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The Big Watermelon: A Cultural History of Florida's Brooksville Ridge

Douglas E. Ponticos

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The Big Watermelon:
A Cultural History of Florida’s Brooksville Ridge

by

Douglas E. Ponticos

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Liberal Arts
Department of Humanities
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

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Ecosystem, Fertile, Sacred, Seasonal, Colonialism

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Dedication

For my beautiful wife Andrea,

I was blessed when you agreed to play tennis with me that January afternoon,

and my parents, whose hope and kindness teaches me more than any book or seminar
Acknowledgements

I want to thank the Florida Studies faculty of the University of South Florida at St. Petersburg for creating and maintaining a place where Floridians can explore the meaning and history of our shared home. When I picked up a copy of Gary Mormino’s *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams* in the gift shop of the Inverness Courthouse Museum in 2006, I never dreamed it would lead to this thesis. I am very much indebted to Dr. Mormino and Dr. Arsenault, who both provided invaluable encouragement and advisement during my graduate studies at USF. Dr. Meindl and Dr. Hallock also offered very generous feedback and support all along the way. I am deeply grateful for the collegial environment of the Florida Studies Program, which never ceases to promote cooperation. Most of all, I am grateful for the support of my loving companion and fellow food-obsessive, Andrea, and our journeys around Florida, through cotton fields and desolate islands, in search of Florida pecans, olives, mangoes, and lychees; and for my family, Mom, Dad, Val, Andy, Dan,Stephi, Elijah, my in-laws, Noreen and Tony, and extended family and friends, who are working together to improve a piece of Florida, one muscadine vine at a time.
Table of Contents

List of Figures...........................................................................................................................................iii

Abstract.....................................................................................................................................................vii

Introduction: The Big Watermelon.................................................................1

Chapter One: Landscapes of Amasura:
   Cacina, the Lightning Whelk, and the Ceremony of the Laurel...................8
      Amasura...........................................................................................................................................9
      Cacina and Whelk Shells: Culture and Landscape......................................12
      Seasonality as Practice: First Fruits............................................................17
      Spanish Consumption of the Land............................................................22
      Spanish Seasonality in Florida.................................................................29
      Experiments in Monoculture......................................................................34

Chapter Two: Landscapes of the Seminoles:
   “Called by the Indians Ouithlachuchy”.......................................................37
      Early Seminole Agro-Pastoralism: Alachua and Chukochatty Savannas........38
      Into the Cove of the Withlacoochee........................................................49

Chapter Three: The Birth of the Brooksville Ridge Landscape:
   First South Florida, Last North Florida....................................................55
      First South Florida: War, Reservation, and Armed Occupation................55
      South of the South....................................................................................65
      The Birth of a Ridge..................................................................................70
         Measuring Breadth: Timber, Turpentine, and Pasturage......................71
         Measuring Depth: Rock Phosphate and Fertility.................................81
         Measuring Height: Big Citrus.................................................................88
         Measuring Time: Farming “Out of Season,” or Trucking.....................93
      The Last North Florida: Experiments in Subsistence............................98

Chapter Four: Fertile Landscapes of a Florida Dust Bowl.........................105
   The Meaning of Fertility............................................................................105
   Practicing Fertility.....................................................................................108
   (Re-)Creating a Cultural Landscape......................................................112

Chapter Five: From Experiment to Settlement:
   Rhythms of a Florida Ridge......................................................................122
   Laboratories of Culture...........................................................................123
   Practicing Seasonality: Settled Landscapes of Florida............................136
List of Figures

Figure 1. “Morning on the Hillside”.................................................................1
Figure 2. “The Altar Oak,” Chinsegut Hill, Early 1930s.................................1
Figure 3. Hernando County Residents Sharing One Big Watermelon............5
Figure 4. Wild Yaupon Holly....................................................................8
Figure 5. Lightning Whelk Cup.................................................................8
Figure 6. Alonso de Solana Map of 1683....................................................10
Figure 7. Closing a Florida Indian Burial with a Shell Cup.........................14
Figure 8. Ceremony of the Laurel/Stag/First Fruits....................................17
Figure 9. Early Florida Indians Hunting Deer...........................................19
Figure 10. Seminole Pumpkins, Photographs by John Kunkel Small, 1929...37
Figure 11. East Florida, 1776..................................................................39
Figure 12. Florida Territory, Seminole Settlements Prior to Treaty, 1823....43
Figure 13. Big Hammock.......................................................................47
Figure 14. Three Hammocks of the Big Hammock.................................47
Figure 15. 1834 Map of Seminole Indian Reservation after U.S. Treaty of Paynes Landing...............................................................51
Figure 16. 1835 Map of Indian Reserve of Florida.....................................52
Figure 17. “Theatre of Military Operations in Florida, 1835-1837”............54
Figure 18. Early Settlement by Post Office Openings in Florida................59
Figure 19. 1850 Map of Florida, Showing Benton County........................60
Figure 20. 1855 Map of Florida, Showing Hernando County and Neighbors.64
Figure 21. Forests of Florida’s Peninsular Gulf Coast; Two Views, Brown Areas were those Logged as of 1881

Figure 22. The Last Train to Lacoochee, Carrying Old-Growth Cypress

Figure 23. 1917 Map of Extractive Boomtowns: Centralia, Wiscon, Tooke Lake, Fivay, Etna, Lacoochee, Rural, Sagano, Abbott, et al.

Figure 24. 1892 Map of Phosphate Regions of Florida and Close-up View of West-Central Florida

Figure 25. Phosphate down the Withlacoochee to Port Inglis

Figure 26. Atlantic Coast Line at Crystal River Mining Company in Lecanto, 1926

Figure 27. Peruvian Guano Fertilizer Advertisement

Figure 28. Plant System Railway, 1893

Figure 29. Blanton (west of Dade City) Citrus Groves before (a) and after (b) “Great Freeze” of 1894/1895

Figure 30. Early 1930s Map of Florida Roads

Figure 31. 1920s/30s Soil Map of Florida

Figure 32. FFA Boys Spraying Pesticides, 1920s

Figure 33. Fertilizing in Dade City, 1940s

Figure 34. Mixed Dairy and Poultry Farm, Big Hammock, near Dade City, 1920

Figure 35. Subsistence Farming System in Six Rural West-Central Florida Counties

Figure 36. Buckets and Dibbles, Withlacoochee Land Use Project

Figure 37. Truck Fields, Chuckochatty Hammock, Hernando County, 1915

Figure 38. Facing East at the Lecanto Crossroads towards the Vast Longleaf Pine Forest, 1915

Figure 39. Cut-Over High Pine Land, Hernando County, 1937

Figure 40. “Production of lumber like this makes heavy demands on Florida
pine forests,” Lacoochee, Florida, 1937………………………………………………115

Figure 41. “A large lumber mill at Lacoochee, Florida. Surrounding forests
have been ruthlessly cut down,” 1937………………………………………………115

Figure 42. Planting Pines in an Abandoned Field,
Withlacoochee Land Use Project, 1937………………………………………………116

Figure 43. Fire Crew, Withlacoochee Land Use Project, 1937……………………116

Figure 44. Citrus County Section of Withlacoochee Development Project, 1936……118

Figure 45. “After reforestation is complete all of the project area
will look like this”……………………………………………………………………120

Figure 46. Ancient Southern Magnolia, Withlacoochee Resettlement Project:
U.S. Resettlement Administration, 1936 ……………………………………………121

Figure 47. Hernando County Game Preserve…………………………………………123

Figure 48. Lecanto Canning Plant Manager Annie Langley…………………………123

Figure 49. Morgan Rundel’s Duck Farm near Inverness, 1929……………………130

Figure 50. Giant Depression Cabbage, Hernando County, 1937…………………131

Figure 51. Florida Family in Their Garden Picking Strawberries……………………132

Figure 52. Citrus County Farmer Boils Sugarcane Juice into Syrup,
using Ready-at-Hand Limestone Rock for Kiln, Barrel Chimney, and
Cast Iron Bowl, 1947………………………………………………………………135

Figure 53. Fall 1929, Tracing the Seasons of the Brooksville Ridge………………137

Figure 54. Lisa von Borowsky, Hernando County…………………………………138

Figure 55. Spring 1930, Tracing the Seasons………………………………………138

Figure 56. “Birds seen and heard at Chinsegut Hill,
January 17th-February 25th, 1930,” from the Journal of Lisa von Borowsky……139

Figure 57. The Lecanto Cannery……………………………………………………140

Figure 58. June 12, 1968- June 16, 1968……………………………………………142

Figure 59. July 15, 1968- July 27, 1968………………………………………………142
Figure 60. August 3, 1968- August 6, 1968.................................................................143

Figure 61. Hernando Rock Cannery.................................................................144

Figure 62. Spring Lake Community Center....................................................145

Figure 63. Limestone Floral City Community House.....................................146

Figure 64. The Brooksville Ridge.................................................................148

Figure 65. Dunnellon Boy and his Sister, Cane-pole Fishing,
           Withlacoochee River, 1950.................................................................152

Figure 66. A Ridge amid Four Watersheds: Withlacoochee (1),
           Coastal Springs (2), Hillsborough (3), and Anclote (4).......................156

Figure 67. Physiographic Regions of West-Central Florida........................156

Figure 68. Evapotranspiration Subregions of Brooksville Ridge Region..........157

Figure 69. Potentiometric Surface of Upper Floridan Aquifer below the
           Brooksville Ridge..................................................................................157
Abstract

The Brooksville Ridge has long been the dominant cultural landscape of west-central Florida. Though rarely used as a cultural designation today, the region’s landscapes continue to unify a people. More than simply an environmental or geologic region, the Brooksville Ridge was born in a period of colonialism and exuberant extraction for distant markets. Before the Ridge, west-central Florida landscapes, such as Amasura and Withlacoochee, were defined predominantly by local and regional needs. This thesis uses a number of primary and secondary documents to trace the changing cultural landscapes of west-central Florida, from pre-Columbian and Seminole landscapes to the rise of the Ridge. During the early decades of the twentieth century, in the midst of war and depression, a movement of settlement emerged. Using local primary sources, such as photographs of locals replanting forests and accounts of community gardens and canning, this thesis also traces how a uniquely settled, Floridian culture emerged out of deeply unsettled landscapes. Long a region of shared experience and culture, this work explores the sacred, fertile, and seasonal landscapes of the Brooksville Ridge.
Introduction

The Big Watermelon

“The land of the sunny South,” we say, but no part of our diversified country is more shaded and covered from sunshine. Many a sunny sheet of plain and prairie break the continuity of the forests of the North and West, and the forests themselves are mostly lighted also, pierced with direct ray lances, or [the sunlight] passing to the earth and the lowly plants in filtered softness through translucent leaves. But in the dense Florida forests sunlight cannot enter. It falls on the evergreen roof and rebounds in long silvery lances and flashy spray. In many places there is not light sufficient to feed a single green leaf on these dark forest floors. All that the eye can reach is just a maze of tree stems and crooked leafless vine strings. All the flowers, all the verdure, all the glory is up in the light (John Muir, October 16, 1867).1

Neither the agriculture specialist nor the conservation specialist has any idea where people belong in the order of things. Neither can conceive of a domesticated or a humane landscape (Wendell Berry).2

Landscape is loud with dialogues (Anne Whiston Spirn).3

Figures 1 (Left) and 2 (Right). “Morning on the Hillside”; and “The Altar Oak,” Chinsegut Hill, Early 1930s4

4“Morning on the Hillside” and “The Altar Oak,” 1930s photographs from the Lisa von Borowsky Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida,
“A steady stream of autos crept up the hill, their headlights weaving mysterious shadows among the pines.”⁵ In the early morning hours of April 10, 1955 residents of the Brooksville Ridge did what they had done for years. Gathering at the summit of Chinsegut Hill, they faced eastward. The large crowd listened as trumpeters pierced the dark air. After a brief service and the reading of a sacred hymn, “the narrator read the Easter Story [and] the actors played out the drama of The Resurrection. The pageant closed with the Resurrection Scene and the congregation turned to face the rising sun. Appropriately, it was at this moment that the sun rose over the tops of the pines below the hillside. A brief prayer and benediction concluded the service.”⁶

How do we know the boundaries of our home? Do we know them by political lines or social markers, by landmarks, by centers of business or recreation, by jurisdictions of city, county, or state? Sometimes we live within boundaries and have only the vaguest sense of their existence; and yet we have some sense, some inkling, of their presence. The Brooksville Ridge is one of these places. Growing up on an edge of the Ridge and traversing it throughout my life, I was never conscious that I lived in any such region, but there was always a sense of a greater unity in the surroundings. Was it nature? Was it geology or geography? Was it culture? Was it history? I began to wonder about the source of this cohesion, and how it could be measured. Where does the Brooksville Ridge begin and end?

In her book Tracking Desire: A Journey after Swallow-tailed Kites, Susan Cerulean follows the kites as they migrate into Florida during late spring to mate. A

---

⁵ “Reverent Crowd Attends 1955 Easter Sunrise Services on Chinsegut Hill,” The Brooksville Sun, 15 April 1955.
⁶ Ibid.
soaring animal that rarely touches either ground or perch, swallow-tailed kites also rarely flap their wings, riding thermals high above Floridians’ heads most of the summer. In tracing the kites through the air, through her binoculars, and throughout Florida, Cerulean also traces the fractured relationship between our landscape and our memory. Once nesting throughout the United States, the kites now only nest in what remains of the high pines of Florida and parts of the Gulf coast. When they migrate back to South America in the fall, the Matsigenka people of Peru call them “children of spirits.”7 We do not know what ancient people of Florida called these creatures.

When the experiences and memories of people who have dwelled in a land are not inherited, are not shared with succeeding generations, Cerulean is concerned that an intimate knowledge of home is also lost.8 No matter how magnifying the lens, contemporary bird-watchers fail to see the “children of spirits” through their viewfinders. Indeed, when waves of Europeans made use of Florida to the exclusion of others, rapidly redefining landscapes, the intimate knowledge, stories, and experience of millennia were neither passed down nor reinterpreted. Cerulean’s journey asks us contemporary Floridians what it would mean to know our home deeply.

Many writers have recognized that Florida is a scarred land. Some scars are shallow, broad, and obvious, while others are deep, subtle, and almost wholly unseen. It is popular for commentators to claim that Florida is soul-less and soil-less, which may be the same thing. But as Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings observed, such people do not know Florida; they are only passing through.9 Despite the scars, there is a spirit which resides

8 Ibid., 115, 154.
in people and in lands, a soul and a soil. Traces remain of ancient landscapes that can still speak. Finding these traces and trying to imagine past landscapes in our localities allows us to know such places more intimately and to imagine other possibilities. The test of the beauty of a place, Marjorie Rawlings reminds us, is “whether it can survive close knowledge.”¹⁰

The meaning of the word landscape has origins in ancient Danish, German, Dutch, and English, combining two important roots: “‘Land’ means both a place and the people living there. Skabe and schaffen mean ‘to shape’; suffixes –skab and –schaft as in the English ‘-ship,’ also mean association, partnership.”¹¹ ‘Landscape’ captures more than the separate terms ‘environment,’ ‘place,’ or ‘land.’ Landscapes are at once visible and invisible; they are material, tangible, and spiritual. Humans have a hand in constructing landscape, but they are only one of its sources. Landscapes are also spaces where people are defined, by the animate and the inanimate.¹²

Florida’s landscapes have long sustained feasts and fasts. People have fought here, loved here, suffered here, found hope here, and Florida has long fed, clothed, and nurtured peoples. Even before the Marjories (Rawlings, Douglas, Carr), there were Floridians who dwelled deeply in the land and learned “to differentiate the shades of green.”¹³ By investigating Floridian landscapes, we can trace changes in the ways people used land, but we can also trace changes in the experience and meaning of lands. Historian Gary Mormino has discussed how technologies affect the ways that modern

¹⁰ Ibid., 245.
¹¹ Anne Whiston Spirn, The Language of Landscape, 16.
¹² Ibid., 17-18.
¹³ Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Cross Creek, 245; One of these women was Dessie Smith Prescott of Citrus County, who taught Marjorie Rawlings how to hunt. See Betty Berger, Back Roads (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2008), 18.
Floridians experience the state. Efficient highways, interstates, and expressways shuttle vehicles rapidly across vast expanses of land, tending to compress time and space, making distances feel smaller.¹⁴ Thousands of acres of land, with their variety and differences, are compressed into “just a few miles” or “just a couple minutes.” And yet, the identity of Floridians expands. There is a clear paradox here. While technology, populations, and urbanization may have compressed both time and space, making distances feel smaller, allowing us to traverse and to live across larger spaces and to perform tasks faster (increasingly through virtual spaces), we identify ourselves with ever larger land areas. But what do we know of the ground upon which we live?

We live in a state the size of England or Greece, but does it mean anything to be a Floridian? In the struggle to compress and transcend time and space, did we lose sight of the ground?

![Figure 3. Hernando County Residents Sharing One Big Watermelon](http://floridamemory.com/items/show/43923)

In a state known for catering to others, I want to know what nourished Floridians in the past. What lands were meaningful to them? What did they grow for their own families and communities?

Whereas farming traditionally defined place and time for the people of north and west Florida, south Florida is a place that glorifies dreamscapes, the magical, and the fantastic. But, let us not be fooled by the illusion that one is real and the other illusory. Both contain landscapes inspired by real ideas, values, and passions. Both contain cultural landscapes with definite consequences, shaped in definite ways. Spaniards projected a “new Andalusia” onto north Florida, Seminoles projected their ancestral Ocone Creek lands onto north and central Florida, Georgians, Alabamans, and Carolinians projected the southeastern Piedmont or British Borderlands, and shivering Northerners projected a “tropical paradise,” an Eden, and a Mediterranean. Some scholars have referred to this phenomenon as a form of cultural conservatism. In addition to hopes and dreams, people in new lands bring with them “the agricultural traditions of their homelands…in their efforts to cultivate the soils of their new homes.”

Immigration to foreign lands requires experimentation. Rather than adaptation, immigration more often meant constructing new landscapes, starting with familiar agricultural systems. Sometimes these systems worked; frequently they did not. But the

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17 Carolyn Baker Lewis, “Cultural Conservatism and Pioneer Florida Viticulture,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (July 1979): 635-636; Lewis provides an interesting analysis of the grape-growing “boom” in Florida during the post-bellum period, when northeasterners and Midwesterners brought northern *vitis labrusca* grapes to central Florida to plant large vineyards, which ultimately failed due to phylloxera and poor marketability. The muscadine vineyards, although much smaller, had been a part of early Florida settlement and continued to thrive on a small, local scale long after 1900. Cultivated muscadines, *vitis rotundafolia*, were brought to Florida by those from the Old South and selected from locally abundant vines.
resulting landscapes were no less real because they were constructed. The human hand was never the only force shaping landscape.

Combining the concept of cultural landscapes employed by writers such as Otto Schluter, Paul Vidal de la Blache, Carl Sauer, Anne Whiston Spirn and others with the recent methods of environmental historians such as William Cronon, Donald Worster, and Simon Schama, this thesis examines the interchange between culture and ecology on the Brooksville Ridge. All landscapes may be “culture before they are nature,” all landscapes may be “constructed” in some sense, but the most pressing question asks: how are different landscapes constructed and de-constructed over time? Which landscapes were transitory from the start, and which were permanent? Whose were settled landscapes?

Using an archaeology and genealogy of landscapes, I endeavor to both better understand the historical and cultural contours of the Brooksville Ridge as well to understand its paradoxical presence and absence in the experience of contemporary Floridians. By tracing the landscapes of early contact-period Florida Indians, of Seminoles, of the U.S. military, of African-Americans and Euro-Americans, of industrialists, subsistence farmers, and Depression-era Floridians, it is possible to peel back the real layers of the Brooksville Ridge. These peoples of the Ridge did not simply give the same places different names over time; they defined space differently and found meaning in it in very different ways. This thesis will address the sacred, fertile and seasonal meanings of these landscapes over time. In doing so, it may be possible to acknowledge the deeper meaning of settlement and the cultural ecosystem that unites us.

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Chapter One

Landscapes of Amasura:

Cacina, the Lightning Whelk, and the Ceremony of the Laurel\textsuperscript{20}

Have you said that you will not eat the fruit of the forest without praying?
(Father Francisco Pareja asks Florida Indians during confession, 1613)\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure4}
\caption{Wild Yaupon Holly (Cacina)}\textsuperscript{22}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure5}
\caption{Lightning Whelk Cup}\textsuperscript{23}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{20} The “laurel” in the “Ceremony of the Laurel” likely refers to the \textit{tola} (sweet bay magnolia tree). Some suggest that the stag in the ceremony was displayed facing the rising sun upon a sweet bay magnolia; see Stefan Lorant, \textit{The New World: The First Pictures of America, Made by John White and Jacques LeMoyne and engraved by Theodore DeBry with Contemporary Narratives of the Huguenot Settlement in Florida 1562-1565 and the Virginia Colony1585-1590} (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946). In Buckingham Smith’s 1848 Report he mentions that \textit{Amaxura} refers to “little Amazon” in Spanish, while St. Leo College historian Father Jerome thought it might have a Moorish meaning (from letter in private correspondence with historian Charles Arnade, 9 January 1961: “On an old map Withlacoochee is called the Mazura river. The only Spanish name of a river on the West Coast of Fla- to my knowledge. Or is Mazura a Spanish word? The nearest I can get to Mazura is Macsuer- of Moorish derivation- of course there may have been some Moorish blood in some Spanish soldiers. Of course too we know that Pánfilo Narváez had a Moor in his army in Florida- the famed Esteban”). There is no generally accepted meaning or etymology of the word, which appeared at least by the early-seventeenth century on Spanish maps and had at least four or five different spellings.

\textsuperscript{21} This question comes out of a Spanish Inquisition in Florida; from the Spanish and transliterated Timucuan question: “Have you said that you will not eat the fruit of the forest without praying?” in Jerald T. Milanich and William C. Sturtevant, Eds. and Trans. Emilio F. Moran, \textit{Francisco Pareja’s 1613 Confessionario: A Documentary Source for Timucuan Ethnography}, (Tallahassee: Division of Archives, History, and Records Management, Florida Department of State, 1972), 26 and 54.

