of a “cool and bracing” climate “hot enough to mature” fruit trees with a different fruit every month; of “juicy meadows green as emeralds” growing golden oranges in the absence of “mosquitoes, or gnats, or black-flies, or snakes” was just a vision relegated to the fiction of promotional guides and adverts (Stowe 142). However, Stowe does remark that Florida’s charm comes from its potential to ground oneself in Nature while remaining at home. The term Stowe uses is “outdoorness” for the ability to be outdoors comfortably in the winter, listen to singing birds, eat fresh fruit, and pick flowers, rather than the exotic Paradise that was being advertised (143).

Likewise, several artists in the late 19th and early 20th century captured Florida's dichotomy through landscape paintings. Where landscapes commissioned by hotels and other tourism promoters glamorized the blended hues of sunsets, Herman Herzog painted melancholic, swampy landscapes, as in *Landscape with Heron* (Fig. 19). A lone heron is surrounded by a body of water surrounded by towering wetland trees. The last rays of sunshine shower distant clouds in shades of yellow and orange while the swamp is cast in dark shade. Likened to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* along the Congo River, Herzog's painting whispers of a "hidden world that lurks beneath the dark pools of water or under the heavy forest canopy" (O'Connor and Monroe 204).

Figure 19. Herman Herzog *Landscape with Heron* Unknown Date

This painting of the primordial swamp, in contrast to the pastoral countryside, reflects the adverse attitudes Northerners had towards Florida's wetlands. An attitude highlighted in Hamilton Disston 's ambition to drain marshlands of South Florida (Derr 87-88). The prevailing belief was that wetlands were uninviting and inhospitable lands and their sole purpose was to be drained and developed. The American apprehension of the swamp is presented in the visually striking 1872 engravings of Harry Fenn: *A Florida Swamp* and *Waiting for Decomposition*. The lack of color in these engravings adds an air of gloom. The haunting image of the swamp in *Waiting for Decomposition* (Fig. 20) features a flock of vultures perched on all the branches of a large cypress while the carcass of a massive alligator floats belly-up in the water below. Fenn worked just before the Luminist landscape artists refined the vision of Paradise advertised in their artwork. *Waiting for Decomposition* echoed the terror of the untamed swamp in Harriet Beecher Stowe's earlier 1856 novel *Dred: A Tale of the Dismal Swamp* of a "darkly struggling, wildly vegetating swamp . . . cut off . . . from the usages and improvements of cultivated life" (O'Connor and Monroe 203). Fenn's *A Florida Swamp* continues his portrayal of the primordial wetlands, depicting herons, egrets, snakes, anoles, alligators, anhingas, and turtles creeping and lurking in shallow water between cypress knees below the dark canopy of the palmettos. Fenn and Herzog's work has parallels to Jervis McEntee's gloomy winter and late fall landscapes of the Hudson, both illustrating the absence of the pastoral setting, yet one as a response to industrialization and the other to the lack of cultivation.

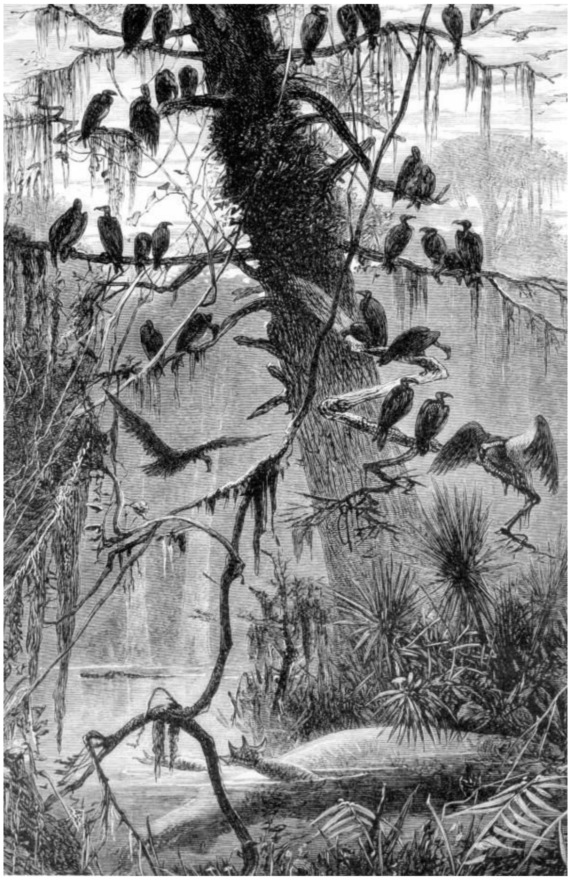

Figure 20. Harry Fen *Waiting for Decomposition* 1872

Despite the hostile accounts of Florida's Nature in journals, guidebooks, and landscapes, its association with Edenic Paradise continued to attract more tourists for an exploitable industry. King's 1875 travel guide "The Southern States of North America" declared that Florida, as the nation's "new winter paradise" was unimaginably more splendid than the "poet's imagination" or myths of the fountain of youth surpassed by the enchanting Silver Springs tributarily attached to the Ocklawaha (145). King romanticized Jacksonville's "health-giving ocean winds," birdsong, lively town squares, "miraculous subtropical vegetation," orange groves, live oaks, and a climate he regularly referred to as "delicious," while making sure to include names of hotels and neighborhoods and their amenities (145-146). The "glimpses of perfect beauty" found on the St. Johns compels visitors to no longer "regret hills and mountains," and questions how they "ever thought them necessary" (King 147). The visions of grandeur are replaced by vistas of "Nature run riot" along the bank of the St Johns (King 147). Florida's delightful irregularity, charming decay, and picturesque solitude found in its natural scene urge the reader to discover them for themselves (King 144-148). Sidney Lanier employs more biblical imagery in his 1875 literary travel guide *Florida* commissioned by the Atlantic Seaboard Railroad and published the same year as King's book. Lanier's voyage along the Ocklawaha provided him an intimate view into Nature that led to "one of the most imaginative accounts of Florida's exotic scenery ever published" (O'Sullivan and Lane, 149). Reminiscent of Transcendentalists perceiving a connection to Nature as communion with God, Lanier describes wind blowing over the water "as if God had turned into water and trees the recollection of some meditative ramble through the lonely seclusions of His own soul" (150). Lanier records the names of trees and water birds he encounters on the Ocklawaha, including an oddly insulting description of an anhinga (151). Within the shapes of the dense vines that wrapped around the forest on the edge of the river, Lanier sees visions of Paradise, chapels, modern life, mythology, and history all at once inscribed into the forest alongside the river. "Look! Here is a great troop of girls, with arms wreathed over their heads, dancing down into the water; here are high velvet arm-chairs and lovely green fauteuils of divers pattern and of softest cushionment; there the vines hang in loops, in pavilions, in columns, in arches, in caves, in pyramids, in women's tresses, in harps and lyres, in globular mountain-ranges, in pagodas, in domes, minarets, machicolated towers, dogs, belfries, draperies, fish, dragons. Yonder is a bizarre congress – Una on her lion, Angelo's Moses, two elephants with howdahs, the Laocöon group, Arthur and Lancelot with great brands extended aloft in combat, Adam bent with love and grief leading Eve out of Paradise, Caesar shrouded in his mantle receiving his stabs, Greek chariots, locomotives, brazen shields and cuirasses, columbiads, the twelve Apostles, the stock exchange. It is a green dance of all things and times" (Lanier 152-153).

Lanier continues his guide by painting the sunset with the imagery of "brilliant flame flares" that eventually subsides into dusk in the "endless creation succeeded by endless oblivion" of the swamp (153). Speaking to the beliefs of Florida's healthful climate, Lanier describes waking in the morning along the Ocklawaha from a night not "any longer, any blacker, any less pure than this perfect white blank in the page" making one "feel as new as Adam" (154). The imagery employed in Lanier's spectacular account of the St Johns Basin conjures the same majesty and awe in the detailed Luminist depictions of Florida. It entices readers to experience the wonder of the Ocklawaha and Florida's mystical forests. It establishes the expectation and preserves the serenity of the primordial swamp without overly glamorizing it, but rather fully accepting the landscape and its transcendence. With Paradise established in Florida and its vision exported by travel guides and landscape paintings, an influx of tourists flooded the state in magnified search for Paradise. Tourists turned to residents and Florida's land speculation explodes.

Chapter 3

Paradise in the Sunshine State:
Florida's Environmental Decay and Refuge

Figure 21. Promotional postcard incorporates themes of *The Birth of Venus*, abundance of the cornucopia, golden rays of sunlight of Luminist paintings, and tropical beaches to attract buyers to a housing boom in Paradise (LaHurd).

Employed by railroad and hotel owners, Victorian authors and artists presented a romanticized vision of Florida that remained more artistic than real. This effort stimulated the tourism industry, but overlooked Florida's endless swamps, cold snaps, mosquitoes, and malaria that plagued its isolated rural population. The new concept of Paradise was heralded by Flagler's

Florida East Coast Railway and his hotels and resorts that followed. Other industrialists brought their own resorts to the coast, with Carl Fisher in Miami Beach, Addison Mizner in Boca Raton and Palm Beach, George Merrick in Coral Gables, and Joseph M. Young in Hollywood (Nelson 13). Tourists enthralled by the opportunity to own a piece of the state they encountered in these resorts became residents of the state. Consequently, Florida's natural charm was drained and developed, and Paradise shifted from the sublime tourist mecca of the St. Johns to a frenzy for coastal land that could be bought and sold.

Transportation unlocked barriers to accessibility in the state. Steamboats had opened the banks of the St Johns to Northerners and rail opened the coasts to the flocks of wealthy tourists. The development of the automobile, notably the Model-T Ford allowed the growing middle class to explore and reside in Florida, spurring a prosperous yet fraudulent land speculation boom.

By 1924, Florida had no sales, land, property, income, or inheritance taxes, attracting out-of-state buyers to flood the market. The allure of Paradise and lucrative tourism fueled the massive profits made from buying and reselling flooded, virtually undevelopable swampland (Nelson 14). Recorded land transactions rose from 22,000 in 1920 to 174,530 in five years, with the price of an $8 parcel of land rising to $150,000 at the same time (Nelson 14). Investigations into the $80 million transferred from Ohio banks into Florida's speculation scheme reported the lack of actual development happening in the state, but rather the subdivision and reselling of lots (Stephenson 92). National press began a stream of criticism towards the Florida real estate economy (Stephenson 92).

With the dire need to keep the impression of a prospering Florida and its land boom alive, Florida Governor John W. Martin confronted the criticism. He abated the anti-Florida propaganda with a speech to publishers in New York City. This allowed speculation to continue until the market burst in 1926 (Stephenson 92; Nelson 14).

September 18th to 20th of 1926 marked the most devastating hurricane to hit South Florida. Miami was bashed by twelve hours of winds reaching 160 miles-per-hour and three-to-four feet of flooding. The shores of Lake Okeechobee were destroyed by tornadoes and flooding, costing 120 lives. Across the state, twenty-seven percent of the citrus crop was lost along with a third of cotton and the entirety of the pepper, string bean, and avocado crops, costing the state $10 million (Nelson 15-16). The illusion of a tranquil Florida Paradise was shattered overnight. Speculators and investors retreated north. The state's economy plummeted. Two years later, the state experienced its deadliest hurricane with an estimated 2500 – 3000 deaths (Blake et al. 7). With that, hope for a renewed land boom vanished. A land speculation system, largely supported by bank funds, saw 125 of 335 banks fail with a loss of assets totaling $375 million (Nelson 16). Unemployment was the highest in the Southeast, where an unfinished hotel was converted into a chicken farm, and entire town of Sun City was purchased for $100 (Nelson 17). A curse of poverty struck the state, setting the stage for the Great Depression.

Florida's dismal economy was a focal point for the New Deal. The New Deal tackled agricultural problems by restoring crop prices, and, in 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt issued funds for each state to develop recreational areas to spur employment (Nelson 20). This effort was keyed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a program that instilled Roosevelt's unwavering conservation attitudes across the country through forest management and stewardship, usually tree planting (Nelson 21). The program, intended to keep young men between the ages of seventeen to twenty-eight out of unemployment, also aided to reduce youth dissent and radicalism; reflecting Roosevelt's own quasi-Transcendentalist values that a connection with Nature would bring "spiritual and moral stability" to the nation's youth (Nelson 21-23,25).

In Florida, the Civilian Conservation Corps, under the direction of the National Park Service, built the foundational infrastructure for the State Park System when the state lacked the funds to do so. However, these projects were heavily disjointed and lacked a comprehensive plan; thus, a State Park System was required to create a focused plan to acquire, manage, and maintain standards for lands set aside for the public recreation (Florida State Planning Board 57). The creation of the Florida State Park System in 1935 was a response to the shortening of the workday that provided citizens with more time for leisure and pleasure. The State Parks were established with the primary purpose of providing recreational opportunities within the state.

In the 1940 *Florida Park, Parkway and Recreational-Area Study*, The Florida State Planning Board recognized recreation to be the core element of tourism, Florida's dominant and most productive sector. Based on the *Recreational Use of Land* by the National Park Service, the Florida Planning Board defines a State Park as "areas of superior scenic value or suitable for recreation, or both, or possessing such interest from archaeological or historical standpoint that their use tends to be State-wide in character" (76). The State Planning Board ensured that the parks appealed to all visitors. To allow for intimate connections with the parks, the educational, inspirational, and scenic values blended with active recreation rather than being second to it (76-77).

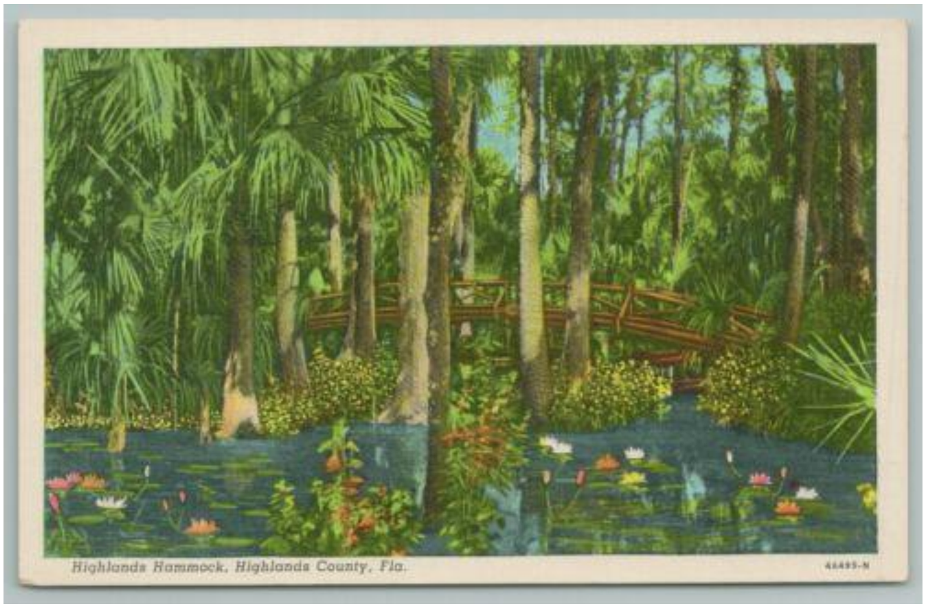

Figure 22. Postcard of Highlands Hammock State Park

Prior to the creation of the State Park System, several parks and Civil War historical monuments had been set aside by private interests. Declared for public use in 1931 and opened to the public in 1933, Highlands Hammock (Fig 22.) became the first state park which would later become part of the Park System. Located near Sebring immediately west of the Lake Wales Ridge, the park is comprised mostly of untouched hydric hammock, a habitat that stands out from the dry, sandy scrub and cultivated citrus groves adjacent to it. The primeval jungle, as described in the State Planning Board study, boasts “trees 100 feet high and 31 feet in circumference, alligator-inhabited lowlands, native orchids in rainbow hues, and ferns growing everywhere along the small lakes and lagoons” (63). As a final bastion for the previously widespread hammocks abundant in the southern portion of the state, initial plans prior to state ownership called for the creation of a national park, although the area was too small. The Roebling family bought the property and provided financial and technical support to develop the park for tourism until 1934 when ownership of the park was transferred to the State and a Civilian Conservation Corps camp was established to continue developing infrastructure as well as a State Garden and Arboretum on the property (Nelson 34-36). While protected for its unique tropical atmosphere, the state's vision for the park was to cultivate profit in the budding tourism industry.

Precedence for the protection of unique natural areas in the park system can be attributed to the protection of Paradise Key in the Royal Palm State Park (Fig. 23) in 1916. The South Florida hammock was set aside for protection before its ultimate incorporation into the Everglades National Park. Hammocks are slightly elevated islands of fertile soil that rise above a sea of sawgrass prairie; Paradise Key is most notable for its royal palms (*Roystonea regia*) towering over a tropical jungle canopy (Florida State Planning Board 114). The ruinous and haphazard clearing of hammocks for agricultural development in the Everglades concerned the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (Derr 165). Spearheaded May Mann Jennings, president of the Federation since 1914, protecting the hammock became the priority of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (Poole 45). Jennings' background in conservation and forestry and her connections with Florida leaders, as the wife to the former governor, focused the efforts of the Federation on the issue (Poole 45). The persistent proposals to Florida congress to create the park and provide a yearly thousand-dollar maintenance budget finally passed (Poole 46-48). Concerns reached Mary Lily Kenan Flagler, Henry Flagler's widowed wife, who agreed to donate 960 acres which was matched by state legislature, establishing a 1920-acre state park that would later expand to 2080 acres (Derr 166). At its founding ceremony, Jenning's declared the scenic jungle of Royal Palm State Park to be "God's Own Garden," evoking Transcendentalist values of divinity in an increasingly rare wilderness as preceding preservationists had down (Poole 48). Keynote speaker at the ceremony and president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, May Belle King Sherman, remarked the power of women's clubs to preserve scenic areas of national importance, a strong sentiment she would incorporate into a new conservation mission for the General Federation (Poole 48).

Figure 23. Postcard of Royal Palm State Park. This postcard parallels Luminist marsh paintings.

Sherman shifted the mission of the larger Federation from a utilitarian purpose that would support and promote the conservation of natural resources to a preservationist goal of protecting scenic landscapes for the sake of benefiting visitors physically, mentally, and morally, as was the case behind her support for Rocky Mountain National Park (Poole 49). In the infancy of park planning and conservation, Royal Palm State Park was protected for its unique and peculiar tropical habitat and public recreation opportunities (Poole 51). The notion that lands needed to be used in some way was still present, with Jennings and the women's clubs suggesting and supporting draining adjacent wetlands for coconut and lime production as to generate funds for the park (Poole 51). Jennings came to define beauty as both the natural state of the park and human manipulation of the landscape to increase beauty. Lining roads with royal palms, cutting trails, creating bird sanctuaries, building a botanical garden, and establishing a game preserve would all serve to increase the park's beauty (Poole 52). In this sense, what Jennings and her contemporaries came to define as Paradise was rooted in the productivity of the land; a land of milk and honey cultivated from the Everglades (Poole 52).

With Royal Palm State Park at the nucleus, environmental advocacy and lobbying led to the eventual approval in 1934 and dedication of the much larger Everglades National Park in 1947. Despite its limited recreational usage and its lack of traditional scenic value, the park garnered support through its immense plant and wildlife diversity and its distinctive hydrology and geology (Poole 58). Conservation and ecology were making their first inroads utility still ruled interactions with Nature (Poole 59). At the dedication ceremony, President Harry S. Truman denounced the destructive practices that had ravaged the Everglades, but instead of hailing an era of preservation he called for utilitarian management practices of minerals, forest, water, and soil as not to exhaust them (Poole 59). In the eyes of Jennings and other clubwomen drainage and manipulation of the Everglades outside of the park was permissible and welcomed (Poole 59).