\textsuperscript{22} Image of wild Yaupon Holly leaves, http://www.eattheweeds.com/yaupon-holly-ilex-vomitoria/
\end{footnotesize}
Amasura

In 1611, a party of Indians from the lower Gulf coast of Florida paddled up the San Martín River (present Suwannee) and slaughtered seventeen Christianized Indians who were delivering supplies to a friar at a mission near the river mouth. Seeing these Infieles, or “unbelievers,” as a threat to fragile Spanish occupation, Governor Ibarra dispatched a retaliatory party of soldiers south along the peninsula. They found, captured, and beheaded all the Indians they thought responsible, including chiefs of Tocobaga and Pojoy near the present Tampa Bay.24

Before and after contact with Europeans, Indians of Florida consisted of diverse, often antagonistic, groups who spoke a number of different dialects and languages. Despite the Crown’s persistent interest in Florida, by the late seventeenth century Spanish control and knowledge of the peninsula had not advanced southward (see Figure 6 below). Instead, missionization had dispersed westward from St. Augustine towards Apalachee, during the so-called “Golden Age of the Florida Missions.”25 Despite the Spanish influence over the people and lands of northernmost Florida, Infieles controlled the majority of the peninsula up until the third decade of the nineteenth century. The interior remained largely unknown to the Spanish.

23 Image of Busycon Shell Cup found at the Fountain of Youth site, St. Augustine, contact-period http://www.flnmh.ufl.edu/histarch/photoout1.asp?id=109
25 See Michael Gannon, The Cross in the Sand (Gainesville, University Presses of Florida, 1993), 57: “In 1655 the Franciscans claimed 26,000 Christianized Indians in thirty-eight doctrinas. Seventy friars, the highest number ever, were in the field. The Florida missions were riding the crest of the Golden Age.”
Diverse in language use, regional loyalties, and, clearly, in their propensity to accept Catholic discipline, Indian tribes of contact-period Florida were incredibly diverse in their use of landscapes. Although some writers describe Tocobagans and Timucuans as unified chiefdoms, they were very diverse groups. For example, Timucuans alone spoke at least ten different dialects. Most of these tribal names and groups were assigned

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26 Map taken from Paul E. Hoffman, *Florida’s Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 154. Redrawn and recaptioned from Alonso de Solana “Mapa de la Ysla de la Florida” by Paul Hoffman. The map names the “Rio de Amayuro.” The St. Johns River (then called “San Juan”) figures very prominently in this map as do “pueblos de infieles” or “towns of unbelievers” along the east and west coasts of Florida.
by the Spanish and do not represent how such people would have represented themselves. Not only did the Spanish conceptually organize Florida Indians into groups, chiefdoms, and cultures, they resettled disparate groups together into urban communities. They were forced to labor in the presidio’s (a military outpost) plantations at St. Augustine, they built the Castillo de San Marcos, and they tended friars’ fields at missions in Potano, Apalachee, and all across the Camino Real.

After the Timucuan Revolt of 1656, forced resettlement congregated Indians in Apalachee, intensifying disease and deaths by the late 1670s. Seeking to maintain Indian labor pools, the Spanish re-settled Indians from the lower peninsula to the hinterlands of Apalachee. Among those resettled was a group of Amacano Indians from the Withlacoochee River region of the west-central peninsula. While history may not have left us with a firsthand account of how Indians such as the Amacano thought of themselves culturally, we can use documentary, archaeological, and ecological evidence to get a meaningful sense of their home. More than a background to their lives or a set of available resources, peninsular Indian landscapes were seasonal, settled, and tied to localities. Understanding how the Spanish severed these connections and redefined the land is fundamental to understanding the Florida peninsula. Though the genealogy of Floridians may be an individual endeavor, the genealogy of Florida brings us all into the story.

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29 Ibid., 129-133.
Cacina and Whelk Shells: Culture and Landscape

In his experiences along the coast of the southeast in 1595, stranded Spanish sailor Fray Andrés de San Miguel recorded many of the cultural beliefs and practices of contact-period Indians.\textsuperscript{31} One of these practices was a “solemn fiesta” involving a ball game proceeded by a ceremony in the village of Asao. Fray Andrés observed a large group of men carrying poles and lances assemble together in one section of a central plaza. After the chief threw a small stone, the size of a small bread roll, as far as he could across the plaza, all the men hurled their poles at the stone. Quickly after letting go of the pole, the men ran to retrieve them. The one who picked up the stone first along with his pole got to throw it back across the plaza. Those who attended the game proceeded to the council house afterwards where the game participants were served cacina:

With reverence they went about giving it to those who played, who were each seated on a bench. Each one took and drank his. As a result of this their bellies became like a drum and as they went on drinking, their bellies kept on growing and swelling. They carried this on calmly for awhile, and we [were] waiting to see how that fiesta would come to an end, when we saw that, on opening their mouths with very great calmness, each one began ejecting by way of them [their mouths] a great stream of water as clear as it was when they drank it.\textsuperscript{32}

Although cacina taken in large quantities often involved vomiting, Fray Andrés explains that religious uses of cacina required lengthy fasting before consumption, hence the “clarity” of the vomit, and the addition of seawater. He specifically notes that it did not have a bad taste and did not induce vomiting during regular use. In fact, he mentions drinking it himself in St. Augustine, adding that many Spaniards and Indians there drank

\textsuperscript{31} Fray Andrés de San Miguel, \textit{An Early Florida Adventure Story}, John H. Hann, trans. (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2001[1595]), 60.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 67: Fray Andrés describes the cacina tree as a “little tree of the size and the appearance of the myrtle…they toast the leaf in a deep earthenware pan…When it is well-roasted, they throw water on top of it, and while they are boiling it, they begin drawing it out and drinking it hot and go on pouring new water on top of it.”
it regularly. During his travels around Florida in 1675 Franciscan Bishop Calderon of Cuba also noted the centrality of cacina to Florida Indians, saying “their greatest luxury is [a drink] which they make from a weed that grows on the seacoast, which they cook and drink hot and which they call cazina [cacina]. It becomes very bitter and is worse than beer, although it does not intoxicate them and is beneficial.”

Cacina use among Indians was common throughout much of the south, but more evidence is needed to understand its particular local significance.

Archaeological excavations in Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, and neighboring counties connect these regionally observed practices to specific sites in peninsular Florida. At Tatham Mound, (near the Withlacoochee River in Citrus County) Dale Hutchinson’s team found Busycon whelk (Busycon contrarium) shells atop the burials of nineteen individuals with European artifacts dated between 1525 and 1550 (see Figure 7 below). This practice of ritually closing a burial mound with Busycon cups is consistent with practices in the Southeast involving consumption of the black drink (cacina). Some believe the vessels were customarily “killed,” by knocking out the bottoms of the cup in order to release the spirit of the vessel to join the deceased in the afterlife. Others contend that priests “killed” the vessels during burial ceremonies to prevent profane re-use.

Similar contact-period burials with accompanying Busycon cups were uncovered in the upper level of a burial mound at Weeki Wachee (in Hernando County) containing

33 Ibid., 67-68.
63 burials. These practices are consistent as well with the ancient practices of pre-
Columbian Indians at the Crystal River mound site (coastal Citrus County), where fifty-
three shell drinking vessels were uncovered in the large burial mound along with
Hopewellian-period religious artifacts. The use of the black drink, both sacred and
profane, was an important cultural practice, but it also connected these Indians to a
specific locality.

![Figure 7. Closing a Florida Indian Burial with a Shell Cup](image)

Shell species used for drinking vessels among local Indian populations included
the lightning whelk, emperor helmet, and horse conch. The lightning whelk (*Busycon
contrarium* Conrad) is the most commonly uncovered shell cup. Ecologically, the
lightning whelk can be found along much of the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, but it is most
commonly present along Florida’s Gulf coast. Growing up to sixteen inches, this species

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37 Dale L. Hutchinson and Jeffrey M. Mitchem, “The Weeki Wachee Mound, An Early Contact Period
Mortuary Locality in Hernando County West-Central Florida,” *Southeastern Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No. 1
(Summer 1996), 47-48.
39 From Stefan Lorant, *The New World: The First Pictures of America, Made by John White and Jacques
LeMoyne and engraved by Theodore DeBry with Contemporary Narratives of the Huguenot Settlement in
has a distinctive “left-handed spiral,” and lives along bay bottoms and in coastal sea
grasses (low-salinity waters) consuming bivalves, such as scallops, oysters, and clams. In
this respect, the lightning whelks have historically depended upon the coastal sea grass
ecosystem, which is itself dependent upon the large quantities of fresh water emanating
from the Withlacoochee, Crystal, Homosassa, Chassahowitzka, Weeki Wachee,
Pithlachascotee, the Anclote and other rivers flowing west from the peninsula. Finding
the shells along coastal islands and salt marshes, Indians were known to remove the
center columella running lengthwise down the shell and to ground down the rough edges
to create a smooth, finished open cup.\textsuperscript{40}

According to research on the distribution of yaupon holly (cacina) in the
Americas, the plant is found wild along the central Gulf coast, up the Atlantic coast from
central Florida to Virginia, and throughout river valleys of the lower south. Yaupon is an
evergreen shrub that has adapted to the harsh, semi-xeric conditions of the seashore,
rivers bluffs, and coastal hammocks. Perhaps not a more appropriate tree could grow in
Florida. It is said to have thoroughly adapted to “barren” and “sterile” conditions.\textsuperscript{41}
While there is little evidence of its historic use south of Tampa Bay, Florida, the center of
morphological diversity of the species is found on Florida’s central Gulf Coast, with
leaves among trees, and even on the same tree, varying in sizes and shapes. All yaupon
holly trees display crenulate-serrate leaves with high caffeine content and distinctive
small, though inedible, red fruits.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41} Shiu Ying Hu, “The Botany of Yaupon” in Charles M. Hudson, Ed., \textit{Black Drink: A Native American
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 10-15, 35-47.
Used together, documentary, archaeological, and ecological studies provide substantial evidence for cacina (*ilex vomitoria*) and whelk shell (*Busycon contrarium*) use among the Indians of Amasura. More than just a feature of culture, such evidence offers a sense of local Indian landscapes. To live in Amasura meant to know particular lands intimately, to look for and at specific objects, to read certain signs in the environment, to dwell upon these. Such evidence allows us to capture how broadly locals were sustained by their surroundings, but also how broadly they depended on them too for their vitality.

Cacina and lightning whelk shell use formed the basis for a number of sacred and profane practices. Drinking cacina after a ball game, during burial rites, or as an everyday practice, cemented social, political, familial, and religious bonds. It also tied local populations to particular landscapes, to the spring-fed coastal rivers and salt marshes that feed the sea grass beds, and to the Amasura River itself as a mode of travel and a connection to the sources of cacina and whelk shells. The natural concentration of cacina plants and whelk shells along the gulf coastal hammocks would have perhaps been the basis of one major regional landscape. Another set of practices that can help us appreciate how local Indians understood their landscapes are those associated with “First Fruits.”

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43 Using other examples of specific, local materials endowed with spiritual significance, such as Pasco Plain pottery and local clay/tempering sources, flint/coral quarries (for hunting materials), and particular foraging forests, where local hickory trees, live oaks, etc. are found unite nature and culture in the understanding of historical landscape; see Lori Collins, “Understanding and Closing the Gaps: A GAP Audit Approach Linking Archaeology and Land Acquisition Strategies in Florida,” Dissertation, University of South Florida, 2007, 89-90.
Two major documentary sources from the Spanish-contact period inform our knowledge of the ceremony of the laurel, also known as the ceremony of the stag (Figure 8 above). In the late sixteenth century Jacques LeMoyne described and illustrated a Timucuan scene in northeast Florida that involved stuffing the skin of a large stag with roots and decorating it with garlands of fruits. Brought to an open area with accompanying song and ritual, it was mounted onto a large tree facing the sunrise. Historian Tamara Spike connects LeMoyne’s description and illustration to ethnographic evidence found in Francisco Pareja’s 1613 *Confessionario*.

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Arriving in Florida in 1595, Pareja was assigned to a Franciscan mission post at San Juan del Puerto near the mouth of the St. Johns River. During his years in Florida, Pareja traveled to neighboring Indian towns, where he established visitas. These were towns without a permanent priest containing facilities where mass and confession could be conducted by visiting priests. Traveling extensively around northeast Florida, Pareja directly influenced nearly 500 Christianized Indians. His Confessionario was written with bilingual translation in Spanish and Timucuan to help peripatetic priests conduct confessions around Florida. It consists of thematically organized questions addressing all aspects of Indian culture thought to be in conflict with Catholic doctrine. Pareja’s confessional contains two questions with references to a ceremony of the laurel. At the beginning of a section of food-related questions, he asks Indian subjects: “The ceremony of the laurel that is made to the Devil, have you made it?” The other asks: “To gather the nuts and palm berries, have you made with the laurel [and] praying that ceremony that you used to do?” Tamara Spike interprets LeMoyne’s description and illustration along with Pareja’s confessional as evidence of a “First Fruits” complex of ceremonies and practices. Taken together, both sources reveal how food and a spiritual world were bound together.

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48 Milanich and Sturtevant, Francisco Pareja’s 1613 Confessionario, 23, f30.
49 Ibid., 26, f133.
50 Tamara Spike, “To Make Graver this Sin: Conceptions of Purity and Pollution Among the Timucua of Spanish Florida” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Florida State University, 2006), 17-19: If LeMoyne’s illustration of the ceremony of the stag corresponds to Pareja’s “ceremony of the laurel,” then the “laurel,” or “tola” in Timucuan (referring to the sweet bay magnolia tree, Persea borbonia) may refer to the tree upon which the stag was mounted according to Spike’s argument.
Not only did many contact-period Indians of Florida pray before they ate, they seem to have refrained from eating the first harvest of anything from the sea, the forest, or the soil. Their food rules were numerous. Pareja’s text includes many references to cultural practices that he was desperately trying to “correct.” For example, he asks:

The first fish that is caught, have you said that they be prayed to and then barbecued? In order to begin the digging of the field, have you prayed the ancient ceremony to the prayer? Before going hunting, have you first made a prayer using tobacco? And arriving at the forest, have you had all the arrows gathered and had an old man say a prayer over them for your use? When collecting acorns or other fruits, did you consider it a sin to eat the first fruits that were cut? Have you considered it a sin to eat the first maize from a new clearing? The first fish that enters the new fish traps, have you said not to put them in hot water, otherwise no more will be caught? The first fish that enters the new fish trap, have you put it near the trap, saying that it will bring plenty of better fish? Having shot a deer and not having killed it, have you prayed to the arrow, believing that thus praying again it will die the next time you shoot it?  

The emphasis on First Fruits rituals and food rules signified more than just a cultural novelty; it may have been the basis of Indian landscapes in much of peninsular Florida (see Figure 9 below).

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Figure 9. Early Florida Indians Hunting Deer

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51 Milanich and Sturtevant, Pareja *Confessionario*, 26, f129, f128, f124, f125, f130
52 “Hunting Deer,” The engravings published by Theodor de Bry in *Grand Voyages* (1591), after watercolors made by Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues; from State Archives of Florida, *Florida Memory*,
First Fruits ceremonies and rituals were a celebration of the wild and sacred fertility of a landscape. Indians of the Florida peninsula drew from their environment with both breadth and depth. They searched for cacina along coastal waterways and inland rivers, and when they gazed upon soaring pine trees, what they saw, at some level, reminded them of the pillars that held up their council house;\textsuperscript{53} when they saw Spanish moss, or \textit{guano}, hanging from a live oak, they saw cloth. When they looked about themselves, they saw a familiar world. What structured where they looked and when they looked was a deep sense of seasonality, rather than need or hunger.

It is impossible to imagine how well, how deeply, they knew the Florida peninsula, but we can get some approximation from Spanish sources. Alsonso de Leturiondo, a Spanish priest born in Florida, wrote extensively about how Florida Indians of the contact period made use of their world. He mentioned a meal Indians consumed while on trails composed of a nut meal, made of acorns, hickory nuts, chinquapin nuts, or basswood nuts, mixed with maize flour, dried persimmons (from upland pine margins) and blueberries (from seasonally wet pine flatwoods and bay swamp margins). The dried meal was mixed with water before consuming. This may have been the refreshment Apalachee called “\textit{tolocano}.”\textsuperscript{54} While Fray Andres was shipwrecked along the east coast in the 1590s, he said that Indians made bread from maize, but primarily they consumed “gruel (\textit{atole}) and cakes [made] from acorn.”\textsuperscript{55} Europeans had long noticed Indians spent much of their time in the woods gathering acorns, as well as hickory nuts, starchy roots

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\url{http://floridamemory.com/items/show/254216}. See also Anne Whiston Spirn, \textit{The Language of Landscape} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 18: “the best fly fishermen think like fish, become the fish, in an intimate bonding of hunting and hunted”
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\textsuperscript{53} Fray Andres, \textit{An Early Florida Adventure Story}, 65.
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\textsuperscript{55} Fray Andres, \textit{An Early Florida Adventure Story}, 68.
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such as smilax and zamia, innumerable fruits (such as saw palmetto berries\textsuperscript{56}), as well as amaranths, chenopods (i.e. quinoa), sunflowers, and cattails.\textsuperscript{57}

The First Fruits complex offers texture where no list of Indian foods or resources can. They celebrated periods of abundance; but more importantly, they actively ensured fertility through accumulated cultural wisdom. Such wisdom required thankfulness, remembrance, and a sense of reverence. It also required saving seeds and preparing the land. Rather than a quality of the land itself, fertility required a cultural practice in addition to an intimate knowledge. Landscapes were defined by practices of fertility, sets of cultural skills born of inherited experience. “Seasonality” was perhaps the central practice of fertility, rather than a characteristic of the land itself. The ways that peninsular Indians practiced seasonality and ensured fertility expressed their cultural landscapes.

In contrast, the Spanish in Florida viewed fertility as something natural, as a resource in the soil. Where the Spanish saw Indians widely dispersed over lands, they saw no settlement. Although populations in the region are not well understood, Dale L. Hutchinson suggests that the contact-period Indians north of Tampa Bay, a region he refers to as “Northern Safety Harbor,” settled in predominantly “small settlements, with seasonal-use areas represented by scattered shell middens.”\textsuperscript{58} The Spanish in Florida could not see settled Indian landscapes. They could neither understand nor imagine local fertility.


\textsuperscript{57} Hann, “The Use and Processing of Plants by Indians of Spanish Florida,” 91-99.

\textsuperscript{58} Dale L. Hutchinson, \textit{Tatham Mound}, 26.
Spanish Consumption of the Land

Early Florida *entradas* forced the European imagination to clarify its desires, hopes, and expectations. Failures not only changed conquest and settlement routes and plans, they were inscribed into *relaciones*, navigational charts, and maps. To the Spanish, failure to successfully explore or settle land said as much about the land itself as it did about the explorers. Ponce de Leon sought settlement on his return to Florida in 1521, but he found only a fateful Calusa arrow. Estevao Gomes tried to sail through America in 1524, but failed to find that hoped-for watery route to Asian wealth. Lucas Vázquez de Ayllon pursued a “mirage of a new Andalusia” along the coastal Southeast in 1526, only to find the soils unfit for building a Spanish city. By the time the fleet of Pánfilo de Narváez was blown off course from Cuba in the spring of 1528 north to the vicinity of modern John’s Pass (north of St. Petersburg), conquistadores in Florida were more guarded. They expected to traverse a large land-mass and to meet hostile Indians. Most urgently, though, they needed to find a stable food supply.

In his *Relacion*, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca recorded many of the encounters and travels of the Narváez expedition. According to Cabeza de Vaca, they anchored in sight of a village in the distance. The next day, an expedition approached the village, only to find it deserted. The villagers paddled out to the anchored boats, approaching in an aggressive manner without attacking. Not intimidated by the confrontation, a Spanish crew of forty men, including six on horseback, came ashore and walked north along the

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Old Tampa Bay.\textsuperscript{61} They came across four Indians to whom they asked one of the most important questions ever posed in Florida. They did so using only gestures: “We showed them maize to see if they recognized it, because up to that point we had not seen any sign of it.”\textsuperscript{62} The Spaniards desired gold, but they needed maize. These Indians took them to their village on Old Tampa Bay where the Spanish pointed at objects they wished to find more of, including gold, cloth, and maize. From this encounter, they learned of Apalache, where they were given the impression they would find large populations with food stores and valuables. These Indians then guided the crew to a village of around fifteen houses with a field of ripe maize and stores of dried maize.\textsuperscript{63}

Perceived supplies of food and wealth were so lacking near the Tampa Bay that they were determined to continue onward. Because the crew was searching for the Rio de Las Palmas (on the Texas Gulf coast), they decided on a route north that stayed close to the coast, but this was not a consensus of the crew. Cabeza de Vaca suggested, “in my opinion we should set sail and go to seek a port and a land better for settling, since what we had seen was in itself as unpopulated and as poor as any place that had been discovered in those parts.”\textsuperscript{64} Nevertheless, in early May three-hundred men on foot, and forty on horseback carrying two pounds of biscuits and a half-pound of salt pork for each man, began a land expedition northward along the coast. They walked for fifteen days without finding any Indians, villages or maize, feasting only on hearts of cabbage palm, as they had done in Andalusia.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 33-37.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 41.
After reaching and then crossing the swift-moving current of a river, labeled “Amasura” on early Spanish maps, they came upon nearly two-hundred Indians. Gestures failed to initiate peace, so the Spaniards fought with them, seizing five or six Indians, who guided them to their village less than a league from the river crossing. There they found great quantities of maize ready to be harvested, very nearly saving them from starvation. Unable to find the port they were looking for, the Spaniards left the villages of the Amasura and headed north with “guides” towards Apalache. They walked for days, going seven or eight leagues at a time without finding any maize. Cabeza de Vaca emphasized the hunger and fatigue of this journey to Apalache.65 On a number of occasions, local Indians were their only source of food, bringing them fish, roots, and water. Other than a little fish, from May until November the only thing Cabeza de Vaca ate in Florida was maize.66

Little more than a decade after Narváez’s expedition, Hernando de Soto retraced his steps. Unlike Narváez’s expeditions, Soto entered Florida’s Gulf coast intentionally, with grand fact-finding, resource-gathering, and settlement plans. In the chronicles of Soto’s expedition we learn some details about their early experiences on the Gulf coast. Luys Hernández de Biedma’s Relacion of the events from 1539 gives us a good first-hand account of the travels from Tampa Bay northward. Biedma’s account of the expedition is the only one whose original document survives, even with the personal signature of the author.67

65 Ibid., 45-55.
66 Ibid., 97-99.
They disembarked from Tampa Bay with 620 men and 223 horses. Indians they captured told them of a Christian who had lived among the Indians since the Narváez expedition. Juan Ortiz had been living among the Calusa south of Tampa Bay for twelve years and could speak native languages fluently, but it took him days to regain his ability to speak Spanish. Biedma noted that while his translations would be useful, he would not be able to show them to Apalache: “He knew little of the land and had neither seen nor heard of things, only twenty leagues away. He told us upon seeing us that there was not a bit of gold in the land.”  

To the Spaniards, Ortiz’s twelve years in Florida did not result in knowledge of the land; he did not know what they wanted to know.

Using Juan Ortiz as an interpreter, Soto learned of a village where local Indians paid tribute called Hurripacuxi northeast of Tampa Bay. There, locals told them of a village called Etocale, in the vicinity of the Amasura River. Instead of the wealthy city of visible abundance they hoped to find, Biedma described seeing there only limited supplies of maize, beans, and small dogs, which locals ate. Biedma saw in the Indians of Etocale (in the vicinity of the present Withlacoochee River) a needy people. Occupying their village for seven or eight days, the Spaniards were not content with this seemingly modest place. They turned their attention to the Apalache of Cabeza de Vaca’s descriptions. According to Biedma, “they captured three or four Indians, but the one who knew the most did not know two leagues farther on from that town.” This statement suggests that Indian knowledge may not have extended very far into other Indian territories. Without a guide with exact knowledge of a route to Apalache, the expedition headed towards New Spain, going west until they could capture more Indian “guides.”

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68 Ibid., 225.
69 Ibid., 225-226.
70 Ibid., 226.
Traveling northwest, they searched for stable food supplies and wealth. Biedma described the lands of Apalache as more heavily settled and more plentiful than the lands of the south.\textsuperscript{71}

Another account of the Hernando de Soto expedition comes from the testimony of Rodrigo Rangel. This testimony is recorded in the \textit{Historia general y natural de las Indias} by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Váludes, apparently from the diary of Rangel, who was a private secretary of Soto. In addition to the diary, Oviedo’s account is also apparently based on interviews he conducted with Rangel.\textsuperscript{72} This account provides additional details on the experiences of the expedition north of Tampa Bay.

With a crew stationed at Tampa Bay, in July of 1539 Hernando de Soto and his army of foot soldiers, cavalry, captains, and interpreter Juan Ortiz set out for the interior. According to Oviedo’s text, Rodrigo Rangel concluded that the land on or near the bay was too sterile to settle: “\textit{porque la tierra parescía esteril, como a verdad aquella costa en tal fama esta.}”\textsuperscript{73} With the major armada headed north from the Bay at Uzita, Soto sent other armies inland towards the east at Urriparacoxi. By late July the armada crossed the north bank of the Hillsborough River and entered the “savannah of Gaucoco,” seeing the first maize in the land. It was green, meaning that it was not dried and likely planted in April/May. Early the next day, they came to a “pretty town,” Luca, where Governor Soto and his other armies met. Soto and a contingent explored further north and found the villages of Vicela and Tocaste on a large lake. But Soto did not stay long because he knew what he wanted. He moved ahead in search of Ocale, where he heard of

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{73} Oviedo, \textit{Historia general y natural de Las Indias} (Madrid: Impr. de la Real academia de la historia, 1851), 548. (http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7026605M/Historia_general_y_natural_de_las_Indias): see English translation on page 257 in \textit{The De Soto Chronicles}. 
great wealth there. As he moved forward, Soto called all his troops to follow behind as he was confident he would find food and valuables. As they moved along an especially wide trail on foot and horseback, with trailing pigs behind, they were attacked by Indians.

On their way to Ocale, the soldiers were so hungry they ate the green corn and the cob that had been taken from the villages north of Tampa Bay, such as Gaucoco, Luca, Vicela, and Tocaste. Arriving in the so-called “province of Ocale,” Soto’s party came to the village of Uqueten, where they captured Indian guides and seized enough corn to send loads of provisions on mules south to the rearguard contingent. When the corn was finally delivered to these men they were found in swamps eating unfamiliar roots and herbs. Going on to the town of Ocale, which Oviedo describes as a “good region of corn,” Indians continued to attack the armies, wounding and killing several Spaniards. By the middle of August, after a number of days sleeping at Ocale, Soto sought out Apalache, where he was told there were many people. Again, in a spread-out fashion, moving from village to village, traveling along Indian trails, droves of Spaniards, horses, mules, pigs, and stolen provisions moved their way through Indian spaces, occupying towns, and continually being attacked as they progressed. Each time the army approached a town, it was deserted. Clearly the conquistadores were spotted long before they reached Indian towns.\(^{74}\)

Both the Narváez and Soto expeditions traveled through peninsular Florida during late spring through summer. The caravans were larger than most of the Indian villages encountered on the peninsula, bringing with them men, firearms, horses, live pigs, and preciously few provisions. Using interpreters and captured guides, they followed Indian trails; they sought out maize, finding modest quantities in fields and stores in small

\(^{74}\) Rangel, “Account,” in *The De Soto Chronicles*, 259-263.
villages north of Tampa Bay. They ate cabbage palm, similar to what they had eaten in Andalusia, and maize, which they had eaten in the Caribbean and New Spain. A truly “well-settled” village was needed to feed this city-like caravan. Narváez and Soto carried with their vast armies more than just material, men, and animals; they brought very particular perceptions, ideas, and interests. It was not Florida Indians who first showed maize to Spaniards, but rather Narváez’s men who showed it to Indians of Tampa Bay. They sought out cities with maize stores. Narváez learned very quickly what he wanted to know about Florida, its deepest truth, by pointing at a host of objects in small quantities amongst Indians of Tampa Bay. Without a translator, the Spaniards learned that gold, cloth, and maize were to be found abundantly in Apalache to the north.

Maize was found by these early sixteenth-century expeditions from Tocobaga to Ocale, but in small enough quantities that the Spanish advanced steadily northward. As far as these conquistadores were concerned, they knew the character of the land after little acquaintance. Treating modest Indian food surpluses as a “natural” feature of the landscape, the lack of substantial stores clearly suggested a poverty and sterility in the land. Not only did they know the land, they knew it better than the Indians themselves. Soto’s men chewed on summer corn cobs. They consumed what they saw as food.75 Fertility was something in the land, or a lack thereof. Being shrewd and hungry cosmopolitans, the Spanish harvested these Indian villages as a natural part of the landscape. Indian villages were perceived as “Indian trees.” Poor yields of maize from a location’s “Indian trees” suggested essential truths about the land. Villages without large food-stores were not properly settled, and this signified a poverty in the land. By

75 Donna L. Ruhl, “Oranges and Wheat: Spanish Attempts at Agriculture in La Florida,” Historical Archaeology, Vol. 31, No. 1: Linking Spanish perceptions of Florida to contemporary events in Spain is crucial to tracing landscape changes in Florida, but unfortunately this cannot be undertaken here.
naturalizing the Indians, the Spanish enacted something even deeper than seeing or conceptualizing Florida. They consumed Florida. In consuming, they linked maize to fertility in a lasting bond.

**Spanish Seasonality in Florida**

The story of maize in the peninsula provides important evidence of fundamental changes in Florida’s early cultural landscapes. Archaeological studies of contact-period sites north of Tampa Bay largely confirm the descriptions of the Narváez and Soto expeditions, who recorded seeing only modest stores of maize on their travels in Amasura. Analyses of dental and bone remains from archaeological sites north of Tampa Bay suggest that maize was not a staple crop for regional contact-period Indians.\(^76\) Documentary evidence confirms that Indian foodways in Florida during the early-contact period were polycultural and interwoven with intimately-known landscapes. Indians on much of the peninsula made use of maize, but only as one part of a very diverse food system. But the Spanish *presidio* at St. Augustine and mission populations demanded substantial plantings of maize and other crops during the Spanish “springtime” in Florida.\(^77\) Spanish seasonality in Florida “required” a monocultural planting of maize, even if it was during the dry season. There is little basis with which to conclude that

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\(^77\) See Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord* (1999): In regards to the substantial Indian labor performed in Apalachee on ranches and farms he concludes: “In the second half of the seventeenth century it was Apalachee, with its fine agricultural soils and large native population (relative to Guale and Timucua), where ranching was the biggest success…In 1685 a ship left there with 100 chickens, 110 hams, 35 jars of lard, 300 deerskins, 44 bushels of corn, and 60 arrobas (approximately 25 pounds) of pine tar” (155-156).
before contact maize was the “staff of life in Florida,” which it would clearly become in areas influenced by the Spanish.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} It may be more precise to call it a grain of dependence.

Father Rogel’s experiences in southwestern Florida in April of 1568 show us the complex role of food and spirituality. During his missionizing among the Calusa, the Jesuit priest tried to teach locals about the Christian notion of the soul. Contrary to Christian doctrine, Calusans believed that each person has three souls, one in the pupil of an eye, another in one’s shadow, and the third in one’s reflection in a mirror or still water. While they were not receptive at first, Rogel reflected that “by treating them with kindness and love and using handouts of corn as bribes, I was able to get them to continue coming to lessons…Though when the corn ran out, they left.”\textsuperscript{\textdegree} The Spanish used maize as a staple grain from the beginning of their \textit{entradas} in Florida, but it was also clearly commodified as were wheat, iron hoes, axes, and beads.

Father Rogel also recorded his difficulties converting people who depended mostly on wild foods at Orista on the south Georgia coast. He preached to them while the Indians were gathered together for two-and-a-half-months, but it became far more difficult in the late fall:

When it was the time of the acorn harvest they all left me, and individual families went to the woods, each to a different place. They only gathered together for festivals every two months, always in different places. I tried to go to the gatherings to preach to them, but they laughed at what I said. Nonetheless, I kept at it, trying to convince them that in the spring they should plant enough crops so they could stay in one place all year. To help them do that I suggested I give them iron hoes and corn seed and that they all plant their fields together at the same place…But after having promised many times to do that the villagers who had been living in twenty households where we were gathered divided up and moved to twelve or thirteen farms separated from one another by four, six, ten, or


twenty leagues. Only two households stayed here and planted...To make conversions among the people of this province who are unaware of Christianity they must be made to come together, live in settlements, and cultivate enough food so they can live year-round in one place. After they are settled, let the preaching commence.\textsuperscript{80}

Rogel’s account suggests that the Indians at Orista gathered together for one main period, probably during late summer. Gatherings and festivals occurred throughout the late fall and winter harvesting and hunting season, but spring and early summer plantings were widely dispersed and lightly settled. As far as the Indians were concerned, they settled over broad landscapes, coming together during harvest peaks. Spanish missionaries could not cope with this kind of broad dependence on landscapes. The Spanish could not settle in Florida without first trying to “settle” local Indians. Not only did the souls of the Indians depend upon it, but as well the stomachs of Spaniards.

Spanish records confirm the intensification of maize production and use among Indians and Spaniards in Florida. From the beginning of the Franciscan mission expansions in the late sixteenth century, Spanish Governors formalized, and missionaries enforced, a tribute system in Indian villages outside of St. Augustine and up the east coast to Guale. In 1595 Gov. Domingo Martínez de Avendaño instituted a head tax on every missionized Indian of one \textit{arroba} (twenty-five pounds) of maize per married male. Beyond the thousands of pounds of maize taken to St. Augustine as tax, accounting records reveal substantial quantities bartered or purchased from mission Indians along the southeastern Atlantic coast. After the Guale Uprising of 1597 and the destruction of substantial corn supplies, Governor Mendez de Canzo instituted a new, formalized system of labor tribute, or \textit{repartimiento}. By 1602, caciques throughout the missionized areas of Guale and the St. Johns River, as well as yet un-missionized areas of Potano,

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 102-103.
Timucua, and Acuera “contributed” a large labor force of Indian men to the fields of St. Augustine. According to Gov. Canzo, “if it were not for the help of the Indians, which I make them give…it would not be possible to sow any grain, nor could the soldiers do it on account of the great labor that is had in digging and harvesting it.”

The royal factor Alonso de las Alas echoed the vital importance of Indian labor to the Florida presidio:

Here where this presidio of St. Augustine is there are great limitations on cultivation, on account of being surrounded by marshes and saltwater channels, and by the land being poor and sandy, and the interior along this parallel toward the west is useless land, with sandy and wet pine barrens, and this continues to the inlet of Tocobaga and the Gulf of Mexico, across which one navigates to New Spain…in all this district there has been sown corn, beans, and squash, and other fruits and legumes, and [even though] it is of great help for the sustenance of the people who live and serve His Majesty here, it is not sufficient to be able to sustain themselves without the salary and ration that they have, and even with this they survive only frugally.

Indeed, the royal situado had been an external support source since 1571, paying the yearly salaries of soldiers, officials, and friars with the riches of New Spain as well as supplying rations and other provisions. Indian labor in St. Augustine was essential to providing sustenance to the royal infrastructure despite the “useless” quality of the land.

By the early seventeenth century, maize production was as at the center of Spanish economic interests in Florida. First used primarily as rations for African slaves in St. Augustine, by 1616 the majority of maize supplies in St. Augustine were used to feed Spanish infantrymen and visiting Indian chiefs and laborers. Spanish demand for maize multiplied annually. Warehouse accounts from St. Augustine show how remarkably monthly maize deposits increased from the early mission period until the eighteenth century. The expansion of the Franciscan missions into Apalachee during the

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82 Ibid., 130.
1630s was no coincidence. According to John Worth, “the survival of this [colonial] system relied upon the maintenance of stable nodes of aboriginal population in strategic locations of agricultural production and along transport and communication arteries.”

There may not have been deposits of gold or silver to mine, which was the basis of Florida’s *situado* from New Spain, but there were laborers and “fertile” lands to mine.

Seen most clearly in the resettlement and concentration of missions and Indian villages along the Camino Real by Gov. Rebolledo after the Timucuan Revolt of 1656, Spanish mission plantations followed the more heavily populated Indian areas from the St. Johns west to Apalachee. This intensification resulted in nothing less than a large-scale transition from Indian polyculture to Spanish monoculture. Making corn into the primary source of sustenance most clearly altered peninsular Indians’ spiritualized landscapes.

Maize was the basis of Spanish colonialism in Florida and they needed other regions of Florida to supply them with what St. Augustine’s fields and the *situado* could not. The Spanish “spring” was therefore imposed and intensified throughout northern areas of Florida. While some attribute insufficiency of peninsular maize harvests to the poverty of the soil, others emphasize the occurrence of severe droughts. Cabeza de Vaca and others pointed to the infertility of the peninsula. Not ironically, this is a point agreed

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83 Ibid., 133-134.
85 Not ironically, John E. Worth follows Weber, Milanich, and Hoffman in arguing that something about the land itself (an essence) made St. Augustine agriculturally unproductive, again neglecting the role of cultures in making (signifying) the land (as) “fertile”: “Meeting the demand for corn and other staples in seventeenth-century St. Augustine was no simple affair. The city was situated in one of the least productive agricultural regions of Florida, and it soon found itself surrounded by a large *despoblado*, or uninhabited zone, as a consequence of demographic collapse among neighboring Indian groups.” See, John E. Worth, *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida, Volume 1* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1998), 127.
upon by many historians and anthropologists such as Paul Hoffman\textsuperscript{86} and Jerald Milanich.\textsuperscript{87} On their views, it took them time, but Spanish colonists eventually discovered the deepest truth about Florida. Few of Florida’s lands are fertile. Some of these rare, “fertile” lands became the basis for the network of maize trade, tribute, and \textit{repartimiento} connecting St. Augustine to Apalachee along the Camino Real through the Suwannee, Aucilla, and Apalachicola river valleys.\textsuperscript{88} The Spanish “spring” needed Spanish “fertility,” fertility as a ready-to-use “resource” in the soil itself.

\textbf{Experiments in Monoculture}

Peninsular Florida’s landscapes, which had long been defined by polyculture, became experiments in monoculture. Imposing Spanish seasonality and viewing fertility as a quality of the land, rather than a practice, led to many agricultural failures. According to Paul Hoffman, Spanish documentary records suggest spring-time droughts had serious impacts on the maize harvests in St. Augustine during much of the seventeenth century. In the fall of 1633 Governor Luis de Horruytiner explained in a letter to the Crown why he and Fray Martínez sought to expand the missions into Apalachee. He noted the large populations and a land both abundant and fertile, a

\textsuperscript{86} See Paul E. Hoffman, \textit{Florida's Frontiers}, 37-38: “In sum, the “secrets of the land” that the de Soto expedition’s survivors wrote down and those they told orally confirmed earlier negative impressions of peninsular Florida but emphasized the economic and conquest potential of the chiefdoms of the piedmont. Peninsular Florida and its coasts did not contain resources or peoples that Spaniards might profitably exploit in the established ways; they were a source of slaves to be sold elsewhere in the Caribbean. Elvas’s summary claimed it to be “a lean land, and most of it covered with rough pine groves, low and very swampy and in places having lofty dense forests, where hostile Indians wandered so that no one could find them”.”

\textsuperscript{87} See Jerald T. Milanich, \textit{Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Spanish Missions and Southeastern Indians}, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 38. In regard to the ultimate failure of the seventeenth-century missions of central and south Florida, Milanich says: “The Spaniards could not make the Indians live off the land as farmers; the land of south Florida was not fertile enough for agriculture.”

potential source of manpower and provisions. That spring in St. Augustine, the maize
crops had failed due to lack of spring rainfall.\footnote{Paul E. Hoffman, \textit{Florida’s Frontiers}, 109.}

Spring planting had become a yearly activity of the Spanish throughout Florida
and structured rhythms of trade, labor, and gift giving.\footnote{Ibid., 123 and 135.} Drought is used as an
explanation for low Indian maize harvests and starving soldiers of Charlesfort in 1562,\footnote{Ibid., 48-49.}
for the end of conflict in the 1570s between Spaniards and Saturiwa around St.
Augustine,\footnote{Ibid., 59.} for the lack of maize harvests in 1588, 1589, and 1591, and disease among
Mocama Indians in contact with Franciscans.\footnote{Ibid., 77: See footnote (345): According to a July 17, 1588 letter from Gov. Marques to Havana
complained that not a grain of maize could be sown due to dryness.} Highly variable spring rainfall from 1638
to 1646 led to increasing demands from St. Augustine for maize and porters from inland
missions.\footnote{Ibid., 120: “the years 1642 and 1643 were noted for a “sterility of maize” at St. Augustine that got so bad
that Spaniards and Indians had to go to the woods to seek out edible roots...In Mocama and Timucua, some
baptized Indians dispersed to gather and hunt in the forests as early as 1639.”} Tithe records at St. Augustine report well below-average maize harvests from
1652 until “normal” rainfall returned in 1656.\footnote{Ibid., 126: Hoffman interprets these events as “natural disasters”.}
Drought was used to explain the lack of
Indian food stores at Pensacola Bay in 1686,\footnote{Ibid., 162.} the lack of spring rains from 1684 to 1687,
and as an explanation for why St. Augustine had difficulty finding the fifty thousand
arrobas per year of maize they required.\footnote{Ibid., 169-170.} Much later, drought and “poor environments,”
were used to explain difficulties among Seminoles living in central Florida during the
mid-1820s and 1830s.\footnote{Ibid., 291 and 304.}

Experimenting with maize monoculture in Florida led to failures that were clearly
a result of a lack of close knowledge. Michael Gannon attributes the failures to the land
itself as well as poor methods: “Maize, or Indian corn, was the only crop harvested in the entire province, and often the land was too sterile even for maize. The poor soil conditions were largely the result of poor farming, and the missionaries expended a great deal of their time in trying to get the Indians to cultivate the fields properly.”99 The land clearly could not support year after year of maize fields, but no land could do so indefinitely. The deeper issue concerns the notion of fertility itself. Whereas the Spanish looked for fertility in the land, as a resource, peninsular Indians had never thought this; instead, they practiced seasonality in order to ensure fertility. At the heart of this practice was a system of polyculture.

The Spanish changed far more than individual souls, diets, or tribes. They did far more than militarize the coasts and build the Camino Real. Pareja himself took credit for the legacy of the missionaries sent into the Florida interior: “we are the ones who bear the burden and heats and we are the ones who are subduing and conquering the land.”100 In conquering the land, they redefined the landscape.101

100 Milanich, Sturtevant, Moran, Francisco Pareja’s 1613 Confessionario: A Documentary Source for Timucuan Ethnography, 14: Recorded by Frey Luís Gerónimo Oré (1936).
Chapter Two
Landscapes of the Seminoles:
“Called by the Indians Ouithlachuchy”102

We hope you will not send us south to a country where neither the hickory nut, the acorn, nor the persimmon grows (Chief Neamathla, early 1820s).103

The great savannas are also remarkable: after periods of heavy falls of rain, they are inundated to the depth of several feet; but when the warm seasons have evaporated this deluge, they often become so entirely dry that the tire runs over them, and sweeps down the tall grass which has sprung up over them to a great height (Charles Vignoles, 1823).104

Figure 10. Seminole Pumpkins, Photographs by John Kunkel Small, 1929105

102 Quote taken from text on “American Map of Florida,” H.S. Tanner, 1823; Available through University of Central Florida digital map collections (http://digitalcollections.lib.ucf.edu/).
104 Charles Vignoles, Observations Upon the Floridas, 1823 (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1977), 75.
105 These Seminole Pumpkins, likely of the same genetic heritage of the “hanging pumpkins” of Chassahowitzka (which means “hanging pumpkin”), were given to J.K. Small from Wild Cat in September of 1929 in the Everglades; State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory,
Early Seminole Agro-Pastoralism: Alachua and Chukochatty Savannas

Long challenged with defending its northern border against English, Creek, and Yamasse raids while trying to maintain strategic trade relations, Spanish influence over northern Florida crumbled during the War of Spanish Succession. By 1714, Governor Moore and his Carolinian expedition, together with Creek allies had attacked and raided a number of Spanish posts that extended deep into the peninsula, killing many Christianized Indians and effectively destroying the Spanish missions. Just a year later, both Yamassees and Creeks turned against the English during the Yamasse War, trying unsuccessfully to push them out of Carolina. With St. Augustine very much on the defensive and its mission territory desolate, by 1716 the Spanish colonial government encouraged Lower Creeks to settle the old mission fields. These Creeks, originating from the land along and between the Ocmulgee and Chattahoochee rivers in central and southern Georgia settled the lands of the former Apalachee. Brent Weisman suggests that Creeks began settling southward on the peninsula after their participation in James Oglethorpe’s attacks on St. Augustine in 1740. This may have been when Cowkeeper’s band of Creeks (from the Ocone “Creek” region) migrated from southern Georgia into the Alachua Savanna. Founding the towns of Lachua and Cuscowilla, Cowkeeper’s settlements would give birth to later leaders Payne, Micanopy, and Bowlegs.