Utility also defined the early parks system. By 1940, the State Park System consisted of ten parks, with plans to incorporate more beach and lakefront public parks into the system for better recreation. The ten parks in the system were chosen to be "distinctive in their vegetation, topography, and outstanding scenic or scientific features, thus providing the opportunity for both citizens and visitors to see and know Florida" (Florida State Planning Board 58). Other than Highlands Hammock State Park, the other nine include Hillsborough River State Park near Tampa featuring the rapids of the Hillsborough River and the surrounding ancient oak hammock (65-66). Gold Head Branch State Park, fifty miles from Gainesville and Jacksonville, protects spring-fed stream in a sixty-five-foot-deep ravine and numerous sinkhole lakes within the park (66). Fort Clinch State Park on Amelia Island in Northwest Florida blends the historic preservation of the fortress with the scenic preservation of the island’s beaches and hammock (67). Florida Caverns State Park in North Florida is best known for its natural limestone caves which the Chipola River beneath the surface and into the caverns for a portion of its course (69). Myakka River State Park outside of Sarasota is a subtropical semi-jungle along the Myakka River; providing an outstanding wildlife sanctuary and a striking scenic view in dry seasons as Lower Myakka Lake disappears into a sinkhole (70). Torreya State Park in the vicinity Tallahassee shelters two critically endangered endemic tree species, Florida yew (*Taxus floridana*) and Florida torreya (*Torreya taxifolia*), in the hills along the Apalachicola River (71). Pan-American State Park was a 300-acre park just outside of Fort Lauderdale along New River aimed to preserve the swamp and magnificent subtropical flora. Suwannee River State Park established around the Suwannee River in North Florida includes springs, cliffs, caverns, and Civil War relics (73-74). Lastly, Tomoka State Park along the intertidal waterways of the Halifax and Tomoka Rivers preserves the primitive setting of the coastal marsh along with the historical preservation of forts and sugar mills.

The parks were designed to accommodate a diverse set activities and facilities “for pleasure, inspiration, and recreation” (Florida State Planning Board 58). Intended usages include “hiking, Nature study, handicraft, picnicking, boating, and swimming” that encourage personal discoveries of Florida by “following miles of foot trails, navigating the tropical rivers and streams, observing the natural phenomena of the protected animals and bird-life, the deep underground caverns, the disappearing streams, and the beautiful forests and jungles” (Florida State Planning Board 58). The *Florida Park, Parkway and Recreational-Area Study* conjures idyllic images of a family vacation with families “bathing in the lakes and rivers” and a father pursuing sport fishing “in well-stocked and protected waters, while his family picnics at the many spots provided with fireplaces, running water, and modern sanitation” (58).

The State Park System recognized the value of scenery, but conservation was the basis for its decisions. The Florida Park Service, which the 1935 establishing legislation placed under the jurisdiction of the Board of Forestry, operated through the lens of utility (Florida State Planning Board 59). The *Florida Park, Parkway and Recreational-Area Study* identifies Florida’s most important resources and sets the framework to weave recreation into conservation areas. The State Planning Board considers natural and physical resources to be wasted if people cannot “make use of them and [benefit] from them . . . Resources only have value when they enable our people to enjoy a more rich and fuller life” (1). The study finds natural resources should first be managed then be used for recreation. “Water is Florida’s most important and vital resource,” with issues concerning its management being flood control, water supply, pollution, irrigation, recreation, and navigation (Florida State Planning Board 1). Likewise, land is another valuable resource. Sub-marginal lands, land with poor soil fertility deemed not economically viable for agriculture, is best used for controlling and conserving water, preserving scenery, and resource extraction of clay, sand, limestone, and other building materials. When restoration efforts were too costly, land destroyed by fire or overgrown were designated as a wildlife reservations (Florida State Planning Board 1).

The utilitarian attitudes, the promotion of recreation, and the portrayal of Nature through Luminist paintings sought to build tourism in the state. Reverence for the natural and scenic beauty was a goal woven into the primary State Park System priority of recreation. The 1935 State Park Act specified that lands added to the state park system must be “suitable for public parks or for the preservation of natural beauty of places of historic association and operate the same as public parks" (Florida State Planning Board 60). The Florida State Planning Board's definition of a state park is adapted from the National Park Service's *Recreational Use of Land* (76). It defines a state park as an area "of superior scenic value or suitable for recreation, or both, or possessing such interest from archaeological or historic standpoint that their use tends to be State-wide in character" (76). The park program aims to "completely utilize its assets," such that "educational, inspirational, and scenic value of the area [are not] made secondary to a program for active recreation" (76-77). With the mission to accommodate a wide range of values, personal encounters with an ancient Paradise were still possible.

Data from the State Road Department assessed Florida tourists driving from Alabama and Georgia. Recreation was their primary reason for travel with 73.7% in contrast to 8.2% visiting the state for health reasons, a number that was much greater during the era of salubrious pilgrimages of the 19th century (Florida State Planning Board 32). The leading forms of recreation were water sports and fishing at 49% followed by touring the state at 21% (33). The study also compiled information on the most popular points of interest. Cities were ranked first with 36% of visits followed by 23% aggregating at scenic attractions and 15% heading for the beaches (33). These attitudes reflected the growing utilitarian attitude of tourists and society.

The Florida Forest and Park Service published the promotional pamphlet *Florida's State Parks Invite You* in 1945. A short description accompanied a photograph or image of each park identifying their greatest appeals and available recreational facilities. Most descriptions identified beauty as a resource that simply exists in these parks, which includes individual flowers, butterflies, trees, plants, birds, and wildlife. As each park was chosen for unique characteristics and oddities, the display of stalactites, stalagmites, and other dripstone formations such as "tapestry-like drapes and lily-pad basins" of Florida Caverns State is also expressed as being beautiful (Florida State Planning Board 69). A larger scenic beauty is described in the hardwood hammock and the beaches that encapsulate the natural scenic assets of Fort Clinch State Park or the "old plantation scenic charm" of Torreya State Park (67, 71). However, the pamphlet's description of Myakka River State Park (Fig. 24) is the only one that conveys intrinsic sublimity. The primordial "stillness so vast you 'feel' it" in the massive park of seemingly endless wildlife habitat (*Florida's State Parks Invite You* 4).

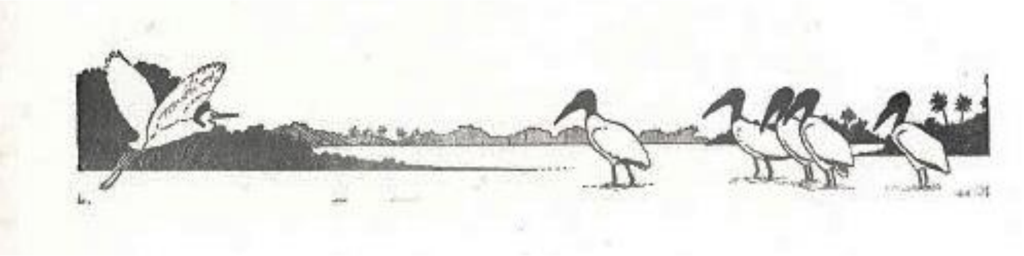

Figure 24. Depiction of birdlife at Myakka River State Park (*Florida's State Parks Invite You* 4)

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, South Florida writer and activist, presented a new vision of the Everglades that "celebrates the achievements of humans and Nature while warning of their limits" in her 1947 book *The Everglades: River of Grass* (O'Sullivan and Lane 224). As a river of grass, the Everglades reflects biological and human history as a flowing continuum into an unknown future from a mystical past. Douglas highlights the allure of the Everglades implied in its name; an "endless, watery bright expanse" of "open green grassy . . . pasture" (Douglas 226-227). A name derived from "the green and brown expanse of saw grass (*Cladium jamaicensis*) and of water" beneath "the dazzling blue heights of space" (Douglas 225). The inhospitable expanse of "fierce, ancient, cutting sedge . . . set with fine saw teeth like points of grass" are as uniform as the sea (Douglas 228-229). Douglas evokes one's personal inconsequentiality amidst the Everglades despite the lack monumentalism found in other National Parks by likening "a man standing in the center . . . lost in the sawgrass" to "a man drowning in the middle of

Okeechobee – or the Atlantic Ocean" (Douglas 230). The appreciation for the system comes from recognizing its hydrologic and biotic uniqueness and grandeur. Below the water flowing from Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf of Mexico, the ancient muck built up "year after year", recounting a history of growth, burns, and decay. The persistence of the glades beneath harsh sun and regular hurricanes spoke to its permanence. In their timelessness, the glades exist alongside a human history of indigenous roots, foreign discovery, exploration, settlement, war, refuge, exile, solitude, destruction, and exploitation (Douglas 225).

"There are no other Everglades," Douglas declared (225). She unveiled the transcendence of a unique ecosystem which set the foundation of a new understanding of aesthetics for a previously distasteful landscape. Scientific knowledge, when used as a basis for imagination, leads to aesthetic appreciation (Fudge 284). Douglas outlines the foundational knowledge of biotic processes in the saw grass muck which demonstrates to readers "how natural objects, and the systems in which they reside, are dynamically related, and this in turn helps [them] uncover certain of Nature's aesthetic properties. When directed toward unscenic [sic] Nature, this activity of the imagination helps provide the opportunity for aesthetic appreciation where before there may have been none" (Fudge 284).

A scientific understanding of ecology was taking form as Douglas wrote *River of Grass*. The post-war era of the United States saw more funding going towards scientific research. The National Science Foundation funded ecological research which led to larger ecology programs in universities, sponsored field work in arctic and tropical regions, and developed an understanding of trophic structure, energetics, productivity, and nutrient cycling (McIntosh 361). Research was also executed on the hazard of nuclear energy to public health and the environment in the 1950s, however it did not become a public concern until the 60s. Ecology became more sophisticated in the 50s with more advanced measuring equipment, apparatus, and methods such as radioisotopes, respirometers, and spectrophotometers as opposed to rulers, string, and thermometers which were more common in the classical ecology of the 1930s (McIntosh 362). As a result, studies on the environment were becoming increasingly quantifiable (McIntosh 362). This made it practical to study entire ecosystems rather than having to focus interactions between abiotic factors and single or closely related taxa (McIntosh 363). Energy budgets could be calculated for ecosystems, dynamic models for population structure and abundance could better factor for competition and predator-prey interactions, and the concept that plant communities existed in a gradient became universally accepted (McIntosh 362-363). Concerns over the issues of resource depletion, environmental degradation, population booms, and food shortages led to the formation of the International Biological Program in 1960 that lasted until 1974 (McIntosh 363). The program coordinated cooperative research to understand complex ecological interactions, finding ways to increase productivity was conducted, improving the methods to predict impacts to the environment, and enhancing the ability to manage natural resources (McIntosh 363).