Despite the common Lower Creek ancestry of these settlers of north and north-central Florida, the events surrounding the Treaty of Picolata in November of 1765

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suggested important changes in Creek customs. Fifty Lower Creek chiefs met with Governor Grant, who sought claim to all lands east of the St. Johns for England, while acknowledging Indian control of the entire peninsula. Cowkeeper intentionally did not attend. Rather, he met with Governor Grant that December to represent distinct group interests, rather than the broad interests of the Creeks. Cowkeeper’s actions signified that Creeks in Florida did not speak with one voice and by the 1770s and 1780s writers began referring to Florida Indians as “Seminoles.”

![Figure 11. East Florida, 1776](image)

From the travels and writings of William Bartram in the 1770s, we get a good idea of these early Seminole settlements on the peninsula. Utilizing many cultural elements which had been important to their Creek ancestors, the towns were organized

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around a central square, the traditional center of ceremonial, social, and political life. Cuscowilla, for example, south of present Gainesville, consisted of about thirty habitations, many of which were two stories high, covered with cypress bark shingles and organized around the public square where feasts and councils were held. Each home contained a small garden plot with some corn, beans, and tobacco, but the bulk of their provisions were tended on the richest lands of the Alachua savanna:

This plantation is one common enclosure, and is worked and tended by the whole community; yet every family has its particular part, according to its own appointment, marked off when planted; and this portion receives the common labor and assistance until ripe, when each family gathers and deposits in its granary its own proper share, setting apart a small gift or contribution for the public granary, which stands in the centre of the plantation.

Utilizing wild Spanish cattle from the vicinity of the Alachua savanna (almost certainly descended from the early Spanish cattle ranch La Chua), by the late 1770s Seminoles of the peninsula developed a unique hybrid plantation system based on agro-pastoralism. This unique culture of agro-pastoralism combined “southern” crops such as corn, rice and tobacco and pastured herds of cattle, horses, and hogs with a system of trade at locations on the St. Johns such as Spalding’s Lower Store, Rolles Town, and later Volusia (see Figure 11 above). In addition to the traditional plantation crops, they grew sweet potatoes, beans, squash, oranges, watermelons, peanuts, peaches and other crops for subsistence and trade. Bartram notes that the Alachua Seminoles comprised fewer people spread over a vaster territory than those Seminole settlements along the Apalachicola River (i.e. the Uches):

They enjoy a superabundance of the necessities and conveniences of life…the hides of deer, bears, tigers and wolves, together with honey, wax and other productions of the country, purchase their cloathing, equipage, and domestic utensils from the whites. They seem to be free from want or desires…nothing to give them disquietude, but the gradual encroachments of the white people.\footnote{Mark Van Doren, Ed. \textit{Travels}, 182-183.}

The Seminoles had done something that neither the Spanish nor the English had done up to that point; they had been thoroughly successful in settling peninsular Florida.\footnote{Ibid., 141.}

The deerskin trade allowed, and required, Seminoles to traverse vast areas of the peninsula hunting. In addition, the ready markets along the St. Johns encouraged the diverse farming methods of Seminole agro-pastoralism. These activities tended to diminish chiefly power and centralization. By the time Cowkeeper’s son Payne (called King Payne) became the leader of the Alachua band of Seminoles in 1784, he relocated his village to another corner of the Alachua savanna. Paynestown was not organized like a traditional Creek, or early Seminole square ground town like Cuscowilla; instead it more resembled a “typical Southern plantation.”\footnote{Weisman, \textit{Unconquered}, 21-22.} By the late eighteenth century, King Payne’s plantation included twenty slaves, 1500 head of cattle, 400 horses, along with sheep and goats.\footnote{Ibid., 24.}

Other groups of Seminoles had also lived in the Florida peninsula south of Cuscowilla, but in lands through which William Bartram did not travel. While Cowkeeper was establishing the settlement of Cuscowilla in the Alachua savanna (after the Treaty of Picolata in 1765), Creek migrants from the town of Eufala in eastern Alabama settled Chukochatty, near present-day Brooksville.\footnote{Brent Weisman, \textit{Like Beads on a String: A Culture History of the Seminole Indians in North Peninsular Florida} (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 68 and 94.} With Anglo advancement
throughout the southern states and continued demand for trade goods in Florida, waves of Upper Creek settlers filtered down the peninsula.\textsuperscript{118} By the early 1800s, Seminole settlements traversed lands not settled since the late 1600s by Indian populations of Potano, Ocale, Acuera, Amacano, and Tocobaga.

The practices of Seminole agro-pastoralism shaped much of what these Seminole settlers looked for in the land. Seminoles of the peninsula increasingly sought out prairie ponds, lakes, and broad interior savanna lands, where their diverse crops could be grown and domesticated cattle pastured on nearby grasslands.\textsuperscript{119} The need for both seasonally wet lands, for good cattle grazing, and well-drained upland areas of hammock, for planting, required a vision that no other peninsular Floridians had ever employed. They sought to settle distinctive landscapes in the Florida peninsula. Whereas the Indians of Amasura saw a substantial source of their livelihood and culture when they looked upon local rivers and waterways, Brent Weisman suggests that when Seminoles looked upon the river they called “Withlacoochee,” they saw primarily a means of transportation.\textsuperscript{120}

The landscape changed. Seminole culture cherished and required rolling savanna lands.

Anglo-Americans also began eyeing Seminole landscapes. In 1812 a Georgia militia led by Colonel Daniel Newnan (the namesake of Newnansville, future seat of Alachua County) attacked the Seminole settlements, leading a U.S. charge to acquire East Florida lands from Spain. Receiving a mortal wound in the attack, King Payne’s role was passed to his brother Bowlegs, who was himself forced to move south of the Suwannee River after encountering Andrew Jackson in 1818. Bowlegs led the Alachua Seminoles south to the wet prairies and savannas of the eastern Withlacoochee. Black Seminoles

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 67-68.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 33-35.
\textsuperscript{120} Weisman, \textit{Unconquered}, 107-108.
founded the settlement of Peliklakah. After Bowlegs died in 1821, his nephew Micanopy settled in the town of Okahumpka (or Okihumky) east of the Withlacoochee (see Figure 12 below).

As more Seminoles practiced agro-pastoralism on the central peninsula, focusing on a diverse form of subsistence and surplus production, trade along the St. Johns increased, but also along the Gulf coast. An archaeological site on the Weeki Wachee

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121 Ibid., 24-25.
122 American Map of Florida, H.S. Tanner, 1823; Available through University of Central Florida digital map collections (http://digitalcollections.lib.ucf.edu/). South of the Suwannee and Tampa Bay north and east. Notice Seminole towns and “Big Hammock” as well as “Chicuchaty Savanna.”
River testifies to Seminole settlements along the Gulf Hammock. In the upper component of an ancient Indian shell midden, olive jar fragments, Staffordshire china, European pearlwares, and pottery of Creek heritage indicate Seminole settlement during the early nineteenth century. The remains also suggest significant trade with Cuba. Seminoles of the Gulf coast north of Tampa Bay such as Arpeika and his band made substantial use of the hammock lands for hunting, farming, fishing and gathering hickory nuts, cacina, and other foods.\textsuperscript{123} They also had easy access to trade. The American government ultimately saw such coastal access to trade with Cuba as a threat to their control over the land and the Seminoles. A key feature of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823 would require the Seminole reservation boundaries to be no closer than twenty-five miles from all coasts.\textsuperscript{124} The Americans wanted to cut off trade in order to contain the Seminoles onto a reservation, but ultimately their goal was to ensure that it was they who possessed and mined the known “fertile” soils of northern Florida.

Just prior to the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, Governor William P. Duval sent Horatio Dexter to assess the territory, expressing “a hope that no treaty would be negotiated with [the Seminoles] before the country they occupied had been properly explored.” Reports he received about the regions occupied by Indians between the Suwannee river and Alachua boasted they were “the best in the territory, and if this were ceded to the Indians, Florida can be of no importance.”\textsuperscript{125} In a letter to Horatio Dexter, Colonel James Gadsden specifically asked him to collect “all the information possible as

\textsuperscript{123} Mark F. Boyd, “Horatio Dexter and Events Leading to the Treaty of Moultrie Creek with the Seminole Indians,” \textit{Florida Anthropologist}, Vol. XI, No. 372: 81: These coastal Seminoles may have been involved with the “Havana fishing smacks” near Tampa.

\textsuperscript{124} Weisman, \textit{Like Beads}, 75-76.

\textsuperscript{125} Mark F. Boyd, “Horatio Dexter and Events Leading to the Treaty of Moultrie Creek with the Seminole Indians,”72.
Governor Duval emphasized “It is desirable that you should keep a regular journal describing the face of the Country over which you may pass, its soil & Timber, Rivers, springs & lakes- the land fit for cultivation and those which are only calculated for hunting ground. The Government of the United States would be much pleased to be informed as minutely as your time & circumstances may permit, of every matter connected with the climate & soil of Florida…use all your influence to concentrate the Indians and to induce them to attend the Treaty.”

Whereas Seminoles were looking for a particular landscape to fulfill an agro-pastoral culture, the Americans were looking to mine soil nutrients and resources.

Horatio Dexter explored the peninsula on horseback in the early 1820s, recording and describing what Seminole settlements he could find. Dexter’s description was by no means a complete list of settlements. Dexter himself argued that “the migratory habits of the Indians make it difficult to be exact.” Nevertheless, Dexter leaves us with a record of one key cultural landscape of the early Semionles in Florida. From St. Augustine, he crossed the St. Johns at Volusia in early summer of 1823 (see Figure 12 above). Leaving Volusia, he crossed the Ocklawaha River and traveled fifteen miles southwest, arriving at the Seminole village of Okehumke (east of the Withlacoochee). The vast Okehumke savanna extended southerly about twenty miles and was about two miles wide. Most of the Indians made their settlement in the Okehumke Hammock, although they planted in primarily former pine lands on the edge of the hammock, and their cattle, horses, and

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126 Ibid., 85.
127 Ibid., 87.
128 Ibid., 82.
hogs ranged in the bordering savanna.\textsuperscript{129} Twelve miles south of Okehumke he found the village of Pilaklikaha, comprised of numerous hammocks from twenty to three hundred acres, each surrounded by savannahs, appearing to Dexter like many islands. The village consisted of about one hundred Black Seminoles, who were slaves of Miconopy’s family, but lived independently pasturing herds of cattle on the savanna and growing crops including corn, rice, and peanuts.\textsuperscript{130}

Dexter approached the Withlacoochee River from the east, crossing the rapidly moving waters. He suggested that the large areas of hammock lands and swamp would be preferable for cultivating sugarcane and rice to the St. Johns where the English plantations had once produced these. Arriving at Sitarkey’s plantation, the only cleared land along the river banks, he saw corn, rice, and sugarcane growing abundantly. Leaving Sitarkey’s he traveled west ten miles across nearly unbroken, and “unusually high,” pine lands. Dexter arrived at the Chucachate hammock (just south of Brooksville), which he describes as up to five miles in width, containing two cleared fields, totaling about 320 acres. The hammock lands were surrounded by a large savanna. Dexter remarked that Chief Sinaha’s village at Chucachate was once “the seat of the Seminole Nation” until a band of Creeks, the Cowetas, attacked them, stealing sixty slaves and a large number of cattle and horses. Not only did the village contain a surplus of corn (in summer), something very unusual according to Dexter, but they farmed “the only Hammock land (the clearing of which requires so much labor) that I have ever seen cleared by the Indians.”\textsuperscript{131} He described the region as the “Big Hammock” (see Figure 13 below), nearly seven miles in depth and thirty miles in circumference. Its soils were

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 88.  
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 88.  
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 90.
said to be “in every respect equal to the best of the Alachua lands. The growth is similar but still more luxuriant, the land in this neighborhood suitable for cultivation is in my opinion amply capable for sustaining a population of 50,000 souls.”

Figures 13 (Left) and 14 (Right). Big Hammock; and Three Hammocks of the Big Hammock

Four miles to the south of the village at Chucachate, Dexter saw high pine “barrens,” bordered on a large area of “pine lands of the best quality, soil a mixture of red clay.” Dotted with ponds and surrounding hammocks, nine miles from Chucachate he described a Seminole settlement with fields situated around a lake at the bottom of hills a hundred feet high. When he visited in mid-July, the fields contained corn, pumpkins,

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132 Ibid., 90.
watermelons, and many other crops. He did not list a name for this settlement. Traveling south from this unnamed village, pine lands with red clay soils of the “best quality” continued to the village of Tomakitchky (Lake Pasadena, near Dade City) eighteen miles distant. Situated along the edge of a vast savanna, detached hamlets dotted the landscape overlooking the savanna. Planted in one common field, the Seminoles grew corn and rice among other things. Continuing southward for twelve miles across high pine land with red clay soils to Lookschapopka Creek, Dexter found a settlement was situated on the border of low savanna lands at the edge of the Creek (Hillsborough River). Crossing the Creek, Dexter arrived at the abandoned town of Hichapuksassa, which contained high pine lands surrounded by overflowed savannas. He remarks that these lands were abandoned due to poor pasturage, being too low and inundated.

Just to the south of the Lookschapopka Creek, Dexter observed an abrupt change in the landscape. This was the southernmost point of what he called “the high fertile district or Country.” South of this begins the great hunting grounds of the Indians called “the scattering ground.” Dexter was not subtle in describing this area for the purposes of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek: “This district of Country forms in my opinion the most delightful region I have ever seen, and exceeds in fertility, elevation, diversity of surface, & beauty of landscape any part of E. Florida.” Below this lay vast winter hunting grounds, but lands almost entirely inundated during the summer. It was by no means a coincidence which lands Horatio Dexter recommended for the Seminole Reservation:

If I may venture to offer an opinion as to the most eligible place to concentrate the Seminoles in, I should recommend the Country SE of Okehumky the present residence of Miconope, it would be most agreeable to them from comprising their hunting grounds which altho[ugh] extremely valuable to them, can never be

\footnote{Ibid., 91.}
\footnote{Ibid., 91.}
brought into cultivation as they are overflowed every wet season and cannot be drained. This part of the country is also preferable to a situation near the sea, where they are too much exposed to intercourse with an enemy in case of war. It is to be observed that the Seminoles are very adverse to be associated.\footnote{136}

Dexter recommended all the seasonally-submerged pine flatwoods and wetlands from present-day Orlando southward, comprising virtually the same area as the original Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades ecosystem. These were the winter hunting grounds of the Seminoles, but they contained little of the hammock and savanna landscapes valued so highly by early Florida Seminoles.

**Into the Cove of the Withlacoochee**

Horatio Dexter’s head count, village descriptions, and observations of lands helped the American government establish a policy of Indian containment. While Governor Duval insisted that the 5,000 Seminoles living in Florida leave immediately due to heightened confrontations between Seminoles and Anglo-American settlers, the Seminole leaders refused. Dexter had taken careful notes and notified chiefs and leaders of the meeting with the American representatives on September 6, 1823. Ultimately, James Gadsden met with Seminole leaders and agreed upon a south Florida reservation.\footnote{137}

The first priority of the Americans was establishing a Florida plantation belt in “Middle Florida.” After two weeks of negotiations, thirty-two chiefs “agreed” to leave north Florida and to occupy a four million acre reservation located between the Withlacoochee and Peace rivers. The government would provide protection (i.e. forts) from outsiders, provide $6,000 for tools and $5,000 per year for twenty years as a

\footnote{136}Ibid., 85.\footnote{137}Weisman, *Unconquered*, 45-46.
reservation stipend. Since many Seminoles were uprooted, the government guaranteed a year of rations in addition to $4,500.\(^{138}\) Anglo-Americans received nearly twenty-four million acres of north Florida in exchange for what Governor Duval said was “the most miserable region I ever beheld.”\(^{139}\) It would take another two decades for the plantation belt to move south of the Withlacoochee. The west-central portion of the peninsula was invaluable to the American planter mentality. There were simply too many under-utilized resources, the Big Hammock and the hammocks of the Withlacoochee provided many possibilities.

During the proceedings leading to the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, Chief Neamathla pleaded, “We hope you will not send us south to a country where neither the hickory nut, the acorn, nor the persimmon grows.” Seminoles of the Chuckachatty, Toachodka, and the Annutteliga Hammocks, and those living in the Cove would have known that these trees and foods were all abundant locally. Rather than the quality of the land in the Reservation being the central problem for Seminoles, it was the concentration and containment. For north Florida Seminoles, the high Red Hills were an entirely different landscape from the rolling savanna lands of the Withlacoochee. Different groups of Seminoles had developed distinct regional differences after inhabiting Florida for many years; ultimately, this first south Florida Reservation would prove short-lived (see Figures 15 and 16 below).

\(^{138}\) Ibid., 46-47.  
Despite their best attempts to contain Florida Seminoles within the south Florida reservation, many returned to their former lands. Conflicts with Anglo-American settlers increased by the early 1830s. Colonel James Gadsden met with Seminole leaders to convince them to move west. This meeting led to the 1832 Treaty of Paynes Landing. According to John K. Mahon, despite coercion at the proceedings President Jackson took the signatures of fifteen Seminole leaders at face value and gave orders for immediate

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140 1834 Map of peninsular Florida Gulf Coast (http://digitalcollections.lib.ucf.edu): All the roads through the ridge connect the trading town of Volusia (where Horatio Dexter was located) through major Seminole villages to “cantonment” at Tampa. Also showing the southern extent of “Alachua” and the “Indian Boundary,” this map was made after the 1832 Treaty of Paynes Landing.
removal west. The Seminoles were to be resettled among Creek enemies. The controversy of the Treaty of Paynes Landing ultimately led to the Second and Third Seminole Wars and the continued militarization of the peninsula for decades.\textsuperscript{141}

Seminoles who had formerly inhabited the Big Hammock were increasingly forced into the Cove of the Withlacoochee. This was more than a migration; it was a radical change in cultural landscape ushered in by both necessity and will.

![1835 Map of Indian Reserve of Florida](http://digitalcollections.lib.ucf.edu/)

\textbf{Figure 16. 1835 Map of Indian Reserve of Florida}\textsuperscript{142}

While the Americans may have had the impression that the Seminoles planned to leave the Reservation for the present state of Oklahoma, leaders such as Osceola moved

\textsuperscript{141} Schafer, “U.S. Territory and State,” 215-218.
\textsuperscript{142} 1835 Map of Florida, University of Central Florida Libraries, \url{http://digitalcollections.lib.ucf.edu/}
the center of Seminole landscapes from the rolling hills of the Big Hammock to the Cove of the Withlacoochee, where Sitarkey had grown sugarcane, corn, and rice since about 1814. The center of resistance during the Second Seminole War would come out of this Cove’s mixed hammocks, swamps, and prairies. As of the early 1830s, very few white men had known or traversed this region. In the Cove, Seminoles grew fruits and vegetables, such as hanging pumpkins, on small hammock islands and pastured cattle in the seasonally wet prairies. They modified the agro-pastoral culture developed on the Alachua and the Chuckachatty savannas to fit these lands of the Withlacoochee.\textsuperscript{143}

In many respects, the Seminoles had used their ancestral knowledge and experience in the southeast to adapt to conditions in the lower Florida peninsula. But in peninsular Florida, Seminoles also created. The region of the Withlacoochee was the last substantial “island” in Florida where their unique agro-pastoral culture could survive, with its combination of large hammock lands and savannas. The landscape of the Withlacoochee was also the last region in the southeast where Seminoles could find acorns, hickory nuts, and persimmons in abundance. It was the last region where they could find savanna lands dry enough to farm and wet enough to pasture their herds. Seminole agro-pastoral culture contributed significantly to shaping and defining the lands of the Withlacoochee. They cleared thousands of acres of hammock and pine lands for permanent agriculture and they managed thousands of acres of cattle pasture.

The shifting of Seminole settlement into the Cove of the Withlacoochee and the American militarization from the north and along the Gulf Coast (which had been excluded from the Treaty of Moultrie Creek Reservation) would shape American civilian entry into the land. Lands below the Withlacoochee River had never been known, much

\textsuperscript{143} Brent Weisman, \textit{Like Beads on a String}, 92-102.
less settled, by Europeans. The U.S. military would provide both the knowledge and the settlement. Seminoles provided the landscapes (see Figure 17 below).

Figure 17. “Theatre of Military Operations in Florida, 1835-1837”

Chapter Three

The Birth of the Brooksville Ridge Landscape:

First South Florida, Last North Florida

The ax, pick, saw, and trowel, have become more the implement of the American soldier than the canon, musket, or sword (Zachary Taylor, 1820).\textsuperscript{145}

The Amanina [Amasura] river is a beautiful stream, and flows through a tract equal to any in these parts; and but for the impediment of the shallows at its mouth, would afford a great outlet for produce; as it is, small craft will convey the exports to the great emporium of Spirito Santo bay [Tampa] (Charles Vignoles, 1823).\textsuperscript{146}

A valley is not a valley if it has no ridge or plateau, no up and down (Anne Whiston Spirn)\textsuperscript{147}

First South Florida: War, Reservation, and Armed Occupation

To European Americans living in West, Middle, or East Florida during the 1820s and 30s, “South Florida”\textsuperscript{148} was where the Indians lived.\textsuperscript{149} It was also the place where no Europeans had ever settled. Americans with a sense of manifest destiny looked westward, but they also looked southward. Paul Hoffman claims that “settlement followed the better soils as they were opened for purchase, with the St. Johns River

\textsuperscript{146} Vignoles, 76-79.
\textsuperscript{147} Anne Whiston Spirn, \textit{The Language of Landscape} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 18.
\textsuperscript{148} As late as 1880, Henry Sanford called his town of Sanford “The Gate City of South Florida”; see Michael Grunwald, \textit{The Swamp}, 73.
\textsuperscript{149} An observer of the regions of Florida in 1885 said that the oldest, and most commonly-known division of Florida included “West Florida,” including the area between the Perdido and Apalachicola rivers, “Middle Florida,” between Apalachicola and the Suwannee, “East Florida,” east of the Suwannee and north of the 29\textsuperscript{th} parallel, and “South Florida,” everything south of the 29\textsuperscript{th} parallel, from the Withlacoochee east and southward; see “Florida! Its Climate, Productions, and Characteristics: A Handbook of Important and Reliable Information for the use of the Tourist, Settler and Investor,” John P. Varnum (Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railway, 1885), 12-13.
serving as a major avenue to the interior.” To be more precise though, Anglo Americans of the southern states sought what they perceived were “good soils.” Their vision was guided by a crop and commodity system that descended from the Caribbean plantations of the sixteenth century. Their perception of soils was indeed important, but far greater forces constrained which avenues Anglo Americans would take into Florida. With the help of Andrew Jackson, salivating planters from the slave-state borderlands forced Seminoles from the bountiful river valleys and old fields of Apalachee in the first war against the Seminoles (1817-1818). This ushered in a first great wave of primarily Anglo-Americans and African-Americans into northernmost Florida.

By the early nineteenth century, Cuban fishermen and Seminoles resided in ranchos along much of the Gulf Coast. The coast north of Tampa Bay was familiar to traders utilizing the ancient port at St. Marks. With the close of the first war against the Seminoles, shallow-draft American vessels more confidently plied deeper up Gulf Coast rivers as well as the St. Johns and inter-coastal rivers of the east coast. Anglo settlers from the southeast utilized the same soils sought out by the Spanish during the seventeenth-century mission-period. Whereas the Spanish used “Christianized” Indian laborers at Mission San Luis, Asile, and La Chua to grow corn and wheat, and graze long-horned cattle, Anglo Americans during the 1820s and 30s used slave labor to exploit many of the same upland clay soils of the Red Hills, between the Suwannee and Apalachicola rivers, growing commodity cotton and tobacco. In fact, these lands in West Florida and northernmost East Florida had been the only lands permanently occupied by the Spanish in the seventeenth century. In contrast, they did not directly

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150 Hoffman, Florida’s Frontiers, 301-302.
occupy the interior of peninsular Florida, despite the serious traumas inflicted by early Spanish expeditions and traveling missionaries (*visitas*), resulting in disease, trade dependency, and “drafted” laborers. European knowledge of much of Florida was so limited that as late as 1837 General Thomas Sidney Jesup admitted, “We have perhaps as little knowledge of the interior of Florida as of the interior of China.”

Looking at Florida maps of the 1840s and 1850s, a difficult question must be posed of labeled populations: do they refer to villages or forts, settlements or boomtowns? Labels can certainly be deceiving. Long before the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, the United States government had implemented a broad policy of armed occupation. United States military forts built during the 1820s and 30s were places of security, but they were also places of commerce. Forts were boomtowns with “camp followers,” sutlers, and gamblers. At Fort Brooke (now downtown Tampa), built in 1824, civilians established residence near the fort, cutting wood and selling whiskey to soldiers and Indians by 1828. Stores opened and families established residence to sell goods to the fort soldiers and enjoy the safety of its shadow.

Fort King (now Ocala) was constructed in 1825 as an Indian agency with a council house and as a source of protection for Anglo Americans living in Alachua County. As early as 1835, the Anglo-American population in north Florida, who had lived there no more than two decades, left the countryside for the safety of a local forts. The civilian and military population depended on U.S. federal rations. President Jackson

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152 Jerald T. Milanich, *Laboring in the Fields of the Lord* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 155-156: “In the second half of the seventeenth century it was Apalachee, with its fine agricultural soils and large native population (relative to Guale and Timucua), where ranching was the biggest success…In 1685 a ship left there with 100 chickens, 110 hams, 35 jars of lard, 300 deerskins, 44 bushels of corn, and 60 arrobas (approximately 25 pounds) of pine tar.”

ordered such distribution to stop in late 1837 in order to encourage civilians to become more independent, but rationing continued in places until the 1840s.\textsuperscript{154}

By 1838, General Zachary Taylor was actively encouraging new residents to occupy the territory and to protect themselves. The U.S. military not only unsettled Indians living in the Florida peninsula, they very actively “settled” Anglo Americans. In addition to actively encouraging immigration and providing rations to the immigrants, the army established thirty-two villages by 1841, provided transportation, allowed the use of abandoned forts, and built new forts at new settlements.\textsuperscript{155}

As part of the army resettlement program in 1841, soldiers closed Fort Annutteeliga and created settlements at Chucochatee, Annuttaliga, and Homosassa in March of 1842, before the Armed Occupation Act. When Congress passed the Act in August of 1842, the U.S. government supplied provisions, guns, and ammunition to civilians, on conditions that they leave the refuge of the fort vicinity. Although the U.S. military largely left Florida by 1843, the 250 defense posts constructed across Florida greatly influenced settlement patterns across the landscape. While the Armed Occupation Act may have marked the end of active U.S. military occupation in Florida, a broader policy of armed occupation since the 1830s had encouraged settlement “on the ground” through provisioning, constructing posts, mapping the land, building hundreds of miles of roads, and thousands of feet of causeways and bridges.\textsuperscript{156} Of the $40 million spent by the U.S. on the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) alone, excluding costs from the 1820s in south Florida, a portion of this went to dredging inland waterways for the use of steamers, to building harbors, and to road and bridge building. Indeed, the roads connecting forts

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 212-217.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 228-229.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 232-233.
had to be larger than most Indian trails or horseback trails since they were required to transport supplies from different posts.\textsuperscript{157}

Born of blood, the U.S treasury, and war-time commerce, post office openings in Florida display how waves of Anglo Americans and African Americans migrated into the first south Florida. Between 1821 and 1859, Morton Winsberg found 184 post offices that opened and lasted at least five years. Winsberg’s map represents the time and direction of settlement southward (see Figure 18 below).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure18.png}
\caption{Early Settlement by Post Office Openings in Florida\textsuperscript{158}}
\end{figure}

For a society structured around owning humans as capital and using them to extract commodities from the land, the presence of Seminole towns comprised of Indians and runaway African-American slaves just below the plantation belt (Middle Florida) would never be acceptable. After the U.S. soldiers pushed peninsular Indians off of Reservation lands during the Second Seminole Indian War (ending in 1842) and Congress passed Thomas Hart Benton’s Armed Occupation Act (August of 1842), Anglo

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 224-225.
planters and would-be planters found their way south of Alachua County. Under the Act, the head of a family or a single man capable of armed defense could claim 160 acres of land south of Gainesville and north of the Peace River. Nearly 6,000 people filling almost 1,200 titles quickly occupied south Florida. These were not only the first Americans, but largely the first people of European descent to ever permanently occupy the peninsula below Alachua County and west of the St. Johns.

![Figure 19. 1850 Map of Florida, Showing Benton County](image)

Originally called “Hernando County” by the Florida legislature when it was divided from Alachua County in 1843, the name was changed to “Benton County” in 1844 after the father of the Armed Occupation Act and locally-adored champion of American expansionism, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Benton County

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included present Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco counties (see Figure 19 above). The name was later changed back to “Hernando County” after Senator Benton took an anti-slavery stance towards the Slavery Compromise of 1850.

Other than a handful of Anglo Americans who came to coastal areas of Benton County, such as Homosassa, before 1842, and others who lived in the shadow of forts on the edge of the Reservation, the Act officially sanctioned permanent Anglo-American occupation of former Seminole Indian lands. Anglo-American occupation occurred so swiftly that by 1850 Benton County listed 45 slave-owning whites. African Americans were forced to do the hard work of clearing upland and lowland hammocks and piney woods for planting in places like Homosassa (Yulee), the Lake Lindsey settlement (Anuttaliga Hammock), and Col. Byrd M. Pearson’s plantation at Mt. Airy (later called “Snow Hill” and now “Chinsegut Hill”). Colonel Byrd Pearson’s plantation is one example of Anglo-Americans occupying former Seminole agricultural lands in the Big Hammock. On a 5,000 acre claim in the Anuttaliga Hammock, Pearson constructed the

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162 Dunn, 14.
163 Including the purported first Anglo-American settler of the area that would become Benton County William Turner, who was not southern, but Pennsylvania Dutch. In possession of a Spanish land grant, Turner built a homesite at Cedar Grove by 1820 (now called “Red Level” near Highway 19); Other early settlers included David Yulee of Caribbean descent and German lumbermen, see Dunn, History of Citrus County, 15; Dibble, “Giveaway Forts,” 230.
east wing of the “Chinsegut Hill Manor House” in 1849, using slave labor to cultivate sugarcane, cotton, citrus, cedar trees, and to tend cattle.\textsuperscript{165}

As a way of stimulating state development and land “improvement” in these lands new to Anglo Americans, the U.S. Congress transferred title of 20,325,013 acres, nearly 59 percent of the state’s land area, deemed “wet and overflowed” to the state of Florida by the Swamp Land Act of 1850.\textsuperscript{166} In many respects this transfer, along with the extent of the first Seminole Indian Reservation (see Figure 15 in Chapter Two), comprised the first “South Florida,” and this is how many visualized the twenty-seventh state at this time, including the original surveyor of the southern peninsula in 1848, Buckingham Smith:

One of the first measures adopted by the government of the United States after acquisition of the Floridas, in 1821, has been the prolific source of evil. In fine, it may be regarded as the primary source of the Seminole war, and all it attendant ruinous effects upon the country. I allude to the arrangement by which the Tallahassee, Miccosookie, and Sampala Indians, of Middle Florida, and the Alachua Indians, and the Seminoles of the upper part of the peninsula, were all, in 1823, assigned to the region south of Micanopy. This measure effectively prevented the settlement of the coast, and of the interior of South Florida, and it consolidated the savages, and placed them in a position most exposed to outward pernicious influences, and, as the result has proved, most defensible against us in case of hostilities. Had they been assigned to a western part of the territory, nearer a dense white population, it is conceived their ultimate removal west of the Mississippi could probably have been effected without the great delay, vast expense, and bloodshed that ensued.\textsuperscript{167}

Anglo-Americans arrived to claim land titles in this new south Florida, such as Dr. Andrew Elton Hodges who left his plantation in Georgia in the early 1850s with a wife,

\textsuperscript{167} Thomas Buckingham Smith, "Report of Buckingham Smith, Esquire, on His Reconnaissnace of the Everglades, 1848." Senate Documents. The Reports of the Committees, Number 242, 30 Congress, 1 Session, 15: 22-23 (author’s emphasis).
six slaves, four covered wagons, twelve horses, six cows, one bull, household furnishing, and farm tools. Hodges’ slaves built the family a home at Inglis in northern Hernando County. But the peninsula was by no means a virgin territory. Militarized from the 1820s, Florida’s U.S. territorial forts were placed on the edge of the former Seminole Reservation and new ones built during the succeeding wars. The U.S. military built roads and bridges, and established trade routes. Ft. King Road is visible in mid-nineteenth-century maps (see Figure 20 below) and a number of Seminole Indian War forts were present in peninsular Florida up to the start of the Civil War in 1861. The lands were militarized, but so too were its people. Some settlers fought in both the Seminole Wars and the Civil War. For example, Captain Samuel E. Hope fought in the Florida Mounted Volunteers during the third Seminole Indian War, from 1856 to 1858, and captained the Sixth Florida Battalion of the Ninth Florida Regiment for the Confederate Army. Two hundred U.S. soldiers who fought Seminoles in Florida during the Second Seminole War became Union or Confederate generals during the Civil War. The peninsula remained militarized throughout the 1860s during the Civil War, when the Union blockaded Florida’s coasts and occupied Florida’s coasts. Repeated militarization and a planter mentality defined the landscape.

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168 Dunn, Back Home, 31.
169 Ibid., 65.
170 Michael Grunwald, The Swamp, 46.
Not only was south Florida not virgin territory because of militarization, but because Seminoles and early Indians of the peninsula had already shaped, tended, and defined the land for millennia. Anglo Americans of Benton County did not settle “untouched wilderness,” they inhabited human landscapes:

The pine woods were open at the time of settlement, there was little undergrowth and a wagon could be driven readily to almost any point on the upland. The presence of a mat of pine needles on the forest floor aided transportation by preventing the vehicles from sinking into the sand. Such land was easily cleared, was in fact cleared in some cases by fires of natural and cultural origin.

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South of The South

Some have argued that Florida’s development in the early years of American occupation can be largely explained by its natural habitat. Soils, rivers, and oceans determined settlement and transportation. Others who look carefully at the history of the state see far less correlation “between minute natural and cultural subdivisions.” Perhaps there was nothing inevitable about the development of peninsular Florida. Rather than the land itself as major force, others emphasize the role of a cultural ethos and a global economy in shaping the peninsula. In order to understand how the land was settled and used, the “natural resources” of the land only explain so much. We must look at the broader forces of culture and its context. The example of Florida during the Civil War proves illustrative.

Apart from the battlefield carnage and the drama of lofty discourse, the Civil War demanded supplies from each of its member states. As an eager and early member of the Confederacy, the state of Florida and its allegiance demanded soldiers and supplies, and required militarizing the home front. The war was a source of death and devastation for innumerable Americans, but it was also a means of survival and commerce for many early residents of peninsular Florida. By the 1840s, the South was thoroughly addicted to cheap, foreign salt for preserving food, tanning hides, and direct consumption. Since there were only a few active salt mines in the South, when the imported salt tap stopped

174 Samuel Dicken, “Central Florida Farm Landscape,” 181.
flowing from New York to the South, it was felt very quickly.\textsuperscript{176} Agents of the Salt Association in Columbus, Georgia were sent south into Florida to survey bays and inlets for salt-extraction plant locations. In June 1862, Colonel A.W. Redding of Chattahoochee County, Georgia recommended Florida’s Gulf Coast for its easy access, abundant wood, forage for cattle and draft animals, and the absence of a salt tax. Along with the work of many enterprising Floridians, companies from Georgia and Alabama established saltworks at Gulf locations on Saint Andrews Bay and throughout the Big Bend. In Hernando County, one salt factory was capable of producing ten to fifteen bushels of salt a day, valued at around ten dollars a bushel. The plant itself was valued at eight thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{177}

Saltworks, by the hundreds, required substantial amounts of fuel wood and fodder for draft animals (including wild pasture, hay, and corn). This led to significant speculation, supply problems, and resentment among Floridians. The 1862 Confederate draft had exempted men in war-related occupations, including many profit-seeking salt workers. The saltworks also required tremendous amounts of labor. African-American slaves frequently performed the work of cutting the timber needed for a continuous supply of fuel (often transporting it over great distances), tending the kettles, and transporting finished salt across Georgia and Alabama borders.\textsuperscript{178}

Salt, mullet, oranges, vegetables and grains, sugar, syrup, and meats left the waters, pastures, and fields of Florida to satisfy Confederate hunger. After trading a number of inherited slaves for six thousand head of cattle, as a young man, Jacob

\textsuperscript{176} Robert Taylor, \textit{Rebel Storehouse: Florida in the Confederate Economy} (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), 44.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 58.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 44-63.
Summerlin enlarged his wealth in the Cuban cattle trade, along with James McKay, and became a commissary sergeant overseeing south Florida, from Hernando County to Monroe County. Utilizing the old hunting grounds of the Seminoles, or “Scattering Grounds,” Summerlin drove his cattle along old trails from Fort Meade to Brooksville and on from Payne’s Prairie to the railroad terminal outside Jacksonville. Other ranchers drove herds northward for sale to the commissary, and some illegally to private hands, bringing an average of about six hundred head of cattle each week to depots in Georgia and the Carolinas.\textsuperscript{179} Under pressure from the commissary, Francis A. Hendry drove eight hundred head of his cattle from Hernando County to the depot in Madison without making any profit.\textsuperscript{180}

Just as the Seminole Indian Wars militarized the Florida interior, attempting to remove and relocate Indians from desired lands, frequently without success, the Civil War again militarized the economy. Wars were destructive, but they were also productive, yielding maps, surveys, navigation charts, roads, bridges, trade networks, and intensifying commodity production. Reconstruction did not give birth to an economic focus on short-term extraction and profit-seeking (i.e. by Carpetbaggers); it simply brought Florida more fully “under the sway of national and international markets.”\textsuperscript{181} It completed a process long under way. External control was nothing new in Florida. In many respects, the militarization of the land during the Seminole Wars and the Civil War simply ushered in the earliest period of American and Confederate colonizing efforts and capital consolidation, only a slight variation on the economic conditions during the two

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 91-92.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 103.
Spanish periods and the British period of occupation in Florida.\textsuperscript{182} Whereas much Euro-American economic activity during the antebellum days in Florida was aimed at fueling the Southern economy, such as cotton and tobacco in Middle Florida and sugar plantations in Alachua, Marion, Citrus, Hernando and Manatee counties, the Civil War simply mandated this relationship with the Impressment Act, passed by the Confederate Congress in March of 1863, giving commissary officers the power to confiscate supplies/products at fixed prices (often lower than market value).\textsuperscript{183}

The Impressment Act led to significant resentment among southern farmers and producers, who viewed it as a violation of states’ rights. One of the most well-known examples of resistance to the Act was the case of \textit{Yulee v. Canova}. David Yulee’s sugar plantation at Homosassa and his Florida Railroad line supplied many civilians and soldiers with sugar during the war, but he refused to accept well-below market value for his valuable sugar crop. Yulee took the case to the Florida Supreme Court, who ruled in his favor, arguing that states’ rights and private property take precedence over the needs of Confederate commissaries.\textsuperscript{184} In many respects, \textit{Yulee v. Canova} revealed not only the impositions of the Confederate government on Floridians, but the character of Florida as a place that welcomed and protected well-capitalized entrepreneurs. War was a time of social upheaval, but it was also a time of business, big and small.

Agricultural monocultures flourished in the Florida of the Old South. Reconstruction merely transformed monocultures into industrialized monoculture. David Yulee made use of northern industry in building his ante-bellum Homosassa sugar mill

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 6-11: I argue this point contrary to Long, who suggests that it was mostly Northerners during Reconstruction who initiated colonization and capital consolidation.

\textsuperscript{183} Robert Taylor, \textit{Rebel Storehouse: Florida in the Confederate Economy}, 113.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 78-79.
with engineers brought south, but it was Hamilton Disston who would spearhead post-War industrial agriculture in Florida near Kissimmee.

The Internal Improvement Fund was initially created by the Florida legislature in 1855 to stimulate railroad construction with land grants, but it was not employed until 1881 when Governor William Bloxham sold four million acres of south Florida to Hamilton Disston for one million dollars and a contract to drain up to twelve million acres of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades ecosystem. Using industrial capital and technology, Disston established a 1,800-acre sugar plantation, a fifteen-mile Sugar Belt Railroad, made profitable land sales, and dredged the Kissimmee and Caloosahatchee Rivers to allow steamers to carry his record sugar yields (thanks to a 2-cents-a-pound federal tariff) from the Kissimmee River to Fort Myers.

While many Florida farmers during the period of 1830s-1860s desired to be planters, to own hundreds of acres and numerous slaves, the vast majority of agricultural units in Florida by 1860 were farmers, not planters. Nevertheless, staple crops of cotton, sugar, and tobacco produced by slave labor for export provided short-term financial success to both planters and farmers. According to agriculturalists of the period, Florida growers knew little about cultivating Florida land, leading readily to soil exhaustion.

The high sands, clays, and limestone of the Brooksville Ridge did not arise entirely out of the ether after the Seminoles were forced to relocate or recede deeper into the peninsula. But in some sense, the Ridge did. American settlers arrived into the first “South Florida” seeking out lands that had been inhabited by Seminoles for nearly a

185 Grunwald, 67.
186 Ibid., 81-83.
187 Ibid., 88-97.
188 Robert Taylor, Rebel Storehouse, 2-3.
century. They came along well-worn trails created, built, and managed by others who
trod before them. The Second Seminole war not only forced relocation and abandonment
of long-held Indian lands, they redefined them, they filled the lands with new meanings,
new institutions, trade routes, and a profusion of knowledge. Military roads, forts, and
surveyors produced U.S. knowledge that laid the groundwork for its use. The Wars had
been destructive, but they were also productive.

The Birth of a Ridge

Rather than a radical disjunction in peninsular Florida between the Seminole Wars, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, there was a marked continuity between the settlement of the early American territory and development of the Florida peninsula in the post-bellum period. A logic of militarization and extraction, an ethos of monoculture, and an explosion of latent technologies connects U.S. territorial soldiers to slave-owning planters and farmers of the first south Florida in the 1840s and 50s to the demands of Confederate quartermasters during the Civil War, to Gilded Age capitalists like Hamilton Disston, Henry Sanford, Henry Plant, and Henry Flagler. Unlike West Florida and northernmost East Florida, much of peninsular Florida remained Indian territory until the American policy of armed occupation systematically redefined the land. The birth of Anglo-American cultural landscapes can be seen most clearly by looking at the land. They created a Ridge as much as they exposed one.

Large-scale lumbering in Florida goes back at least to the New England Live-Oakers, who from the 1820s into the 1850s came to coastal hammocks on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in pursuit of giant curved logs for ship-hull construction. On his arrival to peninsular Florida in May of 1842, Hezekiah L. Thistle was sent to East Florida to preserve timber on public lands. Thistle observed that all along the St. Johns River down into Lake George, all the valuable live oak and red cedar was being cut and removed. Companies such as Palmer & Ferris surveyed, cut, and carried away logs from hundreds of acres of hammock land in the vicinity of the St. Johns. In response, Thistle recommended shallow-draft schooners be sent to protect the resources of the U.S. government. From his appraisal, this included black cypress and yellow pine of superior quality to any in the south, due to Florida’s “proximity to the seaboard and being impregnated with the saline properties of the atmosphere, the texture is firmer and the timber more durable.”

By the 1850s, operations such as the Swift brothers of Massachusetts, with several hundred live-oakers, established logging operations along the east coast. Among the properties logged was the 2,000 acre plantation of Captain James Ormond, a Scotsman from the Bahamas who received a Spanish land-grant in 1815. Anglo Americans from the north and south established steam sawmills throughout this period on the east coast and along the St. Johns River to produce timber for markets in northern states and in the West Indies. In 1858 J. Eberhard Faber established the Faber Cedar Mill at Cedar Key for shipment of red cedar posts originally to Germany and later to a Manhattan pencil factory.

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191 Ibid., 22-26 and 58.
As one of four rail lines in antebellum Florida, David Yulee’s Florida Railroad ran from Fernandina on the east coast to Cedar Key on the gulf coast, providing a means to transport goods from the peninsular gulf, such as cedar, sugar, and oranges. It also provided a “dry” route across land for two-footed creatures too, such as John Muir who followed the “gap” hewn by Yulee’s locomotive. The Faber Company merged with Eagle Pencil Company in 1868 and continued cutting and shipping old-growth red cedar for decades. Due to shallow limestone deposits in coastal swamps and hammocks, Lafayette, Levy, Citrus, and Hernando counties boasted abundant sources of old-growth southern red cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*). In Citrus County, a cedar mill had been in use before the Civil War at Homosassa. Slaves dug a channel known as “Sam’s Bayou” to facilitate the lumber trade. Crystal River had some of the finest cedar in Florida, supplying carloads of cedar slats for northern (meaning all states north of Florida) pencil manufacturers such as Dixon Pencil Co. in Tennessee.