Applied ecology informed forestry and other management practices based on conservation land ethics during the early 1900s (McIntosh 355). From the 1920s to 1950s, the main practical use for ecological research was the preservation of natural conditions, and early warnings of ecological crises were published (McIntosh 360-361). Aldo Leopold wrote on both in *Game Management* in 1933 and *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, where the latter combined ecology and game management to develop the ethics and aesthetics for conservation that would later be adopted into the environmental movement of the 60s (McIntosh 361). Likewise, *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson published in 1962 brought environmental concerns regarding hazardous pesticides into the public consciousness, while a growing anxiety surrounded nuclear fallout (McIntosh 368). Alerting America of the environmental crisis took form in multiple subsets of ecology (McIntosh 368). From waste management, resource management, erosion control, fire ecology, and pollutants, an ever-increasing amount of research was done to understand anthropogenic impacts on ecology (McIntosh 368). In an applied form, federal legislation provided a stimulus that integrated ecology into federal projects as in the National Environmental Policy Act through environmental impact statements (McIntosh 368).

In Florida, government action for environmental protection was a response to rapid development and subsequent environmental disaster. Housing was again a massively lucrative market in Florida from the 1950s to 1970s. Driven by the search for Paradise, newcomers contributed to the state's population doubling to 6.8 million in 1970 (Stephenson 145). The east coast of Florida was lined with condominiums and hotels while gas stations, fast-food outlets, shopping centers, and malls sprouted across the state (Derr 338). The demand for new housing pushed developers to drain wetlands and fill bays, causing statewide environmental havoc (Stephenson 145-146). Across Florida, sensitive lands experienced raging peat fires, the rampant spread of invasive *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthiolia*), nutrient-loading in waterways leading to algal blooms, and saltwater intrusion in aquifers exacerbated by the 1970-1971 drought (Stephenson 145-146; Carter 125). Later that year, Governor Askew brought together scientists, engineers, government officials, politicians, and activists for the Florida Water Management Conference to reconcile the conflict between population growth and water depletion (Carter 125-126). Markedly countercultural, this conference challenged the tradition of unlimited growth and came to the consensus that Florida would require necessary "land use control measures and could no longer be found primarily in the manipulation of available water resources" (Carter 126).

The Water Resources Act, the Environmental Land and Water Management Act, the State Comprehensive Planning Act, the Land Conservation Act, and the Environmental Reorganization Act were all passed in 1972 following the conference. Together, they provided the state with comprehensive land and water use plans to limit population densities. (Stephenson 147; Carter 133). The Environmental Land and Water Management Act introduced a two-tiered system that allowed state officials to designate and monitor lands of critical concern. Additionally, state officials could now approve or deny development plans with large regional impacts while local governments held hearings to make decisions directly in critical areas (Derr 368; Carter 134). Similarly, the Land Conservation Act allowed the state to issue bonds to raise as much as $240 million to acquire endangered habitats, environmentally sensitive lands, and recreational areas (Derr 368). Public opinion was also more environmentally conscious. More citizens understood that the built and natural environment are interwoven systems (Derr 370). These pieces of legislature heralded a new model for national environmental land acquisition and protection that distinguished Florida from typical Southern states which focused on maximizing its economy to one with sustainable development at the center of its growth plans (Carter 137). The foundational understanding of Nature's ecological value and the start of the environmental movement preserved the beauty of Florida's original Paradise. Transcendentalist attitudes were brought into government and protected the dwindling remnants of the naturalist and Luminist aesthetic. What was set aside in this era would persist into today's highly juxtaposed built and natural landscape of Central Florida and its equally juxtaposed attitudes towards preserving or developing natural lands.

Chapter 4

Hunting For Paradise with a Camera:
Photographing the Luminist Vision

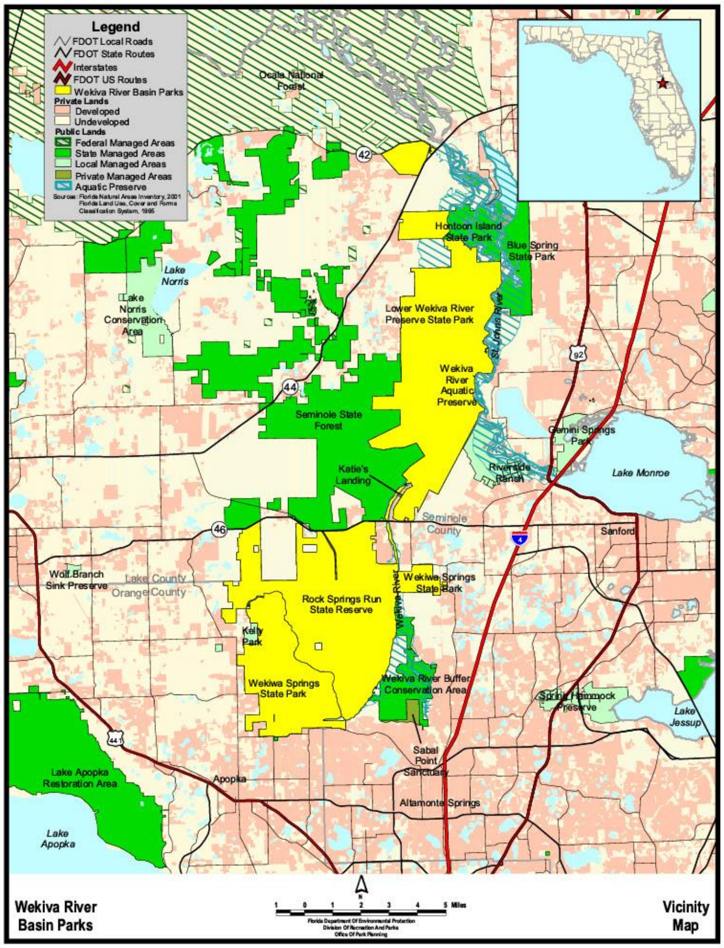

Figure 25. Vicinity map of the Wekiva River Basin State Parks and adjacent protected areas. Note the intact corridor from Wekiwa Springs State Park to Blue Spring State Park and the Ocala National Forest.

As a result of the environmental consciousness and the 1972 environmentally focused legislature, Wekiwa Springs State Park and Blue Spring State Park were acquired by the state explicitly for their scenic value, threatened species, and dwindling natural resources. Wekiwa Springs State Park was sold to the State of Florida by the Apopka Sportsman's Club in 1969, a year after the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed by Congress (National Park Service 5,33). Although the Wekiva River System was not designated as a National Wild and Scenic River until 2000, its acquisition reflected a change in land ethic from recreation to preservation with "the fact that clean, natural waterways are not in endless supply" (National Park Service 5, Wekiva Wild and Scenic River Advisory Management Committee 4). This also marks a divergence from the original State Park System's primary mission to set aside land primarily for recreation that provided visitors and tourists with unique experiences in Florida's nature. The original State Parks also intended to provide "essential acreage which could be set aside exclusively for wildlife . . . [that] could be preserved as a source of restocking [wildlife into] surrounding territory" (Florida State Planning Board 2). This was a response to the overhunting of birds for their plumes and showed an early understanding of ecological principles alongside the reality of Florida's diminishing natural resources (Florida State Planning Board 2). While not at the forefront of their management, the original State Parks set a framework to manage biodiversity. A foundational statement from the 1940 State Planning Board, "make Florida the mecca of Nature lovers and . . . persons who hunt with the camera," is still, if not more, applicable to the parks today (2).

The Wekiva River system is currently protected through a series of State Parks, Forests, Reserves, and Preserves. The river system is fed by thirty-one named springs and covers a 242-square-mile drainage basin in north Lake County, northwest Orange County, west Seminole County, and the southeastern tip of Marion County. The largest springs are Wekiwa Springs in Wekiwa Springs State Park which discharges 48 million gallons per day and Rock Springs in Kelly Park, an Orange County managed park, which discharges 41.8 million gallons per day as of 2012. Rock Springs Run flows north out of Kelly Park then south into Rock Springs Run State

Reserve and Wekiwa Springs State Park. It forms the Wekiva River at its confluence with Wekiwa Springs Run then flows north between Rock Springs Run State Reserve and the Wekiva Buffer Conservation Area, which the Little Wekiva River flows through before meeting the Wekiva. Just before it joins the St Johns River, the Wekiva River combines with Black Water Creek, a tributary with headwaters at Lake Norris. Surface water from the Ocala National Forest flows into the lake then into Black Water Creek where it and its floodplain meander through private property and the Seminole State Forest, where it meets Seminole Creek. At its convergence with the St Johns, the Wekiva River and its floodplain are protected in the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park and the Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve. A few miles north of this point are the Hontoon Island State Park and Blue Spring State Park, both directly on the St Johns River (Wekiva Wild and Scenic River Advisory Management Committee 7-15; State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, *BS&HISP UMP* 2-3). Conservation lands along the St Johns and in Lake County close the gap to make the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway, an important wildlife corridor used by threatened Florida black bears (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) (WW&SR AMC 20, 84).

The hydrology of the Wekiva River System is a combination of surface water and groundwater streams. The underlying karst topography of the Floridan aquifer is filled by precipitation that percolates through the limestone bedrock. Water then flows underground until it upwells at spring boils. The Wekiva Springshed gathers water from the Eustis and Mount Dora areas in Lake County, the Apopka and Winter Garden area in Orange County, and the Altamonte Springs and Longwood areas of Seminole County. The springshed provides consistent flow and temperature into crystal clear spring runs, a contrast to the variable flow of blackwater systems fed by surface water. Blackwater systems are associated with dark, tannic water and a floodplain into which water overflows during the rainy season. The dynamic interaction between groundwater and surface water throughout the Wekiva River System creates a diverse series of lentic and lotic systems in rivers, lakes, springs, creeks, and seepage areas. Combined with a subtropical climate, hydrology also affects plant communities on land, creating a gradation of floodplain marshes, floodplain swamps, hydric hammocks, wet flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, depression marshes, dome swamps, marsh lakes, upland mixed forests, baygalls, xeric hammocks, sandhills, scrubby flatwoods, and scrub. (WW&SR AMC 7-15; SFDEP, *WRBSP MUMP* 21-34).

The land use history of Wekiwa Springs State Park reflects the history of Florida. Following the removal of Seminoles during the Second Seminole Wars, the area near the Wekiwa drew in settlers. Wekiwa Springs, then called Clay Springs, was the center of the town by the same name (National Park Service 32). The spring was used as a landing for barges and eventually steamboats following the Civil War (National Park Service 32). Clay Springs was primarily used to ship citrus and produce from the agricultural town of Apopka to the riverport city of Sanford (Robinson and Belleville 31). The last few decades of the 19th century saw a rise in tourism at Clay Springs parallel to tourism on the Ocklawaha and the St Johns. Amenities and recreational facilities such as a hotel, bathhouses, toboggans, cabins, and picnic areas sprung up at Clay Springs. The name was changed to Wekiwa in 1906 and the springs were further commodified for its supposed salubrious effect (National Parks Service 32). A brochure from the time named "Nature's Wonderful Fountain" claimed that Wekiwa's pure water was "essential for good health," and that drinking it "cleanses your kidneys, regulates your bowels, and gives you appetite" (Robinson and Belleville 36). The collapse of Florida real estate, the 1926 and 1928 hurricanes, and the Great Depression killed tourism at Wekiwa Springs. Its buildings burned or were torn down; however, this halted speculation and planned development on the river which preserved the natural beauty that is enjoyed today (National Park Service 32; Robinson and Belleville 47).