The tracks were laid and the course charted for Florida’s lumber industry to take off after the Civil War. As eastern and then mid-western forests began thinning, companies looked southward. Commercial lumbering in the south rose dramatically with the transfer of capital and technology from the Great Lakes States in the 1880s. The repeal of the 1866 Southern Homestead Act in 1876, which was designed to promote small landholding of 80 acres or less for freed slaves, immigrants, and poor whites on public land, opened up a new boom of speculation and capital transfer to the south. By 1914, South Consolidated Land, Southern States Land and Timber Co., and Empire Land

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and National Timber Co. all owned over a million acres of Florida’s forests, while Florida Coast Line and Canal Transport Co., John Paul Interests, Cummer-Diggins Interests and five other major companies owned over 300,000 acres each.\textsuperscript{196} After decades of logging in Michigan and Canada, the Cummer family formed the Cummer Lumber Company in 1881 and began purchasing large tracts of land in the south, increasingly focused on Florida by 1889. In 1890 the family moved their operation to Jacksonville and built a mill in 1896 to cut virgin longleaf pine (see Figure 21 below). Initially focused in Baker, Alachua, and Levy counties, Cummer Lumber built a railroad, the Jacksonville & Southwestern Railroad, for this purpose.

\textbf{Figure 21. Forests of Florida’s Peninsular Gulf Coast; Two Views, Brown Areas were those Logged as of 1881}\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 265: As an example of size comparison, the total area of the Withlacoochee State Forest today is around 150,000 acres.


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According to an account of the day, “skilled labor in the woods is white, but the common labor is all Negro.” African-American laborers were paid piece-meal, by the tree cut, while gangs of whites operating skidders were paid a set amount each month. All were supplied with goods from a commissary by a ticket system, receiving only the cash difference between goods consumed and money owed them. The Cummers later built a modern mill at Sumner to process virgin pine and cypress near the lower Suwannee River and down the gulf coast. With a fully integrated system of fieldwork, milling, and shipping, the Cummers increased their peninsular holdings to over half-a-million acres, transporting raw timber, mined phosphate, and pine stumps and waste products to Jacksonville factories to produce finished turpentine, pine tar, charcoal, phosgene gas (during World War I), and fruit and vegetable containers.

By the early 1900s, the Cummers had made their way farther down the peninsula to Lacoochee, where they built a modern, electrified sawmill and box factory. This factory, the largest of its kind in the south, operated until 1960 cutting cypress, pine, and hardwoods in west-central Florida (see Figure 22 below).

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199 Ibid., 148-152.
200 Ibid., 152-153.
Other major sawmills included the Aripeka Saw Mills with its company town at Fivay milling ancient cypress trees from wetlands in northern Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties with production ending by about 1912. As Fivay’s boomtown receded, another major mill emerged north along the Tampa Northern Railroad in Hernando County at Centralia (see Figure 23 below). Many mill workers lived in a nearby town named Wiscon, named after the home state of many of the mill laborers, while Centralia was named after the hometown of the owner of Central Cypress Lumber Co.’s hometown Centralia, Illinois. With a final stack of cypress lumber fifteen feet high stretched over 160 acres, Centralia loaded the last of coastal Hernando County’s old-growth cypress onto the Tampa Northern railroad in 1917. While Lewis Petteway’s nearby turpentine still at Tooke Lake continued production, the roughly 1500 residents of Centralia dispersed. These may be ghost towns now, but their scars on the landscape reveal the true “ghosts.”

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For centuries pine trees in Florida were slashed to make their resin flow.

Turpentine made from that resin was a common commodity in much of the south by the late nineteenth century, but it took the research of Dr. Charles H. Herty of Georgia to modernize the industry. Learning from the practices of the French, he introduced to America the practice of attaching clay cups below diagonally-cut slashes at the base of pine trees, rather than cutting a mortal box into the base of the trees to catch the pine resin. With the goading of Gifford Pinchot, Dr. Herty modernized the naval stores industry by 1903, and later developed the process of making pulp paper from southern

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Herty’s system of resin extraction quickly became an industry standard, but critics contend that the relationship between forest products companies and laborers was a last remnant of feudalism. Companies owned the land, controlled the capital, and devised the contracts, and the workers purchased all their goods at the commissary run by the factor and received cash payments infrequently.

In the post-bellum years, both Southerners and Northerners sought to build new plantations in Florida. Of those who bought at least five thousand acres of federal lands in Florida between 1880-1888, twelve Southerners purchased a total of 125,172 acres, and six Northerners purchased a total of 64,243 acres. With an open range, wealthy cattlemen of the post-bellum period such as the Lykes family and Jacob Summerlin sprawled their hardy Castillian cattle over vast expanses of Florida forest and swampland, land that only decades before had been the “Scattering Ground,” or expansive Indian hunting grounds. Supplying an important local demand, peninsular cattlemen drove their surplus southward. In 1905, south Florida cattlemen drove 700 head of cattle down the Peace River to the port at Punta Gorda for shipment to Cuba.

Cattlemen of the peninsula had long utilized burning to “improve” the land. Former director of the Florida Division of Forestry Harold Mikell followed his father around as a child while he burned a patch of woods to clear out unwanted reptiles and mammals and to obtain fresh wiregrass growth for their cattle. Estimates suggest that by

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206 Ibid., 145.
the early 1900s, cattlemen of south Florida burned up to fifty percent of Florida’s forests to improve pasture. Ultimately, widespread logging of the 1800s and early 1900s coupled with open range cattle ranching and annual pasture burns led to the failure of longleaf pine (*pinus palustris*) regeneration. Highly resistant to fire with their thick bark and long needles, longleaf pines need low-intensity fire to reproduce, but they remain somewhat vulnerable during their juvenile period. Pulp and pasture interests largely replaced longleaf pine forests in the south with shorter-lived, and fire intolerant, slash pine and loblolly pine. Working in tandem, industrial farmers, turpentine operators, lumbermen, and cattlemen left an indelible scar on the surface of peninsular Florida resulting in the near extinction of the longleaf pine/wiregrass ecosystem, leaving wastelands of second growth timber and scrub oak in their wake.

Timucuans and Apalachees specifically scorned the free-ranging European cattle and hogs of seventeenth-century Spaniards. These animals destroyed their fields and consumed the essentials of subsistence from the woods: acorns, wild fruits such as saw palmetto berries, tubers, and grasses. The imported animals competed directly for food with the whitetail deer, the principal husbanded animal of the southern Indian through the seventeenth century. In fact, the fruits of the saw palmetto, a key component of the pine flatwoods ecosystem, comprise a key element in the early-winter diet of whitetail deer and black bears, which are also known to give birth in protective palmetto thickets. When forage was scarce, cattle consumed saw palmetto fronds. Ultimately, though, cattlemen needed more grass to make meat. Early Florida Indians burned forests too, but

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211 Ibid., 326.
212 Ibid., 5.
they did so over millennia to create improved pastures, prairies, and meadows for foraging game. These were a part of seasonal hunting regimes. More than changes in the land, these were new landscapes defined by a new ethos.

When Governor Fuller Warren pushed the Fence Law in 1949 in order to take cows off public highways, he merely completed a long-underway change in culture and industry. It was the culmination of an extended process to industrialize cattle rearing for improved production. Government authorities and industry experts discouraged burning to replenish wild forage while heavily promoting “improved” pastures and stock. Fire was discouraged to protect fire intolerant and fast-growing slash and loblolly pine plantations as well as to protect less fire tolerant imported pasture grasses: “wiregrass will withstand fire; it will not withstand close grazing or trampling, nor will it survive being plowed up. The plants recommended for grazing purposes in this state—lespedeza (Japan clover), Dallis, Vasey and Bahia grasses—will not live if fire is permitted in our woods; but they thrive upon close grazing and trampling.”

When Cuba stopped purchasing Florida cattle during World War I, state officials and cattlemen looked northward for customers. Because northerners were used to thoroughbred cattle, Florida’s native cattle were deemed unacceptable by the industry. Yet, Florida’s native cattle had become a product of their surroundings, developing some resistance to cattle tick fever, while northern thoroughbreds remained highly susceptible. In order to rejuvenate the industry, the State of Florida passed a mandatory tick eradication program in 1923. Eradicating ticks would clear the way for more delicate

213 Ibid., 438: This also meant finding foreign grasses to fill the ecological niche of wire grass and to grow the most amount of cattle flesh per acre. In the early twentieth century a popular range grass was Para or “Fort Thompson” grass; see 1905 Florida State Census of Agriculture, 12.
214 “Rural common sense keeps fire off land and let nature help establish best grazing plants,” The Southern Argus, 4 October 1923.
thoroughbreds to populate the state. Every fourteen days, cattlemen and women across
the Brooksville Ridge dipped their native cattle (of which there were about half a million
in the state in the early 1920s) in an arsenic-based solution. As cattlemen and the
industry sought to protect the genetics of their thoroughbreds and make it easier to round
them up for dipping, fences popped up around the state. And following the logic of the
industry, cattlemen placed more emphasis on breeding stock and developing chemically-
based grazing ranges. Rather than ranging cattle across broad landscapes using fire to
improve seasonal grasses, cattlemen increasingly became beef growers.215 The emerging
industry focused intently on “improving” stock, increasingly replacing ancient
Andalucian Florida cattle with breeds more acceptable to the northern palate, such as
grain-fed Herefords. Pastures became intensive grazing lands. According to a 1936
edition of *The Florida Cattleman*, “Thousands of acres have been run over with harrows
or cover crop or weed and brush cutters, thus getting rid of palmetto, other brush and
weeds in preparation for seeding carpet grass or paragrass. Right now the demand for
carpet grass seed for planting for pasture purposes in Florida far exceeds the supply of
such seed. Thousands of tons of lime and phosphate are being used on pastures now…the
direct result of an awakening to the fact that good cattle must have good feed.” In
addition the fervor of local and state boosters, Depression era U.S. Agricultural
Adjustment programs subsidized much of the effort to industrialize Florida beef
production.216

215 William B. Stronge, *The Sunshine Economy: An Economic History of Florida Since the Civil War*
Measuring Depth: Rock Phosphate and Fertility

While many suspected the presence of phosphate deposits in Florida during the 1860s, the industry in Florida emerged only after South Carolina’s lead. After the Civil War, industrialists in Charleston rapidly expanded their operations of combining rock phosphate from the Ashley River with sulphuric acid to create the commercial fertilizer superphosphate.\(^{217}\) After a number of independent “discoveries” in Florida during the 1880s, the Peace River Phosphate Company was the first company (composed of men from Orlando, Birmingham, and Atlanta) to begin buying up phosphate lands for commercial production. Using the cover of a tent as a lab, the businessmen, among whom was geologist and a chemist, tested the rock from the Peace River. Upon discovering an average concentration of bone phosphate of lime (or BPL) of sixty-one percent, they purchased forty-three miles of river front along the Peace River. By covering their real intentions with a plan to produce tannic acid from saw palmetto roots, they were able to buy lots of land cheaply.\(^{218}\) These events would lead to the start of the pebble phosphate industry of Florida, bringing the Atlantic Coast-Line Railroad to the four phosphate plants operating in Mulberry by the 1890s.

After a career that included working as an engineer, U.S. Marshal, journalist, and Confederate soldier, Albertus Vogt retired to land near the Withlacoochee River where he hoped to grow citrus and enjoy the outdoors. While digging a well for his orange grove, one of Vogt’s African-American laborers discovered a chalky substance near the Withlacoochee River. At the time he thought it was gypsum, but after having the sample tested, the St. Louis laboratory told him he possessed “the most valuable rock on the


\(^{218}\) Ibid., 2, 42-45.
continent.” At seventy-six percent BPL, local investors, bankers, and landholders (including John F. Dunn, an Ocala bank president and Captain John L. Inglis) quickly joined together to form the Dunnellon Phosphate Company in October of 1889 with 70,000 acres of land and $1.2 million in capital stock.\textsuperscript{219}

This led to pervasive land speculation and mineral seeking: “trains were filled with prospecting parties armed with spades, chemicals, and camping apparatus.”\textsuperscript{220} Pine land that previously sold for less than a dollar an acre now sold for anywhere from ten to fifty dollars per acre. The woods south of Dunnellon were pierced with steel sounding rods, a fifteen to twenty foot long rod with which one would bring rock to the surface for testing. Not only did this activity lead to a rock phosphate empire around Dunnellon, Ocala, and south into Citrus and Hernando counties, each sounding rod hole outlined a new relationship with the land.\textsuperscript{221} They outlined a rock phosphate ridge (see Figure 24 below).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 51-52.
\item \textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 60.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 60-64..
\end{itemize}
In 1905 alone, Port Inglis, located at the mouth of the Withlacoochee River, exported 185,211 tons of raw phosphate valued at $2,222,532. Only Port Tampa, which exported rock phosphate from the southern Brooksville Ridge as well as pebble district of soft rock phosphate to the south, exported more phosphate from Florida. Taking advantage of the state’s generous convict labor-lease system, companies and land-owners such as Weeks Bros. & Co. of Sagano in Pasco County (35 prisoners), J.W. Ward Jr. of Floral City in Citrus County (45 prisoners), and J.R. Powell & Co. of Rural in Hernando County (39 prisoners) produced large quantities of turpentine, timber, and mined phosphate for export (see Figures 25 and 26 below).

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224 Ibid. 320-324.
While a globally prized source of soil fertility was bursting at Florida’s seems, farmers in Florida were very much a mixed bag. With the phosphate boom of the early 1890s, neither Florida farmers, nor Florida fertilizer manufacturers were very excited. As of 1886, none of the fertilizers manufactured in Florida used phosphate in their mixes. Two fertilizer manufacturing plants in Florida in the last years of the nineteenth century, the Goulding Fertilizer Company in Pensacola and Messrs. Little Brothers at Jacksonville, supplied sixty thousand tons of fertilizer to Florida farmers, primarily for citrus groves. By 1910, not only did fertilizer manufacturing plants multiply in the state, farmers used nearly three times as much only eighteen years later. Cutting edge farms consolidated hundreds of acres (such as those in the reclaimed areas of the Everglades), using the latest

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insecticides, herbicides, and fertilizers based on cutting-edge soil science and agricultural economics.

Yet, great debates raged in small towns across Florida and the nation. Many small farmers continued to put their faith in ready-at-hand and inexpensive “organic” sources of soil fertility. For traditional farmers all around the world, this meant manuring, controlled burning, using legumes, cover crops/green manure, oyster shells, rotting fish and seaweed to ensure fertility. The necessity of stimulating exhausted soil was recognized in ancient times, perhaps as early as human settlement itself. Carthaginians used bird dung before 200 B.C. and ancient Greeks recognized the importance of manures for ensuring fertility. By the twelfth century, both Arabians and Peruvians made substantial use guano, such that among Incans it was a capital offense to kill a young bird on the guano islands.  

Meal made from the bones of animals was used throughout Europe and in the U.S. by the late eighteenth century. For more than two millennia, farmers knew that even the best soils would not “naturally” continue to bear fruit.

Gainesville farmer L.A. Barnes moved down from Massachusetts in 1865 and made substantial use of ready-at-hand sources of soil enrichment. Despite having thousands of acres of fertile hammock land on the original Arredondo grant, he maintained a strict regimen of practices to ensure fertility in the soil. Using muck beds on his property, a common practice in Florida, he devised a compost incorporating the muck with lime or stable manure, hog manure, cotton-seed or ashes. He never used “fancy fertilizers.” Other farmers in the area utilized “green manures” such as cow-peas, which acted as a mulch between rows of strawberries and provided fertility when worked

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228 Ibid., 7-8.
into the soil after drying and rotting.\textsuperscript{229} Another farmer of the peninsula during the 1880s suggested swamp muck as an ideal soil amendment when composted with lime or potash or stable manure mixed with muck, pine straw, cones or wire grass and weeds. He would burn limestone from a deposit on the Wekiva River to isolate the lime or use oyster shell based lime. While special manures could be purchased, he recommended planting cowpeas at a rate of one and a half bushels per acre on worn land and then turning the vines under.\textsuperscript{230}

By the early decades of the twentieth century, \textit{Brooksville Journal} readers found advertisement for organically-sourced Peruvian guano from distant shores (see Figure 27 below), blood meal, dried fish scrap, bone meal, or tobacco stems next to ads for manufactured chemical fertilizer mixes containing sulphate of ammonia, Florida super phosphate, or sulphate of potash, all imported minerals treated with sulfuric acid in large acid chambers.\textsuperscript{231}

\textsuperscript{229} Carl Webber, “The Eden of the South, Descriptive of the Orange Groves, Vegetable Farms, Strawberry Fields, Peach Orchards, Soil, Climate, Natural Peculiarities, and the People of Alachua County, Florida, Together with Other Valuable Information for Tourists, Invalids, or those Seeking a Home” (New York 1883): 89-92.

\textsuperscript{230} Dr. Z.H. Mason, “A General Description of Orange County, Florida, Its Soil, Climate, Health, Productions, Resources, and Facilities of Transportation,” Orange County Immigration Society, 1881.

\textsuperscript{231} \textit{The Brooksville Journal}, 12 May 1932.
In 1905, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture B.E. McLin pushed the state’s farmers to use state-sourced fertilizers such as rock phosphate, cottonseed meal, and the by-products of fisheries (such as menhaden), and he encouraged farmers and ranchers to grow appropriate cultivars and grasses for Florida-grown feedstuffs. McLin clearly advocated greater agricultural autonomy in Florida, but he most fervently directed Florida agriculture towards chemical fertilizer manufacturing. Rather than simply trying to improve the lives of Florida farmers, McLin was trying to improve the health of agriculture in Florida. These are two very different pursuits.

After being used to make ammonium nitrate munitions during World War I and World War II, the Haber-Bosch process was re-fitted to make synthetic ammonium sulphate fertilizers after the War (extracting atmospheric nitrogen to synthesize...
ammonium under high heat and pressure with large quantities of fossil fuels). The infrastructure and the logic had long been in place for Florida’s agriculture to enter new heights of industrialization. In Florida, agriculture and industry was large in scale and export-directed from the start, serving a national and world economy. It is perhaps Florida’s central paradox: To the nation and the world, Florida is both a sterile land and a major source of their agricultural fertility and produce.

Measuring Height: Big Citrus

Phosphate surveys and exploration not only extracted a prized fertilizer and raw material for world consumption, they scientifically mapped a high Ridge traversing the western peninsula and brought railroads. These surveys showed that there was not just one, unified ridge as the eighteenth-century British had thought (see Figure 11 in Chapter Two). Instead, they found many ridges, and nearly all of them were seen as “ideal” locations for the more scientifically and economically centered approaches to citriculture in Florida. High, dry, cheap land was much sought after in the Florida peninsula.

Florida’s citrus industry expanded rapidly after it became a United States territory in 1821, with large groves positioned on easily accessible east and west coast rivers such as the St. Johns, the Indian, the Halifax, and the Hillsborough. Douglas Dummett’s method of “topworking” sweet Chinese orange scion wood onto hardy wild sour orange rootstock allowed growers to produce oranges in only three years and ship the high demand product to northern ports. Although the freeze of 1835 heavily damaged most groves in the southeast, Dummett’s method of “topworking” onto hardy rootstock

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allowed the industry to come back strong. Before the Civil War citrus growers largely utilized coastal areas and inland areas accessible by paddleboat, such as up the Ocklawaha. After the Civil War, the character of the industry changed with the influx of people, capital, and railroads. Citrus growers of the Gilded Age were largely fueled by what Christian Warren calls “orange fever.” Land speculators, health seekers, and promoters, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, encouraged northerners to come claim some of the easy money down in the Florida peninsula.  

By the 1870s and 80s, the steamboat exchange through Lake Tsala Apopka in the Cove of the Withlacoochee made it the location of the early Brooksville Ridge citrus boom. The Orange State Canal (dredged in 1884) provided a connection from Floral City to a rail station at Lake Panasoffkee, further stimulating local production. The Plant System Railroad later provided growers with ready access to northern markets by the early 1890s. Growers had a clear reason to expand operations north and south along the Ridge interior.

Orange fever and Henry Plant’s railroad together very clearly outlined the Brooksville Ridge (see Figure 28 below).

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236 Hampton Dunn, Back Home, 88.
Interior grove owners planted on the heights to maximize air drainage. Inverness opened the Orange Hotel and Citrus County itself was named for its blossoming industry after separating from the Hernando County in 1887. Brooksville opened the Tangerine Hotel. After marrying in upstate New York and moving to Wisconsin in 1855, the Raymonds moved to Brooksville in 1882 to start an orange grove. When the “Great Freeze” hit in December 1894/February 1895, they were among thousands of new

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238 Hampton Dunn, *Back Home*, 100.
peninsular growers shocked by the cold. While the Raymonds left Brooksville to pursue
the lumber business in Tampa, other growers such as those in the Pleasant Grove (in
Citrus County) community became ranchers. As much as it was a natural event, the
“Great Freeze” shocked the industry and the many inexperienced citrus growers. Many
Lecanto farmers, who were primarily from the Carolinas, had planted seedling orange
groves for home consumption during the citrus industry boom of the late nineteenth
century. Bringing folk-wisdom of stone-fruit growing from the Old South and Europe,
they “planted in between the hills to protect them from frost” in early spring. But citrus
trees planted in this manner in Florida had little chance of survival, where cold air finds
the lowest elevations killing tender evergreen branches.\(^{239}\)

Some of the oldest groves, such as that of J.H. Hampton of Floral City survived
the freeze.\(^ {240} \) Many growers not only stayed in north-central Florida, they consolidated
and expanded.\(^ {241} \) Groves in places such as Blanton, near Dade City, added significantly
to their groves after the “Great Freeze” (see Figure 29 below).

\(^{239}\) Ibid., 174-175.
\(^{240}\) Ibid. 72.
\(^{241}\) “Tampan, 102, Bans Birthday Candles,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 September 1937.
While many of the smaller, less-experienced, and less-capitalized grove owners moved away or changed careers, larger groves tended to rehabilitate their trees by re-grafting, selecting new scion-wood and rootstock wisely. Growers followed the model of the successful “wild” citrus trees planted by Indians in hammocks (where small lakes and canopy cover provided cold protection). Much of the available hammock land was cleared for groves. In low areas, small raised mounds were used to protect against flooding, taking advantage of the greater fertility of hammock lands and the protection provided by nearby lakes. Those small growers who replanted or re-habilitated their groves became dependent on the larger growers “to pick, grade, and market their

242 Samuel Dicken, “Central Florida Farm Landscape,” 179. (1-Citrus Grove, 2-Abandoned Grove, 3-Truck Crops, 4-Idle Land, 5-Hammock, 6-Pine)
product.”243 Forces in place before the “Great Freeze” strengthened in the years after the freeze. Marketing and distribution consolidation in the Florida Fruit Exchange had been in place by 1885, Florida established the office of state chemist in 1889 to promote commercial fertilizer use and to standardize products, and the USDA began the scientific study of commercially viable cultivars in 1893 by opening the USDA Sub-Tropical Lab at Lake Eustis.244

Just as the phosphate prospectors “exposed” the Brooksville Ridge with every steel rod thrust into the ground, big citrus demanded a careful tracing of topographic heights. Being on high land was no longer simply pastoral (as it had been among Gilded-Age tourists and émigrés), it was an industrial necessity. Not ironically, once the heights of the Brooksville Ridge had been traced, groves occupied nearly every peak from Inverness to Zephyrhills. The Brooksville Ridge became just an anonymous corner of “The Florida Ridge.” Indeed, as the ridges of north-central and central Florida became citrus plantations, they became “The Central Ridge” to industry experts, geographers, and tourists.245

Measuring Time: Farming “Out of Season,” or Trucking

In the 1880s, J.T. Walls, an African-American ex-Congressman from Florida, may have been the largest truck-grower in the State. On the edge of Payne’s Prairie, Wall’s 1,800 acre farm had been the most productive cotton farm in Alachua County prior to the Civil War, then owned by wealthy South Carolinian J.W. Harris. On 250-300

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244 William B. Stronge, The Sunshine Economy: An Economic History of Florida since the Civil War (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 61-64.
acres he raised vegetables for the Northern market, renting, on shares or by cash, the rest of his cultivated acreage.Wall accessed northern markets thanks to steamers of the Alachua Navigation Company and rail lines of the Florida Transit Railroad.  