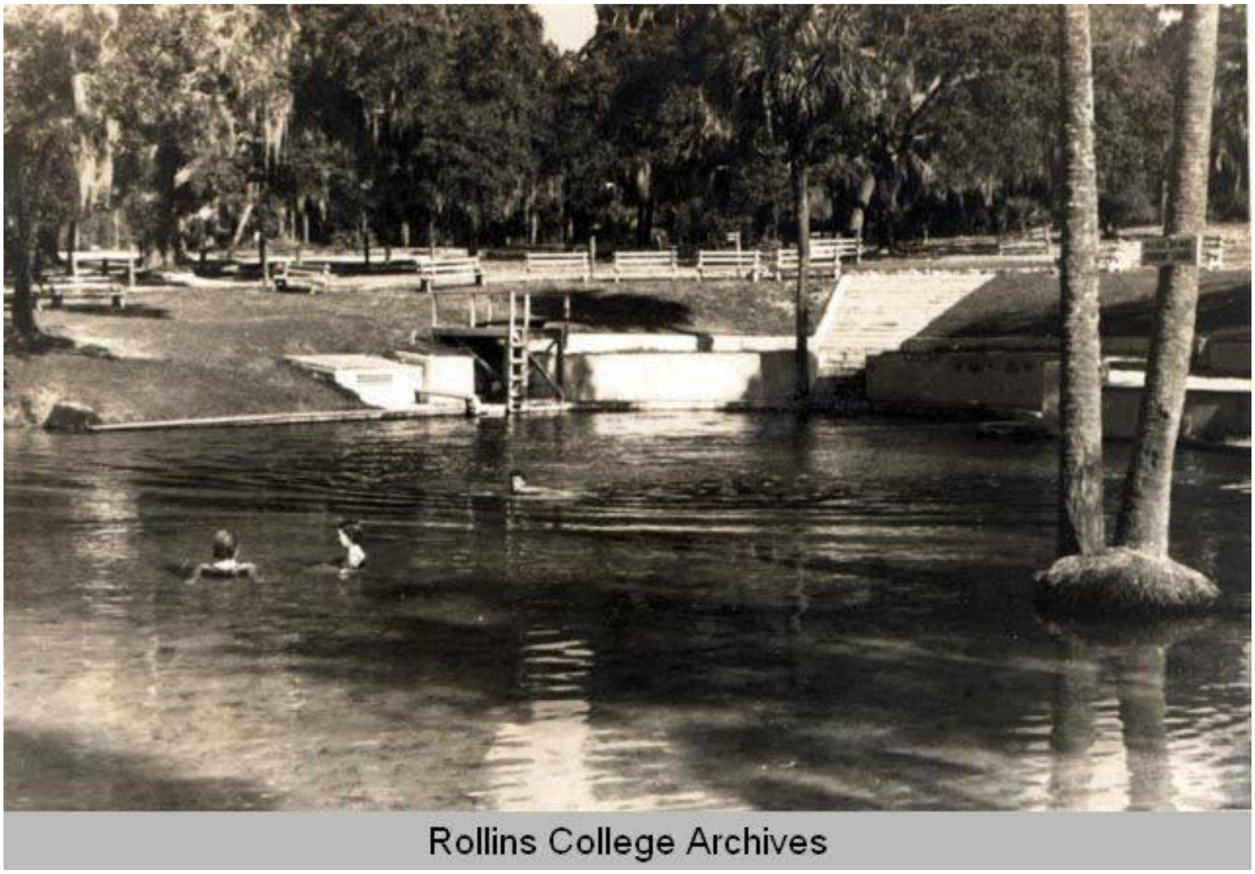

Figure 26. *Swimming at Wekiva Springs.* Photo of Wekiwa Spring showing its historic recreational value.

Dr. Howard Atwood Kelly bought the property around Rock Springs at the head of the Wekiva River's first tributary; he remarked that the exposed limestone bluff visible above the spring boil as being "the most beautiful and interesting of all [he] had ever seen, not only in Florida, but in any other state," and later dedicated the property to Orange County in 1927. This marked one of the earliest conservation efforts in Florida (Robinson and Belleville 68-67; WW&SR AMC 13). When tourism and development left the area in the 1930s, logging for cypress, pine, and hardwoods and turpentining became the most practical use of the land. The Wilson Cypress Company logged the basin, constructing tram beds and railroad grades to transport timber headed for Boston across the basin and dragged down the river by tugger boats (National Parks Service 32-33; Robinson and Belleville 65). The Apopka Sportsmen's Club bought the property from the Wilson Cypress Company and used it recreationally as hunting and fishing grounds until it was purchased by the state in 1969 (National Park Service 32-33). Interestingly, their sport hunting applied early practical of ecology. Through game management, it was realized that the declining deer population was caused by tick fever and unregulated hunting, and rebounded when a restriction on hunting does was put in place (Robinson and Belleville 77).

The Wekiva River ecosystem is assessed in the *Wekiva River Rock Spring Run & Seminole Creek Wild and Scenic River Study* and subsequent *Wekiva Wild and Scenic River System Comprehensive Management Plan* for its five "outstandingly remarkable values": scenic, recreation, wildlife and habitat, historic and cultural, and water quality and quantity values (WW&SR AMC 1). These values are preserved for "benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" (WW&SR AMC 4). The River System's "exceptional scenic resource," provides "ample opportunities to explore, study, and appreciate . . . the crystal clear waters of the springs and spring runs; the tannic dark water of the tributaries; and the mosaic of natural communities surrounding the river system" (WW&SR AMC 48). In addition, the Wild and Scenic River values+ take in the original State Park Board's mission to accommodate for a wide range of recreational uses including "navigating the tropical rivers and streams" and "observing the natural phenomena" (Florida State Planning Board 58).

Bill Bellville retraced the William Bartram' travels along the St Johns and its tributaries. Along the Wekiva, he embellishes the river with descriptions of its fauna and flora existing with the mysterious floodplain, where, at twilight, "cypress trees dance in the muted light" of the full moon that casts an "unworldly glow . . . deep into the swamp." (Belleville, *River of Lakes* 69). He finds the biodiversity of the Wekiva to be "a microcosm of the entire St Johns," noting threatened species like the limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) and Florida black bear as well as resident, migrant, or introduced biota such as needle palms (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*), butterfly orchids, (*Plantathera sp.*), water orchids (*Habenaria repens*), lotus lilies (*Nelumbo lutea*), wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*), ruby-throated hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubirs*), yellow-billed cuckoos (*Coccyzus americanus*), red bellied cooters (*Pseudemys nelson*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), spotted gar (*Lepisosteus oculatus*), stingrays (*Dasyatis sabina*), eel grass (*Vallisneria americana*), rhesus monkeys (*Macaca mulatta*), the Wekiwa hydrobe (*Aphaostracon monas*), and the Wekiwa siltsnail (*Cincinnatia wekiwae*) (Belleville, *River of Lakes* 70-72). His imaginative personified descriptions of the river's biodiversity intertwined with its role in Amerindian culture is akin to Bartram's, but add the importance of umbrella species, habitat connectivity, cultural eutrophication, habitat loss to development, sedimentation, and human history along the river (Belleville, *River of Lakes* 70-74).

The Wild and Scenic River's five values are presented holistically, with management principles behind each value aimed to preserve the natural and free flowing state of the river. The scenic value of the system is balanced by its recreational value; ideal recreational activities contribute little to noise pollution, litter, gasoline fumes and leakage, and erosion (WW&SR AMC 49, 69-70). At a recreational capacity of 3220 daily visitors, Wekiva Springs State Park is managed to ensure that the massive recreational demand of Central Florida does not impede scenic value (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 194). Scenic and recreational values depend on wildlife and their habitat as well as water quality and quantity to uphold their value, but tend to conflict with them as well, especially with recreation. The main impacts on wildlife in the basin include road collisions with black bears in the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway, habitat fragmentation, boat propeller injuries on manatees, inadequate water levels to support wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) rookeries, and invasive species that disrupt native species, increase erosion, or impede water flow (WW&SR AMC 87-91). Additionally, nutrient loading which causes algal blooms and makes invasives more prevalent, noise pollution from watercraft, the physical effects of propellors on wakes and propellors on riverbanks and eelgrass, and litter left behind from recreational activities impact the wildlife and water of the system (WW&SR AMC 87-94). As a partially urban watershed, the Wekiva River System has a higher nitrate concentration than 95% of Florida waterways, which is caused by septic tanks, wastewater treatment plants, and fertilizer use in agriculture and landscaping (WW&SR AMC 127). As is the case in other comprehensive management plans for protected lands in the basin, the *Wekiva Wild and Scenic River System Comprehensive Management Plan* identifies the key values of the parks and manages the impacts of recreation with a clear understanding of how interconnected the different uses and values of the land and waterways are. This presents a much more advanced understanding of ecology beyond game management used in the first state parks, and better allows for the protection of scenic Nature, although in a much more dire modern context.

Blue Spring State Park is another important and popular state park in Central Florida. At a flowrate of 104.7 million gallons per day Blue Spring is the largest spring directly on the St Johns, making it a significant wintering location for over five hundred Florida manatees (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) travelling upstream looking for the warmer temperatures of the springs (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 18, Belleville, *River of Lakes* 80-81). Blue Spring State Park was acquired by the state in 1972 through the Land Acquisition Trust Fund as refuge manatees (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 1). The decision to acquire the park was heavily influenced by public support following the release of the film "Forgotten Mermaids" by Jacques Cousteau (Belleville, *River of Lakes* 81). The film advocated for their protection from boat propellors and thoughtless tourists, while portraying manatees as the charismatic megafauna behind the ecology-focused, conservation initiative (O'Connor). Today, along with the adjacent Hontoon Island State Park, "public outdoor recreation and conservation is the designated single use of the parks" (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 1).