Many other peninsular farmers accessed to northern markets via railroads built to haul timber, turpentine, phosphate, beef, and citrus out of the state and carry Gilded-Age tourists into the state.

Did rural Floridians of the 1920s or 1930s like to eat escarole or celery? They certainly grew a lot of it! During 1928-29 Florida farmers shipped nearly 8,000 carloads of celery and nearly 700 carloads of escarole northward. To outside observers of Florida’s agriculture in the early 1930s, nature destined Florida to serve others: “this warm climate accompanied with much rain and sunshine at certain seasons makes the growing of crops ‘out of season’ (in winter) comparatively easy and oftentimes very profitable to the grower.”

Due to the perishable nature of most truck crops and the lack of market options, truck farms at the beginning of the twentieth century were positioned in close proximity to railroads and navigable waterways. War, resource extraction, and transportation infrastructure, usually occurring simultaneously, long determined settlement patterns in the peninsula. With connecting roads being built to the railroads throughout the state and refrigerated trucks becoming available, farms could

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246 Carl Webber, “The Eden of the South, Descriptive of the Orange Groves, Vegetable Farms, Strawberry Fields, Peach Orchards, Soil, Climate, Natural Peculiarities, and the People of Alachua County, Florida, Together with Other Valuable Information for Tourists, Invalids, or those Seeking a Home” (New York 1883): 93-94.


248 Ibid., 85.
now be located almost anywhere (see Figure 30 below). The question was no longer “can produce reach the market,” but “how quickly can the produce be transported.”

Not only did “northerners” (here meaning all states north of Florida) look to Florida during the winter for cheap and fresh produce with hungry eyes, Floridians looked at their own lands through the eyes of outsiders (see Figure 31 below). Soil maps tell us so much, but what exactly are they telling us? They tell us objective facts about general soil types, how certain growing media might drain, how much fertilizer one might need to use, and so forth. Macro-level maps often guide industry decision-making (e.g. where the best large-scale return-on-investment could be made). Yet, there is almost no sense of the particular variations, the small hammock spaced here or there, of subtle differences in elevation, or changes in plant communities often just a few feet from each other. This is not the scale of someone living very closely with the land.

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249 Ibid., 87-89.
250 Ibid., 91.
When we view such a map it is supposed to show us just the facts, but it always shows us more. Maps condition a way of looking, a way of seeing Florida. By the 1920s and 1930s, Hastings became associated with white potatoes, “slicing” sandwich tomatoes with Homestead, celery with Seminole County, eggplant with Brooksville, escarole with Manatee County, and sweet corn with Zellwood.\textsuperscript{252} Not only was there an association, locals even took pride in these commodities, crowning kings and queens of industrially-

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid. 93-100: See also Nano Riley’s “Lake Apopka: From Natural Wonder to Unnatural Disaster,” in \textit{Paradise Lost? The Environmental History of Florida}, which discusses the history of Lake Apopka and the muck corn farms of the Zellwood Drainage District.
produced corn, tomatoes, and strawberries.\textsuperscript{253} But they were not only shipped northward, the seed cultivars were largely selected in the north, and saved in the north; Florida’s soils were changed to suit the northern seed rather than changing and selecting seed over time to suit the place. Whether it meant dredging, irrigating with deep well water, running sprinklers all night for freeze protection, spraying lead arsenate to kill leaf fungus, fertilizing with thousands of tons of easy-to-spread synthetic nitrogen and sulfuric acid-treated phosphorus, and potassium-based fertilizers, Florida’s rural landscapes had long been structured around far-away markets (see Figures 32 and 33 below). If Floridians at the turn of the twentieth century did not eat much escarole, what did they like to eat? What did they grow for their own families’ tables?

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures}
\caption{Figures 32 (Left) and 33 (Right). FFA Boys Spraying Pesticides, 1920s; and Fertilizing in Dade City, 1940s\textsuperscript{254}}
\end{figure}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{253} Gary Mormino, \textit{Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams}, 210-212.
The Last North Florida: Experiments in Subsistence

While a type of farming oriented around transporting locals harvests to northern tables intensified from the 1870s throughout Florida, and exploded in the Everglades region in the 1920s, there were other relationships with the land. Industrial landscapes were not the only landscapes on the Brooksville Ridge. Subsistence farming, which was oriented primarily around maintaining a form of agro-pastoralism yielded a very different landscape. Many farmers near towns on the Brooksville Ridge such as Lecanto, Blanton, Brooksville, Dade City, Inverness, and Hernando practiced a diverse model of agriculture focused on producing food for family and community consumption with surpluses sold (see Figure 34 below). This “general farming system” was brought to peninsular Florida primarily by Anglo Americans and African Americans focused on dependable “southern” crops, including corn, sugarcane, peanuts, cotton, and indigo.255 We might call this region “the last North Florida.”256

![Figure 34. Mixed Dairy and Poultry Farm, Big Hammock, near Dade City, 1920]

256 Hernando County has been called “the southern tip of Florida plantation region,” see Roger Landers, St. Petersburg Times, 25 June 2007.
A geographer of rural Florida in the 1930s, Samuel N. Dicken, took careful account of rural people in peninsular Florida and their landscapes. In his travels around Florida, professor Dicken was struck by a district of farm landscapes connecting parts of Pasco County in the south to Marion County in the North. After several decades of experimenting with the crops brought from their former homes, they found repeated success with some plants and practices, and failure with others. In addition to common practices, including inter-planted corn and peanuts, ample pasturage, woodland, fallowed fields, and hay fields, the farming area was composed of many family farms whose principle focus was subsistence. They also tended to group together into neighborhoods, leaving vast areas of unoccupied lands around them. In Citrus County, only 6.1 percent of land was farmed in 1932 up to a high of 19.4 percent in Marion County.\(^\text{258}\)

One rural neighborhood Dicken carefully investigated was Lecanto, situated on a road between Crystal River and Inverness next to a pond, in an area where surface water was very rare. Coming largely from the Carolinas, Lecanto farmers in the late nineteenth century grew cotton, corn, vegetables, and raised cattle and hogs. They also planted small seedling orange groves for personal consumption. By the early 1930s, Lecanto grew neither oranges nor cotton; principal crops included inter-planted corn and peanuts, sweet potatoes, truck crops, ground almonds (chufas, which make orchata in Spain), and legumes such as cowpeas used to improve the soil. Farmers pulled the blades from corn plants after they ripened and tied them into bundles to use as fodder, often instead of hay. As of 1934, there were about fifty subsistence farms of this type in Lecanto averaging 93 acres each, including about 30 cropped acres and 30 in pasture, with the rest either fallow, in woodland or orchard. Because land in the area remained widely available and soil

\(^{258}\) Samuel N. Dicken, “Central Florida Farm Landscape,” 181.
fertility so low, farmers rarely planted more than one crop on the same ground each year. Professor Dicken noticed a trend towards agricultural stagnation in the area, with “the cessation of cotton growing and the lack of a good money crop” and nearly forty percent of the land reverted to the state due to back taxes. Nevertheless, Dicken noted a population increase from 1900 to 1930 that he attributed to land speculators, tourists, and workers at the Crystal River Rock quarry.²⁵⁹

Professor Dicken also studied Blanton, another small town in the rural farming district along the Brooksville Ridge. In northeastern Pasco County, Blanton lies in the Big Hammock region stretching from southern Citrus County south into southern Pasco County. He characterized the land as similar to Lecanto with high pine hills of longleaf, and numerous level mesas with deep solution depressions with hammock surrounding lakes. As at Lecanto, surface soils were sandy with a subsurface of clay or sandy clay and small traces of organic matter. Since the high pine lands were open and contained a thick mat of pine needles, such land was easily cleared. Dicken took notice of the many areas of high pine that had been cleared and “replaced with turkey oak and black oak, trees which rarely reached large size in the pine land but formed, for a time at least, a denser stand than the original pine. So the cut-over or burned-over land, including most of this region near Blanton, is in fact today a mixture of oak and pine, though still referred to as pine land.”²⁶⁰ Lumbermen of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries preferred uniform longleaf pine forests that once stretched from Dunnellon on the banks of the Withlacoochee River to the headwaters of the Hillsborough River and

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 174-175.
²⁶⁰ Ibid., 176.
the ancient cypress stands in the Gulf Hammock, the Cove of the Withlacoochee, and Wahoo Swamp. Many small hammocks often escaped the planter and the lumberman:

In the hammocks a great many varieties of trees are growing, relatively little disturbed by fire or ax. Fringing the lakes or occupying the low solution depressions not too wet, the site is protected from fire by its position and moisture, and from the ax by the density and variety of the stand…the live oak, the water oak, the red gum, the tupelo gum, the red bay, ash, elm, and magnolia, for most of which there is little demand. Then, too, the hammocks are usually small, unfavorable for large scale lumbering operations.²⁶¹

Early farmers chose high pine land at elevations “neither in the highest nor the lowest locations,” in order to ensure thin sand and higher clay content and proximity to water without being inundated. They grew corn, cotton, sugarcane, and a variety of subsistence crops, letting their cattle range wild in the woods. When Dicken explored the area in the early 1930s he noticed that nearly all commercial longleaf pine had been cut over and only large mills remained, such as Cummer and Sons at Lacoochee, though their focus had shifted to what was left of old-growth cypress. In contrast to Lecanto, citrus groves had always been a part of subsistence farms in Blanton. In the last decades of the nineteenth century there were a number of small groves of primarily seedling Homosassa oranges, but after the “Big Freeze” groves were replanted on hardy rootstock and then grafted with sweet orange scion wood. By the early 1900s, the average size of Blanton subsistence farms, of which there were about fifty-six, was seventy acres. Citrus production played an important role in Pasco County subsistence farms, but the larger trend towards consolidation in the citrus industry in Florida tended to eliminate the small grove owner.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Ibid., 176.
²⁶² Ibid., 177-180.
Ultimately the farm types of this rural landscape district show evidence of experimentation with some significant long-term successes and many failures. Successes and failures were a function of subsistence needs, limited knowledge and experience of local climate, as well as the competitive forces of an increasingly industrial agriculture in Florida and across the nation. Professor Dicken’s research in the early 1930s characterized the Brooksville Ridge as not only a geological feature, but a rural agricultural region. Many of these subsistence farmers shared similar experiences from the post-bellum period until the 1930s. The subsistence farming communities, while small, reveal a cultural cohesion within the Brooksville Ridge landscape. As Dicken’s data illustrates (see Figure 35 below), a rural culture of subsistence unites many of the counties of west-central Florida, particularly the neighboring counties of Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus. All contain small, rural communities with subsistence-oriented farmers. They shared the landscapes of the Big Hammock (traversing all three counties) as well as the high longleaf pine land which very much outlines the highest points of the Brooksville Ridge.
United by geology and geography, subsistence farmers of the Brooksville Ridge experimented with the general farming system of the Old South, very characteristic of north Florida. While they often met success, their methods, knowledge of locality, and expectations were nevertheless not always at home. Samuel Dicken concluded:

The types of agriculture described above show evidence of instability in many particulars. Observations indicate, for example, that more hammock land is being cleared and put under cultivation, partly as a result of lumbering operations in the hardwoods and partly because the farmers are appreciating the greater fertility of the hammock soils. Undoubtedly some of the high pine land is being abandoned in certain localities, for example, in the Lecanto district. Since the cultivation of early vegetables or citrus fruits requires large amounts of commercial fertilizer (unfortunately the local phosphate is not “available” in the crude form), the

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263 Ibid., 181: The original caption of the figure read, “Average farms are indicated in their true proportions and acreage may be read from the ten-acre divisions on the vertical margins. Crop percentages are marked on the top lines in 10 percent divisions. Thus the average farm in Citrus County is 93 acres, of which 30 acres are cropped and 30 pasture. Percentages of hay (H), corn, vegetables (V), orchard (or), and fallow are shown according to the acreage. The livestock bar graph gives the relative numbers of horses, beef cattle (bc), dairy cattle (solid black), and swine (sw), the last reduced to units in the proportion of 5 swine to one cow or horse. Total livestock units per farm are indicated by number.”
market must be good to stimulate production, Thus the future of this region depends to a large extent on external factors. By the 1930s, the rural region was largely dependent on urban fertilizer manufacturers in Jacksonville and Pensacola, world suppliers of agricultural chemicals such as ammonium sulphate and ammonium nitrate, and suppliers of processing materials such as natural gas, coal, and pyrites for the production of sulphuric acid-treated fertilizers. In the context of the 1930s, subsistence farmers and rural communities of the Brooksville Ridge were perhaps as far from independent subsistence than they had ever been. Yet, there is a history of subsistence on the Brooksville Ridge. As a farming district, many families of the Brooksville Ridge shared a spirit of earnest experimentation despite the growing external economic forces. Successes and failures were the shared experiences of a region.

\[264\] Ibid., 182.
Chapter Four

Fertile Landscapes of a Florida Dust Bowl

An enduring agriculture must never cease to consider and respect and preserve wildness. The farm can exist only within the wilderness of mystery and natural force. And if the farm is to last and remain in health, the wilderness must survive within the farm. That is what agricultural fertility is: the survival of natural process in the human order. To learn to preserve the fertility of the farm...we must study the forest (Wendell Berry).265

Figure 36. Buckets and Dibbles, Withlacoochee Land Use Project266

The Meaning of Fertility

Innumerable surveyors, boosters, investors, and politicians long proclaimed both the supreme worth of Florida lands and their supreme worthlessness; separating dreams from reality in Florida is often a tricky matter. By the early decades of the twentieth century, “scientific” analyses of Florida’s soils confidently confirmed what Spanish

explorers from the Pánfilo de Narváez and Hernando de Soto expeditions recorded about the peninsula in the 1500s. It was  
esteril. Geographer Roland Harper expresses this sentiment in 1927:

> On account of the sterility of most of the peninsula soils, the farmers there need large quantities of fertilizers; and that being the case, such crops as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph [staples corn, cotton, tobacco] could hardly be raised in competition with regions a little farther north that have more fertile soils. Cotton has also to meet the competition of such countries as India and Egypt, where labor is much cheaper than in the United States; it is sometimes called the "poor man's crop." Consequently the farmers of peninsular Florida have been led to concentrate their efforts either on crops which will not grow much farther north, such as oranges and various tropical fruits, or on perishables like strawberries and vegetables, which can be produced in winter and spring, when this state has a temporary monopoly and can command high prices.\(^{267}\)

Not only was Florida poor in natural fertility, Harper claimed Florida had the least fertile soils of any state in the Union. Yet, he suggested that this actually helped the state in a number of respects. If the soils were naturally fertile, Florida would long ago have been fully occupied by commodity-producing slave plantations. Instead, his research suggested that by 1925, Florida farmers’ success (the total value of land and buildings) was inversely related to the fertility of their soil. Owing primarily to the expansion of farms on the “infertile” peninsula, Florida farms were valued higher, on average, than the average U.S. farm in 1925, with the highest farm values of any state in the southeast. While the number, acreage, and population of U.S. farms declined rapidly between 1920 and 1925, the number of farms in Florida increased. Florida’s overall population increased 30 percent during those five years, farms were more highly valued and productive than ever, and yet Florida’s farm population began declining.\(^{268}\)

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\(^{268}\) Ibid., 342-345.
Overwhelmingly, Florida’s success in export farming rested upon adapting to the economic model of competitive market advantage described by Harper. What Harper called “up-to-date fruit and truck farming” focused on perishable fruits and vegetables as well as longer-lasting, wax-coated citrus fruits suited to Florida’s geography. This is what economist William B. Stronge referred to as the “sunshine sector” of Florida’s economy.\textsuperscript{269} With a naturally sterile soil as a foundation, a “fertile” soil was simply constructed on top of the sterile one to produce adequate crops for export. Competitive regional advantage demanded chemical fertility where there was none naturally. With sunshine, a great location, and strong demand, anything was possible on the Florida peninsula.

Yet, fertility may be more nuanced than either Harper or the Conquistadores imagined. For Indians of the Amasura, Seminoles of the Withlacoochee, and many Euro-American subsistence farmers of the Big Hammock and the Cove, fertility was not simply a characteristic of soils. Fertility required a particular kind of human vision informed by experience. In practice, this meant reading certain signs in the land (e.g. looking for types of trees, even tasting the soil). It required very particular practices informed by the wisdom of experience. Fertility involved reading signs and managing a landscape. It was less about the land itself than it was about a culture’s purposeful shaping of the land. While Indians of the Amasura and the Seminoles of the Withlacoochee drew deeply from local experience to develop particular practices of fertility, Euro-American subsistence farmers experimented without the benefit of local

\textsuperscript{269} William B. Stronge, \textit{The Sunshine Economy: An Economic History of Florida since the Civil War}, 108-115.
experience. Other observers and farmers of early Florida looked upon peninsula lands with different eyes:

They seem to the superficial view unfit for agriculture, particularly to the eye of a northern farmer who from early association of ideas, considers pine lands and barrenness as terms synonymous. Luxuriant pasture ranges are found everywhere, and millions of horned cattle may be raised with no other trouble than herding and periodically burning the grass, which quickly grows again, the tender shoots imparting by their succulency and fragrance, a flavour to the flesh not always found in the stall-fed beeves of a city. The chief support of the ancient Indian population was derived from their countless herds of cattle, which a succession of invasions from hostile tribes and lawless borderers have now almost wholly exterminated.  

The ancient Indians Charles Vignoles refers to in 1823 were the Seminoles of the Alachua and Chuckochatty savannas, who carefully managed agro-pastoral landscapes for cattle and crops. And the ancient Indians of the southeast, who used fire to manage the fertility of white-tailed deer foraging and planting grounds. Culturally-managed, and intimately-known, landscapes shaped what could be expected, or hoped for, from the land. Fertility was primarily a set of particular cultural practices, defined far more broadly than by soils alone.

**Practicing Fertility**

When Euro-Americans began moving southward into the peninsular interior in the early 1820s, a very specific kind of ethos and agriculture informed their perception of the land. White farmers and planters from southern states, northerners, and Europeans with sub-tropical dreams began to eye the peninsula below the Suwannee River for the first

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270 Charles Vignoles, *Observations Upon the Floridas*, (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1823), 76: see also “Orange County, Florida: Soil, Climate, Health, Productions, Resources, and Facilities of Transportation,” 1881: “when planted upon hammock land the yield is from twenty-five to fifty bushels per acre; upon pine land the average is about ten bushels. This may be considered a small crop by a western farmer, but is must be remembered that the friable character of our soil enables us to cultivate three acres with less labor than one in those sections where the soil is stiff.”
time. They were in search of plantation lands, for corn, cotton, and rice, but also for sugarcane, oranges, pineapples, and bananas. In many ways, American planters followed the lead of English planters from the Bahamas who occupied lands east of the St. Johns in the 1770s and 1780s, growing sea-island cotton and sugarcane for export. This Anglo-American “eyeing” of the peninsula was formalized through land surveys.

While there had been earlier descriptions of the land of the peninsula, Charles Vignoles’ *Observations Upon the Floridas* of 1823 was one of the first done by whites for the purpose of settling the interior. In what are today parts of Citrus and Hernando counties, Vignoles described a vast 300 square-mile area of burned-over high pinelands. He estimated that they were burned around 1800, presumably by Seminole cattlemen improving pasturage, lightning-induced wildfire, or a combination of both. Horatio Dexter described the land east of contemporary Brooksville in 1823 as nearly ten miles of pure high pinelands. Longleaf pine (*P. palustris*) forests covered most of the Brooksville Ridge with slash pines (*P. ellioti*) on the lower slopes, which tended to be seasonally submerged. These were not simply “natural” landscapes. Evidence from the Southeast and Florida suggests that Indians of the Amasura as well as Seminoles of the Withlacoochee maintained these pine forests through regular burning; in the case of the early Florida Indians, this was to improve deer, turkey, and bear habitat and for the Seminoles, primarily to improve cattle pasturage. But this required a delicate rhythm; burning could not be continuous during early years of growth when longleaf seedlings remain sensitive to fire. In subsequent years of growth, burning prevented the pines from

271 Charles Vignoles, *Observations Upon the Floridas*, 73.
272 Ibid., 77-78.
273 Mark Boyd, 89.
being shaded out by fast growing black jack oaks. Many of the “savannas” and “prairies” encountered and utilized by Withlacoochee Seminoles were likely the old fields, known as “tallahassee,” of early Florida Indians, areas burned so frequently that they resulted in wide open grasslands.

Figure 37. Truck Fields, Chukochatty Hammock, Hernando County, 1915

By the turn of the twentieth century, felling trees was nothing new on the Brooksville Ridge. In the case of most Indians and many European planters in America, who imitated Indians, girdling trees was the easiest way of preparing a field for planting. This involved removing the bark around the circumference of the tree. The trees would slowly die and rot away (see Figure 37 above, girdled trees on left). Others used an iron axe to chop the trees a few feet up from the ground and then burn the trunks and stumps in place, planting among the remains and using the best lumber for local construction needs. Burning provided needed potash and remaining stumps and roots were rarely removed since fertility would be exhausted anyway after four or five seasons of intensive

275 Ibid., 45-47.
production. Frequently, these fields would be returned to woods after a number of years of planting, left to overgrow, and years later re-burned and re-planted.²⁷⁷

What was new on the Brooksville Ridge was the practice of clear-cutting high pine lands, removing the timber, and then expecting that land to be productive again. Whereas girdled and burned-over lands returned some of the nutrients and organic matter in the trees to the soil, cutover lands that removed the timber and plowed the resulting fields with precision became peninsular wastelands, permanently removing nutrients and organic matter in the woody material.