In his 1765 and 1774 explorations, William Bartram remarked how exceptionally clear the water at Blue Spring was, as if fish and alligators had been placed on a table in front of him despite being several feet below the surface (Belleville, *River of Lakes* 82). The property around the spring boil was first settled in 1856 by Luis Thursby and became an important steamboat landing that shipped crops from Orange City to the North. The landing remained popular until the state was connected by rail which caused the steamboat industry on the St Johns to fade. A restored version of Thursby House from 1875 to 1887 that "evokes the era of the steamship" can still be visited today at the center of Blue Spring State Park ("Thursby House at Blue Spring"). Today, the park's primary significance is to provide a sanctuary for manatees as well as habitat for federally designated threatened Florida scrub jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), reflecting the shift in park management since the conception of the State Park System and the environmental movement of the 1970s. The two parks, Blue Spring and Hontoon Island, have a total of 15 natural communities: mesic flatwoods, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, upland mixed forest, baygall, depression marsh, floodplain forest, floodplain marsh, hydric hammock, river floodplain lake, sandhill upland lake, blackwater stream, spring run stream, and aquatic cave, which together support species diversity in aquatic and terrestrial habitats (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 18-25). These habitats host several state and federally listed endangered or threatened species or those of special concern beyond the manatee and scrub jay. These include the endemic Blue Spring Aphaostracon (*Aphaostracon asthenes*) and Blue Spring siltsnail (*Cincinnatia parva*), the Okeechobee gourd (*Curcurbita okeechobeensis*), hooded pitcherplant (*Sarracenia minor*), the Florida mouse (*Podomys floridanus*), bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and Florida black bears (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 26-28).

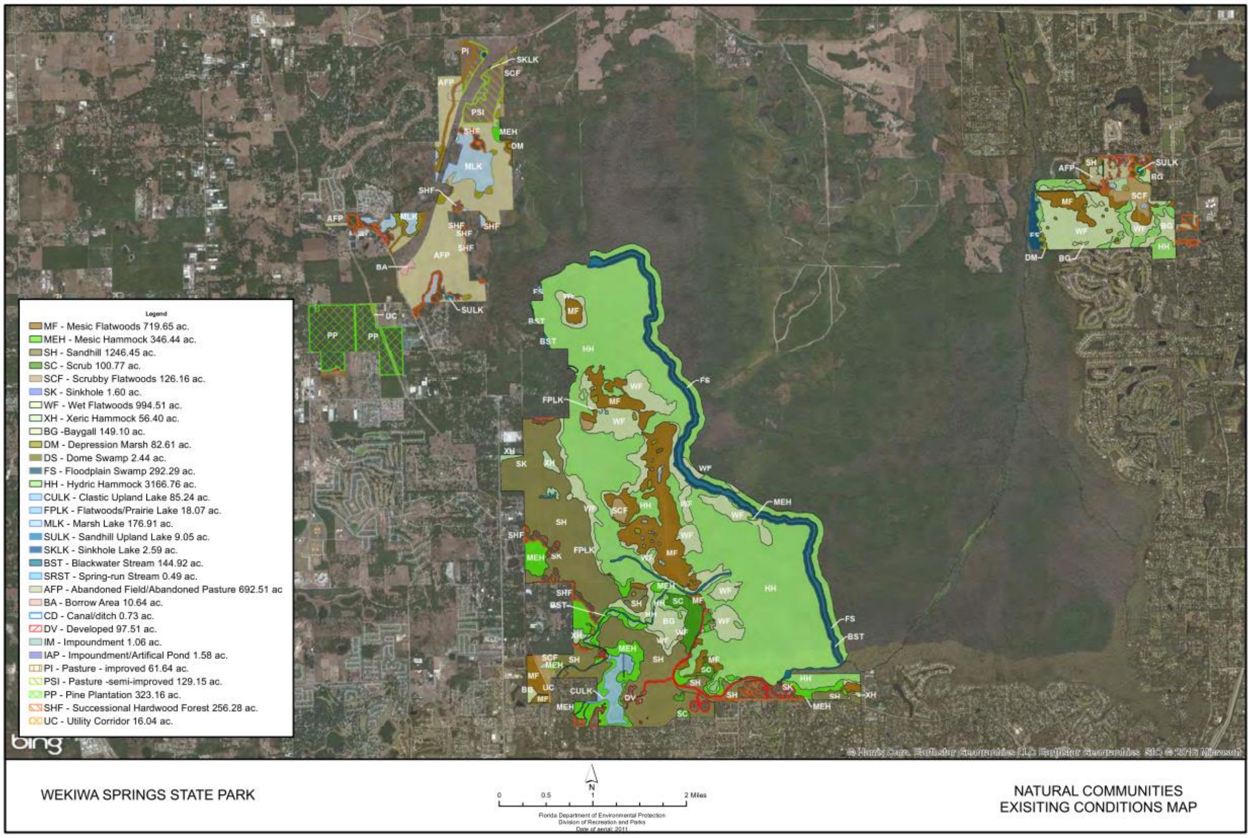

Figure 27. Map of natural communities and existing conditions at Wekiwa Springs State Park. Community delineations are more accurate on this map as compared to the following map (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 44).

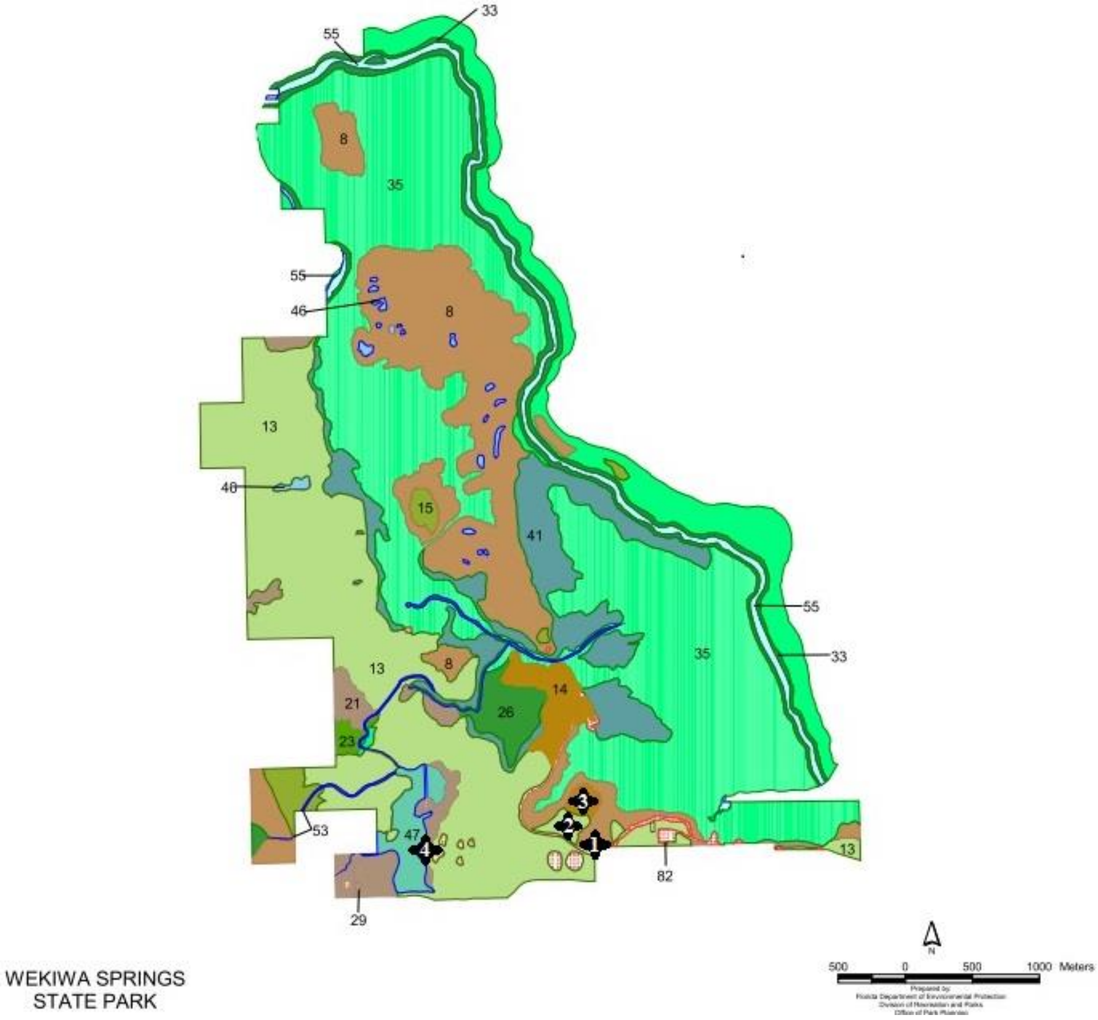

Figure 28. Map of the natural communities at Wekiwa Springs State Park taken from the 2005 Multi-Unit Management Plan. This map is less visually cluttered but also less accurate (SFDEP, *WRBSP MUMP* 22). Markers are places where I took the following photos.

My first set of photos was taken along the trail at the southern end of Wekiva Springs State Park. This trail follows the gradient of natural communities from the spring run to hydric hammock, into mesic flatwoods, through sandhill, and culminating at scrub communities at the highest elevations. Labeled markers on the natural communities map from the 2005 Wekiva Basin State Parks Unit-Management Plan (Fig. 28) correspond to the following photos. The habitat information used in the photo descriptions is from the update 2017 Unit-Management Plan (Fig. 27) which includes updated and more accurate community delineations and descriptions. The map provided in the 2017 map is visually cluttered with satellite imagery, so the markers are placed on 2005 map is provided here instead.

The following photos emulate what naturalists traveling the St Johns River Valley would have encountered and noted. I incorporate observations from William Bartram's *Travels* into my descriptions of subjects to contextualize the photos. I focus on visually appealing flora and fauna portrayed at angles which highlight distinguishing features and prompt an audience to formulate stories for the images.

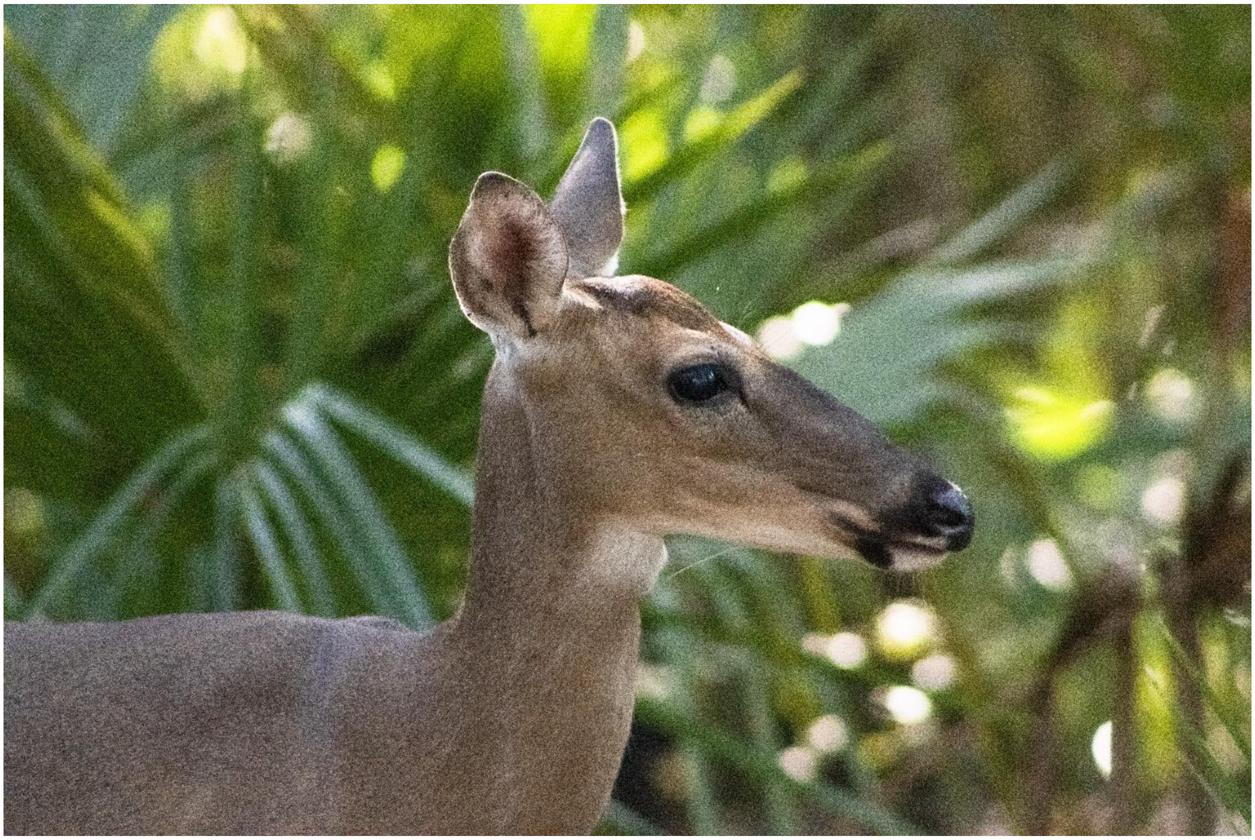

Figure 29. Deer at Wekiwa Springs State Park

This portrait of a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) was taken at Marker 1, soon after the park opened that morning. Few people had walked the trail, leaving it quite and peaceful. A small herd of deer were comfortably grazing in the cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) and saw palm (*Serenoa* repens) understory beneath dense the live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), and pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) canopy of the mesic hammock (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 51-52). The mesic hammock is an ecotonal community occurring between hydric hammocks and sandhill.

Capturing this photo, I kept the deer's eye near-centered in the frame to humanize the deer. William Bartram mentions deer several times in *Travels*, often humanizing them as well. As hunters, his companions saw deer for their utilitarian purpose and prepared to hunt them.

Meanwhile, Bartram recorded the herd "flouncing in a sparkling pond, in a green meadow or cove beyond the point; some lying down on their sides in the cool water, whilst others were prancing like young kids; the young bucks in playsome sport" (Bartram 174). The herd I encountered had three adults and a fawn. The canopy muted the soft morning light while gaps in the trees sprinkled the deer in golden light.

The gradient between mesic hammocks and pine-dominated communities follows differences in the fire regime. Pine-dominated communities, i.e., flatwoods and sandhills, experience higher fire frequencies than mesic hammocks which are not fire-adapted. Anthropogenic fire suppression in pine-dominated habitats can allow hardwood invasion. Since the habitat is well established, exotic species removal and prescribed burns in pine-dominated communities are the main management practices used to maintain the habitat (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 51-52).

Figure 30. Photograph of a tiger swallowtail butterfly on wildflowers at Wekiwa Springs State Park.

Further upland on the trail, the dense hardwood canopy gave way to open sandhill. Bartram welcomed the stark contrast of "dark and grassy savannas" in sandhill forests, noting that "new objects of observation in the works of Nature soon reconcile the surprised imagination of the change" (Bartram 42). The understory is in bloom with summer farewell (*Dalea pinnata*) and yellow buttons (*Balduina angustifolia*). The photo taken at Marker 2 highlights a striking tiger swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio glaucus*) feeding on summer farewell nectar. Flowers and butterflies are the oldest of Florida's gems recorded by naturalists. Bartram records thorough descriptions of the brilliant patterns and celestial colors of butterflies "remarkable for splendour" (Bartram 23). With the wings facing the lens, the black and yellow tiger-stripes which give the butterfly are clear, but its forked tail and blue scales are covered by flowers in the foreground.

Bartram provides vivid descriptions of similar flatwood communities, stating that the “forest of long-leaved pine (*P. palustris* Linn.) the earth covered with grass, interspersed with an infinite variety of herbaceous plats, and embellished with extensive savannas, always green, sparkling with ponds of water, and ornamented with clumps of evergreen, and other trees and shrubs” (Bartram 52).

He expresses reverence for “a magnificent grove of stately pines, succeeding to the expansive wild plains” (Bartram 155). As it did for me, being in the sandhill “had a pleasing effect, rousing the faculties of the mind, awakening the imagination by its sublimity, and arresting every active, inquisitive idea, by the variety of the scenery, and the solemn symphony of the steady Western breezes, playing incessantly, rising and falling through the thick and wavy foliage” (Bartram 155).

The beauty present in today’s flatwoods and sandhill are remarkable as they are a result of habitat restoration following pine logging and turpentining in the 1930s and 1940s. Sandhill restoration projects since the park’s acquisition included active, one-to-three-year lightning season burns and oak girdling to reestablish longleaf pines (*Pinus palustris*) in the canopy and the wiregrass (*Aristida stricta* var. *beyrichiana*) dominated herbaceous layer. Despite a 2004 herbicide dosing error which killed native plants, recently disturbed areas having a higher presence of invasive plants, and domestic cats (*Felis catus*) reducing small animal populations, most of the 1246 acres of sandhill “is in excellent condition” with portions “in fair to poor condition as an artifact of burning techniques due to proximity of the urban interface” (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 52-54)

Figure 31. Pinecone at Wekiwa Springs State Park

At its highest altitude, the trail cuts through scrub. This photo taken at Marker 3 of a sand pine (*Pinus clausa*) pinecone highlights the smaller details of Nature which Bartram would have stopped to study. The tight framing of this photo excludes the context of the scene's surroundings, which is left to the imagination, much like how Bartram's *Travels* leaves the imagination to add more details beyond his descriptions. In this case, scrub restoration since 2002 is the story behind the cropped photo. Scrub composition is variable but is usually dominated by scrub oak (*Quercus inopina*), sand live oak (*Quercus geminate*), myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*), Chapman's oak (*Quercus chapmanii*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), and rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*) occurring at different heights and ages between different pathces. Sand pines are present but typically not dominant. Open spaces of bare patches of scrub are managed to "produce a mosaic of differing structure classes, with a preference given to early succession scrub that can support a viable population of scrub jays" (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) and Florida mice (*Podomys floridanus*), both of which are imperiled endemics (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 55-56). To do this, the parks have harvested sand pines and restored the five-to-fifteen-year fire intervals through prescribed fire. Due to fire suppression, scrub jays have been absent from the park. Mature oaks and pines at Wekiwa Springs State Park are well over 1.5-2 meters, the ideal scrub jay height requirement, and lack the amount of open scrub needed to support the birds. The pinecone pictured is part of an isolated "stand of mature sand pines which will require mechanical treatment most likely with timber harvest," and represents the park's efforts to bring back scrub jays (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 55). Managing to increase biodiversity and support endemic species adds to the beauty of the naturalist's vision.

Figure 32. Sunset at Lake Prevatt: clastic upland lake in Wekiwa Springs State Park.

This photograph was taken at Lake Prevatt at the southwestern corner of the park, Marker 4. This photo captures more of the Luminist vision and less of the naturalist vision of Florida Nature. By capturing a larger perspective with wider angle than the previous photos, this photo aligns with the Transcendentalist notion of the grandeur of Nature and the insignificance of oneself that are embedded into landscape paintings of the Hudson River School and subsequent Florida Luminist painters. Peeking through the emergent marshes, the warm glow of the fading sun reflects off the water's surface. The orange-cast clouds contrast with the small flock of ducks flying across the sky and the mesic hardwood canopy hugging the horizon. This photograph most resembles Heade's *Sunset: Tropical Marshes, Florida* (Fig. 16) due to its similar composition, sunset gradient, hammock on the horizon, and reflective waters. The aesthetic captivated Heade and other Florida landscape painters of his time. Although the lake's beauty is captured in this photo, this portion of the Wekiwa Springs State Park faces some of the most adversity from developments across the park borders.

Lake Prevatt is the largest water body in the state park. It is fed by streams that pass through adjacent subdevelopments. The increase of impervious surfaces in the lake's watershed has increased the inflow of urban runoff, altered the lake's hydroperiod, increased the amounts of trash and pollutants, increased erosion, and increased the presence of exotics from adjacent subdevelopments (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 27-28). The clastic upland lake lacks significant surface outflows, rather, water typically dissipates from the lake through evapotranspiration and groundwater recharge through sinkholes in the lake basin. When water levels are high, water is discharged at the surface. Despite its Outstanding Florida Water status, the lake faces significant anthropogenic and climactic threats. Increasing seasonal droughts, urban water consumption, and groundwater withdrawals leave the lake dry and allow willow (*Salix caroliniana*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), saltbush (*Baccharis halimfolia*), dogfennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*), and other shrubs to encroach into the basin. Mowing and burning are carried out to reduce these shrubs and control bioaccumulation. Invasive armored catfish *(Pterygoplicththys disjunctivus*), brown hoplo *(Hoplosternum littorale*), blue tilapia (*Oreochromis aureus*), walking catfish (*Clarias batrachus*), Chinese tallow trees (*Sapium sebiferum*), and torpedo grass (*Panicum repens*) are found in and around the lake. Measures for control include removal and treatment. Stormwater runoff from Welch and Thompson Roads enter the lake with no treatment, introducing pollutants and silt while the increasing impervious surface in Apopka lead to "unnaturally rapid water level changes." Stormwater continues to be a major issue until an appropriate stormwater system can be put in place (SFDEP, *WRBSP AUMP* 67-68). At the interface of urban sprawl, the ecological understanding of Lake Prevatt and the applied management practices of the state park have allowed the Luminist aesthetic in the park to persist.

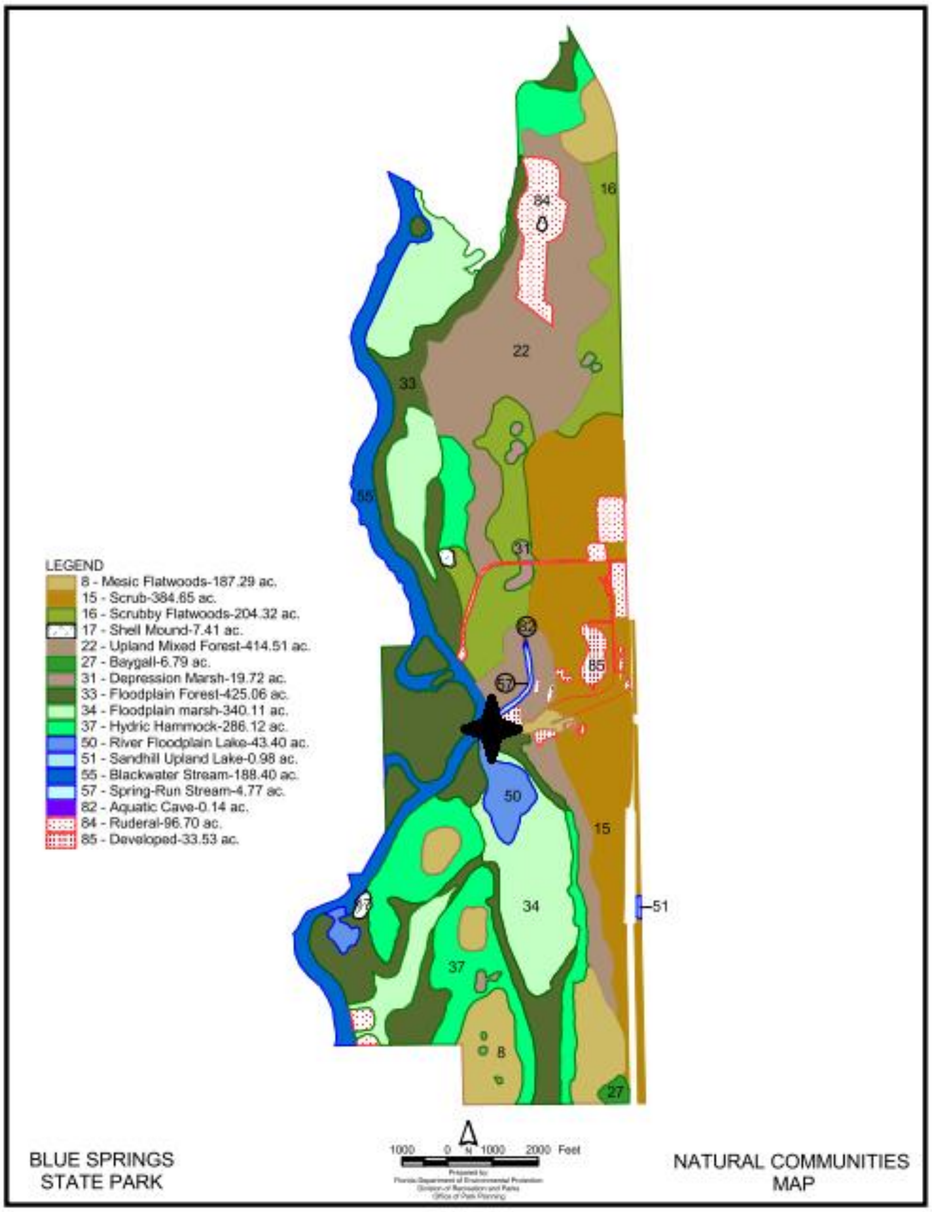

Figure 33. Natural communities map of Blue Spring State Park (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 19). Following photos were taken at the black marker: the confluence of the spring run and St Johns River.

Figure 34. Black vultures roosting at sunset, Blue Springs State Park.

Figure 35. Black vulture roost backlit by rays from the setting sun at Blue Springs State Park.

Figure 36. Sunset on the St. Johns River at Blue Springs State Park.

This series of images captures the sun setting behind the floodplain forest of Hontoon Island at Blue Spring State Park on the west bank of the St Johns River from the east bank near where Blue Spring Run meets the river. Centered in each frame towering bald cypress tree (*Taxodium distichum*) with a flock of roosting of black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*). Other dominant trees in photo are “mostly water hickory (*Carya aquatica*), Florida elm (*Ulmus americana*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), [and] sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*) (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 23).

In these photos, I captured the essence of Florida Luminist paintings: the interaction between dynamic natural lighting and the landscape. The rays of sunlight paint a golden crown from the canopy that stretches into sky, striking the underside of the clouds to create a scene nearly identical to Martin Johnson Heade’s paintings. The mellow reflection of light on the St Johns

River balances the bright display of sunset in the sky. Heade best captured this effect in *Tropical Sunset – Florida Marsh* (Fig. 17) or *The Great Florida Sunset* (Fig. 1) where he used the colors and contrasts of sunsets and sunrise in marshes. The effervescent allure of his painting drew tourists to the St Johns in the late 1800s. Blue Spring State Park continues the legacy of tourists visiting the landing.

The silhouettes of the black vultures in the first frame are reminiscent of Harry Fenn's *Waiting for Decomposition* (Fig. 20). Rather than elements of a hostile swampland, the vultures add to the beauty of the sunset scene by representing its biodiversity. The gradation between the three photos acts like landscape paintings. The small details and subjects not central to the painting bring life to the painting when analyzed closely. With the first two photos focused on details, the final photo is focused on landscape. Similarly, Heade often included grazing cattle and wading herons in his Florida scenes. Highlighting these details adds context and significance to the beauty of the sunset by showing the biodiversity of the floodplain forest, one which the park recognizes as being in "very good condition" save for minor impacts from historical dredging on the river (SFDEP *BS&HISP MUMP* 23). The main management measure for the floodplain swamp are surveys for and chemically treatment to remove invasive wild taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), coral ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*), and paragrass (*Urochloa mutica*) (SFDEP *BSSP A&RC DUMP* 31).

Collectively, these photos capture the modern legacy of Florida's tropical and subtropical curiosities that have attracted naturalists and tourists to the state. Today, the state is recognized for its biodiversity and natural springs. As shown in these photos, Blue Spring State Park captures the beauty that was used by Victorian artists and tycoons to lure tourists to the state while upholding the management goal to preserve valuable habitat for threatened species in Central Florida.

Conclusion

The historical artistic aesthetics of the St Johns River are often overlooked. Most tourists favor beach access rather than walking, biking, and trail hiking sought after by residents (Florida DEP 71-76). The region's theme parks draw the majority of the state's tourists and have shifted the typical tourist season from the cool and dry winter months to the warm and rainy summer ones (Derr 383-384). Tourism has defined Florida's economy since the early 20th century. The source of tourism has shifted from steamboats on the St Johns, to coastal resorts along railways, to the modern theme parks in Central Florida. Tourist-centric development brings a population that undervalues the state's unique beauty. As a result, developers have ravaged Florida's landscape imbued with the beauty of Luminist paintings. Thankfully, ecologically informed State Parks remain a haven for the Luminist aesthetic.

Artists of the Hudson River School painted the American landscape in a time of industrialization and westward expansion. Their work became a pillar of American culture while criticizing the nation's industrial progress. The toll on Nature struck many of these artists, particularly Thomas Cole, who formed a foundation for the environmental movement through their artwork.

In Florida, Hudson River School artists painted the St Johns River's serene marshes and swamps. William Bartram's *Travels*, a belief in the curative properties of a subtropical climate, and travel guides provided a basis for their vision. Built on this foundation, Luminist painters then established an association of Paradise in Florida. Tourists fascinated by Paradise flooded the state's resorts and housing market.

The 20th century saw cycles of economic growth and ecological disaster. Florida's 1920s housing market plummeted after devastating damage from successive hurricanes. The New Deal rebuilt Florida's economy. In the process, the CCC constructed the origins of the State Park System. Royal Palm and Highland Hammock State Parks were built on a utilitarian principle to provide recreation opportunities, but they secondarily preserved the Luminist vision of Paradise and continued to attract tourists. Land development continued to grow over the next decades, lulling as newcomers into Paradise. The strain on the natural system caused statewide water shortages and peat fires. Unable to ignore the calamity, the state government passed legislation for comprehensive water and land use plans. By this time, the scientific community established ecology, and public understanding of anthropogenic impacts to Nature grew. This momentum allowed the State Park System to consolidate environmentally sensitive lands.

Environmental legislation resulted in the acquisition of the Wekiwa Springs and Blue Spring State Parks. Since then, ecological management and ambitious habitat restoration programs have supported Florida's endemic species and kept the Wekiva-Ocala corridor. In addition, the preservation and restoration of ecologically distinct lands and waterways maintain the aesthetic of natural Florida. Today, the naturalist and Luminist visions of Paradise persists and can be appreciated by current residents, future residents, and tourists. Without less destructive habits and lifestyles, however, this vision remains under threat.

Within Orange County, development and excessive recreation threaten environmentally sensitive lands. Egret Island and the Shingle Creek Drainage Basin are examples of development and recreational conflicts in biodiverse ecosystems which feature the Luminist aesthetic. As the population of Central Florida continues to grow, it is essential that developments employ artistry to harmonize with the natural system. Incorporating natural beauty into the built environment may increase an appreciation of Florida’s natural landscape, and increase support for conservation. Doing this will be crucial to preserve the Luminist aesthetic threatened by development. Until Nature and development act in sync, State Parks and other protected areas harbor the remaining light of Luminist Paradise.

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