By the mid-1920s, the Brooksville Ridge had become the dominant cultural landscape of west-central Florida. Highways built upon locally mined lime rock, train tracks built upon and fueled by local lumber, and dredged waterways were the means by which local objects, such as pine, cypress, cedar, turpentine, beef, truck crops, phosphate rock, and oranges found their way to distant mouths and markets. Despite modifications to the labor system, the agricultural model remained one of monoculture since the Civil War. It only intensified. The Brooksville Ridge was shaped overwhelmingly by external forces, external needs, external diets, and external vision. It was supplying, or had recently supplied, people of the northern U.S. and the world with innumerable articles of everyday life.²⁷⁸

Peninsular Florida’s problem had never been sterility, it was industrial monoculture. Its cultural landscapes were not defined by Floridians but by the needs, the desires, and the dreams of others. While its economy was well-rooted and established, its culture was only experimental, impermanent, un-settled.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 65.
²⁷⁸ It would be interesting to make a list of all of these finished products/materials as of 1930.
In places like Lecanto and Blanton, many subsistence farmers knew the land more intimately. They were learning the limits of the southern cropping system on the Ridge. Many of these farmers used legumes, which naturally fix nitrogen from the air, to improve the soil, and many of the higher pine lands were being abandoned due to soil exhaustion. Farmers inter-planted corn and peanuts for subsistence use and local sale, but the dependency on purchased commercial fertilizer to make truck farming profitable also made them utterly vulnerable to national economic fluctuations. Those who owned the highest lands or water-warmed lands focused on growing citrus. Others looked for work elsewhere. Local subsistence farmers knew what to expect from the land, but their skills and local knowledge could not generate enough revenue to pay property taxes.

Family subsistence farms decreased in acreage, and by the early 1930s nearly forty percent of regional farmland reverted to the state because of unpaid taxes.  

Highly mechanized crop farms became the dominant American landscape. Farmers witnessed a “golden age of agriculture” during the first two decades of the century, in which farm values increased, along with food prices, and incomes. The American farmer was changing, becoming more technologically dependent, less diversified, and more reliant on other farmers for food. The United States Department of Agriculture estimated that in 1920 the average family farm produced only forty percent of its food consumption, down from sixty percent in 1900. By the late 1920s, even the most successful Brooksville Ridge farms were more dependent than ever on off-farm food, consumer goods, and services.

By the time the Great Depression was felt around the nation, years of extraction left a very clear imprint on the Brooksville Ridge that could be read by farmers and hunters, as well as conservationists. Sawmills, such as those at Centralia and Lacoochee, extracted nearly all the old-growth longleaf pine and cypress on the uplands and lowlands of the Ridge, just as an earlier generation removed the cedar trees at Crystal River, Homosassa, and Cedar Key for New England pencil manufacturers. Sawmills, big and small, and phosphate pits dotted the landscape. But who profited from this profligate exuberance? Increasingly, local, state, and federal officials agreed that there was a disaster across the Brooksville Ridge: “The original forest has been destroyed with no effort made to replace it. Game had been ruthlessly slaughtered, and a shift in the

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280 Samuel Dicken, “Central Florida Farm Landscape,” 1935, 175.
vegetable producing center of the state, has increased the marketing problems of the local farm citizens."\(^2\)82

![Figure 39. Cut-Over High Pine Land, Hernando County, 1937](image)

By the early 1930s, over fifty percent of rural families on the Ridge were on federal relief and many had been delinquent on their taxes for years. State officials called the problems of the Ridge "representative of the most serious land resource, farm and social conditions within this general section of the state."\(^2\)84 Many agreed that a long-standing problem needed a practical solution. Originally part of a Resettlement Administration project started in 1935, the federal government purchased lands from nearly 300 owners who voluntary sold them for nearly $700,000.\(^2\)85 The same organization addressing the problems of Dust Bowl farmers in the Great Plains, the Resettlement Administration, along with the Farm Security Administration and Soil

\(^{282}\) *Evening Independent*, 8 July 1936.


\(^{284}\) *Evening Independent*, 8 July 1936.

Conservation Service, sought out lands nationwide that were severely eroded, misused, and unstable.\textsuperscript{286}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures.png}
\caption{Figures 40 (Left) and 41 (Right). “Production of lumber like this makes heavy demands on Florida pine forests,” Laccoochee, Florida, 1937; and “A large lumber mill at Laccoochee, Florida. Surrounding forests have been ruthlessly cut down,” 1937\textsuperscript{287}}
\end{figure}

The goal of the project, re-named the Withlacoochee River Agricultural Demonstration Project was to make the lands cut-over by mills like the Cummers and Sons at Laccoochee useful to local people. Locals and government officials alike saw plainly the dramatic changes in the local environment from just a few decades of mining, truck farming, and heavy lumbering.\textsuperscript{288} Separated into four areas with distinct “problems of topography, soil, and utilization,” the project was focused on carefully controlling fire to clear out underbrush and encourage sprawling stands of longleaf pines, to replenish and restock the forests with quail, turkeys, deer, and fish for improved hunting and fishing, and to carefully build up food supplies for those animals. The goal was not

\textsuperscript{287} Arthur Rothstein, Library of Congress, “Production of lumber like this makes heavy demands on Florida pine forests, Withlacoochee Land Use Project,” 1937; \url{http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8b35730}, “A large lumber mill at Laccoochee, Florida. Surrounding forests have been ruthlessly cut down,” 1937; \url{http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8b35731}.
\textsuperscript{288} Lewis N. Wynne and Guy Porcher Harrison, “Withlacoochee, A New Deal Legacy: A Photo Essay,” \textit{Tampa Bay History}, Spring/Summer Vol. 10, no. 1 (1988): This article contains fantastic images of the New Deal project from State forestry records.
abstract, but practically focused on carefully reforesting an area that had previously “supported a considerable population.”

Figure 42. Planting Pines in an Abandoned Field, Withlacoochee Land Use Project, 1937

Figure 43. Fire Crew, Withlacoochee Land Use Project, 1937


Residents of the Brooksville Ridge very literally re-created and maintained an ancient cultural landscape. By the fall of 1936, nearly a thousand locals were employed by the federal government (mostly through the Works Progress Administration) to reforest over 100,000 acres traversing Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, and Sumter counties. They planted hundreds of thousands of longleaf and slash pine seedlings. Many of the high pine lands were exhausted after a few seasons of planting, and many farmers on the Ridge could not afford their taxes much less commercial fertilizers. “Southern” commodity-farming simply did not pay in peninsular Florida. Cut-over or burned-over pine lands were never the same; the delicate cultural landscape which nurtured their establishment was easily upset by industrial monoculture. Stunted turkey oaks and black jack oaks quickly formed a dense stand in such areas, shading out long-lived longleaf pines.

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The Withlacoochee project responded to a long period of abuse and experimentation. By the early 1930s, the state conservation board and agencies set hunting restrictions and bag limits and employed one hundred game wardens to enforce such rules. Nearly eight percent of the state was turned into wildlife refuges, excluding hunting to give animal populations places to recover. Hatcheries for shad, bass, and bream were established along with freshwater fishing licensing systems and catch limits. As a way of encouraging those fishing for subsistence, the legislature permitted folks fishing with a cane or bamboo pole (without a reel) to fish without a license (in their

294 Florida State Road Department (FL: Citrus County, 1936), showing boundary of Withlacoochee Development Project; http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps/pages/100/f190/f190.htm
The goal of the Resettlement Administration may have officially been to “conserve” resources, but it was re-creating cultural landscapes. These were landscapes valuable to rural and urban people around the state. Harnessing regional values to create cultural landscapes required particular practices of fertility. A regimen of burning re-established the longleaf forest, which supported Amasura hunting grounds and Withlacoochee Seminole cattle pastures. It would again be hunting grounds, burned to maintain grasses, tubers, and fruits attractive to local game. One goal may have been to “resettle” small farmers living on cut-over pine lands, but what it enacted was the actual settlement of a people, a region, and a culture. In (re-)creating the Withlacoochee hunting grounds, the project and the community’s efforts conserved more than natural resources, they conserved a region long bound by a shared cultural and ecological fate.

Figure 45. “After reforestation is complete all of the project area will look like this”296

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Figure 46. Ancient Southern Magnolia, Withlacoochee Resettlement Project: U.S. Resettlement Administration, 1936

A few weeks before the new year a beautiful 8-point buck came upon a big 11-pointer in the woods along the edge of the Withlacoochee Land Use Project. There was a pawing of ground and shaking of antlers and then the two bucks charged and clashed head-on. How long they fought nobody knows. But in the end they locked their antlers and though they plunged and hooked their heads in the terrible anger that brought on the fight, they remained caught fast. The struggle went on until their antlers were meshed in a vice-like grip. Finally, they lay quiet and after several days they died. Thus they were found, their antlers still locked, on Jan. 10, 1953, by George Priest of Pleasant Grove and his son, James Kipling, 12. Priest guessed that they had been dead three or four weeks. He severed the heads and brought them to Inverness. He said he had tried and could not pull the antlers apart.

To me the canning season is a joy. Just to be able to bring in from your own place peaches, mayhaws, tomatoes, squash, pimentos, dill, pears, grapes, figs, and plums at the various seasons and other products as they mature, brings a feeling of deep satisfaction and keen joy of living. My home kitchen is then a laboratory. The water kettle ‘boils to beat the band;’ the fruits and vegetables in their containers going through different processes at various stages are most wonderful experiments, and as for me, I feel like a miracle-worker bringing to pass all these beautiful results.

A very clever poet, Wallace Stevens, ended a poem with saying, “But there is no spring in Florida.” He did not know Florida. He came as a stranger, a traveler, to Florida, and the lushness of spring was to him only lushness. He could not differentiate among the shades of green, which at Cross Creek tell us when to plant and when to fertilize and when to cultivate.

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Laboratories of Culture

The Withlacoochee Resettlement project united communities whose cultural, economic, and ecological fates had long been intertwined. In the forest, hundreds of rural Floridians from Citrus, Hernando, Sumter, and Pasco counties carried buckets and dibbles across the countryside. They planted, they scattered, they burned, and they watered. Beyond the soaring rhetoric of conservationists and preservationists, something new was created. More than a Ridge of resources, it became a place to live. It was made into a humane landscape. Forests were not reserved for kings or elite landowners, but for anyone who wanted to enter and respect a number of sensible rules. They could stalk a buck, a wild turkey, or quail to feed their family. They also served as a place to remember. The great pine forests would not simply be left to themselves to grow “naturally”; they would require years of cultural management, permanent practices of

fertility, permanent culture. Created with cultural values, it would be sustained through
the work, commitment, and cooperation of a region.

Simmering long before the Great Depression, but finding its fullest expression in
the 1930s, another movement ushered in a period of settling. It was, very literally, a
movement of home-making. In 1926, food and marketing agent for the state of Florida
Isabelle S. Thursby made note of the culture beneath the commerce:

Twenty years ago writers spoke of ‘possibilities in Florida.’ Today we write of
‘actualities.’ Formerly the wild orange groves in Florida were a curiosity to
newcomers, and only far-seeing pioneers appreciated these as ‘possibilities.’
Today Florida citrus fruit, acknowledged to be the juiciest, sweetest and best
flavored on earth, needs no comment…Some people, however, have not yet
learned that Florida has a diversity of soils, a range of fruits that includes all
varieties from the well-known berries, peaches, pears, pecans, figs and
muscadines of north Florida to the less known tropical mangoes, papayas, star
apples, Surinam cherries, coconuts, avocados, pineapples, bananas, guavas, and
even the monstera deliciosa. There may be other people who think Florida
produces fruits and vegetables seasonally and for commercial use only. Florida
people find considerable satisfaction in knowing this impression is incorrect.
Home Demonstration work has as one important purpose the production of an
adequate supply of fruits and vegetables and the plentiful use of these products
which are so necessary for the health and enjoyment of the family. As far as
practicable these products are used on the table fresh from the field and garden.
All-the-year gardens, permanent and varied fruit plantings and the cultivation and
proper cookery of the products are a part of the Home Demonstration program.
The excess crops are conserved for future use by canning and preserving, or are
sent to market.\footnote{Nathan Mayo, Commissioner of Agriculture, “Rural Home Life in Florida,” Florida Department of
Agriculture, Quarterly Bulletin, 1927: 142.}

By the mid-1920s, many rural Floridians had developed deep connections with the land.
Increasingly, as Isabelle Thursby noted, Florida was not only the land of the possible, it
had become the land of the actual. Commercial Florida truck farms, groves, and fields
shipped railcar loads of fruits, vegetables, and staples to “northern” tables since before
the Civil War, but this practice no longer defined Florida’s local food culture by the turn
of the twentieth century. What Floridians shipped, and what they ate were two very
different things.

A distinct spirit of local food production for local use was prominent among rural
Florida folks long before World War I. This spirit was as old as the United States. The
search for a diverse agriculture adapted to regional soils and conditions followed in the
footsteps of George Washington’s concept of a national “chair of agriculture” and
Jefferson’s “system of local agricultural societies” devised to assist farmers across the
country. Formal and informal agricultural societies were an important way for American
farmers in specific localities to spread practical solutions to problems of farm and home
life. In 1862, Congress created the United States Department of Agriculture and passed
the Morrill Land-Grant Act, both of which supported the activities of dispersed
agricultural societies with practical, tax-supported colleges of agriculture and mechanical
arts. The Hatch Act of 1887 further cemented the federal and state commitment to
improving rural life, establishing agricultural experiment stations. Research and
experiments were conducted by agriculture professors at the land-grant colleges as well
as on local farms, where demonstrations were made to the public. On this foundation, Dr.
Seaman A. Knapp is credited with formalizing the Extension Service during his work
with Texas cotton farmers in 1902 combating the Mexican boll weevil. Successes in
fighting boll weevils on small, community demonstration farms encouraged other
southern states such as Mississippi, Alabama, Virginia, and others to seek the assistance
of demonstration agents. Following the lead of Mississippi in 1908, state governments
throughout the south passed laws allowing counties to pay part of the salary of
demonstration agents. While states and the federal government had been cooperating in
agricultural extension work, the Smith-Lever Cooperative Extension Act of 1914 established a lasting relationship between the federal government, states, counties, and land-grant colleges. The goal of extension work was fundamentally practical, but it was also fundamentally value-based. The Act formally put value on improving farms and rural life. American agriculture needed to be productive, but it also needed to be respected as a way of life. Eventually it would become so productive that farm life would almost entirely disappear.

By November 1914, counties of the Brooksville Ridge already had substantial experience organizing local canning, tomato, and corn clubs. Miss Harris, the state organizer of canning clubs, spoke to students in the Dade City high school auditorium on local canning work and appealed to the school board for funding to employ a permanent county agent. They approved $300 to be used for such purposes. Professor McQuarrie from the Agricultural Experiment Station in Gainesville also spoke that day on the culture of corn and Dr. Babb spoke about raising hogs and rotating crops. After the presentations, a scholarship to attend the Florida State College for Women was granted to Miss Margaret Haupert, who won first prize in the tomato canning club contest that year.

The Brooksville Ridge had its first “official” farm demonstrator, Walter E. Allen, and its first home demonstration agent, Elizabeth W. Moore in 1915. These demonstrators led early 3-H (“head,” “heart,” “hands”), and later 4-H (“head,” “heart,” “hands,” and “health”), work in Florida, which began as corn clubs for boys and tomato

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304 “Canning Club and Corn Club Activity,” *Dade City Banner*, 6 November 1914.
and canning clubs for girls. The groups planted and cared for substantial garden plots and made good use of what was harvested. The leaders in tomato and corn growing and canning from these groups won scholarships to attend the Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee or the University of Florida in Gainesville, respectively.  

As the impact of World War I and food shortages reached Florida, the purposes of canning and gardening intensified and became more urgent. There was a question on many local folks’ minds: “Is Pasco County Self Supporting?”  

In a situation not too different from Florida’s experiences during the Civil War, commissioners worried that with freight “practically under government control,” an emergency might direct all freight supplies to a standing army: “In an event like this—should all cars be stopped from coming South—he pointed out the seriousness of the situation and the fact that the South would be compelled to feed itself.”  

The Dade City courthouse was packed with an eager crowd listening to C.K. McQuarrie, of the State Agricultural Preparedness Commission, who was traveling down the Seaboard line along the Brooksville Ridge to speak with locals. He spoke of the importance of maintaining a home garden as a means of “reducing the high cost of living, and providing a variety of food stuffs for the table.”  

Many folks on the Ridge had been well aware of the value of homegrown foods in spite of the fluctuations in international politics, booms and busts.

Many canned before the war, and many canned after. In 1923, the women of the Lake Lindsey Home Demonstration club near Brooksville discussed whether to purchase

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306 “Agricultural Commission Speaks Here,” *Dade City Banner*, 1 June 1917.
307 Ibid.
308 Ibid.
a “Burpee Sealer” to improve the canning of their fruits and vegetables. Throughout the 1920s, practical information appeared in the “Hernando Farm, Dairy, and Grove” section of Brooksville’s *Southern Argus*, encouraging more folks to garden, not only in the spring and fall, but in the summer: “There is no basis for the idea that vegetables cannot be grown in Florida during the hot summer months, and those vegetables in the garden that will soon be depleted should be replaced or others planted to take their places.” A Florida College of Agriculture professor included specific information on variety selection and detailed planting schedules for the local area.310

Many continued following agricultural tips learned during war-time, such as the use of plants and cultivars adapted to local conditions: “Mexican June” corn, “New Era” cowpeas, “Bliss Triumph” potatoes for uplands and “Rose No. 4” for lowlands, Spanish peanuts, “Highland” rice, and sweet potatoes. Livestock and legumes were recommended for “upbuilding the soil” (such as “Florida Special Velvet Beans”), buckwheat planted for chickens, hogs, and cattle, as well as for the soil as green manure.311 Finding the right cultivars to fit an agro-pastoral culture was not a simple matter. It had always been the hard work of a culture of the land. Such work also signified a people’s intimacy with a locality. The culture of selecting and saving adapted cultivars among most traditional rural peoples took centuries, if not millennia. By the mid-1920s, many rural folks on the Brooksville Ridge had much experience with “Florida conditions.” Girls raised Rhode Island Reds to support their “Go-to-College Funds.”312 Residents had grown so fond of the sweet and easy-to-grow Japanese

311 “Agricultural Commission Speaks Here,” *Dade City Banner*, 1 June, 1917.
persimmons that a “progressive drug store” in Brooksville began serving persimmon a-la-mode, a “beautiful, delicious, and nutritious combination.” Floridians of the Ridge were experienced growers of tried-and-true Sand or Pineapple pears, Celeste figs, Florida cranberry or roselle, muscadine grapes, Curtis and Elliot pecans, Rabbiteye blueberries, Cattley guavas, loquats, Golden chayotes, and Jewel peaches. The 1926 harvest of guavas was so great in Citrus County, for example, that Home Demonstration agent Mrs. Moore gave demonstrations to every community in the county, making “butter, paste, jelly, juice, preserves, spiced guavas, catsup, chutney, and plain canned guavas for ice cream, shortcake, etc.” Locals liked the guavas so much that all meetings were fully attended and the women and girls were sure to save the seeds of the choice varieties for re-planting.

The regional food culture of the Brooksville Ridge blossomed in the work of canning clubs and community food projects, but it also reflected a wider ethos of subsistence on the Ridge. Despite the great real estate boom in Florida that capitalized on selling images, dreams, and often mirages, thousands of Floridians were getting their hands dirty. In counties of the Brooksville Ridge, such as Citrus, Hernando, and Sumter, rural populations peaked between 1925 and 1945. In the U.S. as a whole, during 1932-33 alone, there was a net movement of 750,000 people from cities to the countryside. This included many young men and women who had previously left the countryside in the early 1920s and returned to live with their families when they lost their jobs, as well

313 Ibid., 165.
314 Ibid., 148, 151.
315 Ibid., 158.
316 Eleventh census of the state of Florida, 1945; (Microfilm series S 1371, 43 reels); Record Group 001021; State Library and Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, Florida. Accessed online at http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00075642/00001/64?search=rural, page 63, statistics on rural population.
as urbanites who tried to eke out a living on unclaimed rural lands at the height of the
downturn.\textsuperscript{317} There were more subsistence farmers than ever before, and more than there
would ever be. This was a moment when Florida was actually settled (not just
symbolically), the birth of a Floridian identity based on settlement of specific lands.
Small farmers learned from the failures of the past and nourished successful practices.

![Figure 49. Morgan Rundel's Duck Farm near Inverness, 1929\textsuperscript{318}](image)

In contrast to urban Americans who immediately felt the shock of the stock
market crash during the fall of 1929, having no places to live and no way of procuring
food, many other Americans experienced the event differently. Many farm families had
not shared in what Donald Worster called the “giddy burst of affluence” of the 1920s.\textsuperscript{319}
And Florida was not the Great Plains. Despite the massive collapse of the Florida real
estate market in 1926 and the ensuing U.S. economic Depression, populations continued
to increase significantly in Florida. From 528,000 in 1900 to 968,470 in 1920, to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{317} David B. Danbom,\textit{ Born in the Country}, 200-201: See also King Vidor’s 1932 film \textit{Our Daily Bread}.
\item \textsuperscript{318} “Young ducks on Morgan Rundel’s farm near Inverness,” 1929: State Archives of Florida, \textit{Florida Memory}, \url{http://floridamemory.com/items/show/156261}; “Ducks on Morgan Rundel’s farm near Inverness”: State Archives of Florida, \textit{Florida Memory}, \url{http://floridamemory.com/items/show/156260}, apparently one of the most successful duck dressing farms in the south.
\item \textsuperscript{319} Donald Worster, \textit{Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10-11.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
1,468,000 in 1930, and 1,800,000 in 1940, people kept coming south. Not all of these new Floridians moved to cities. During the period from 1920 to 1950, the number of farms, number of farmers, and number of lands owned by farm operators on the Ridge peaked in the census year of 1935 (see figure below).

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**Callahan Grows 7-lb. Cabbage**

A large cabbage weighing 7 pounds and measuring approximately 11 1/2 inches across and 36 inches in circumference has been on display for several days in the window of the Sun office. This cabbage was raised by Mr. Jesse L. Callahan on his farm about eight miles north of here in the hammock section. He has a large variety of vegetables on his farm. All these vegetables have grown in the same proportion as this cabbage, showing the great fertility of the soil there.

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**Figure 50. Giant Depression Cabbage, Hernando County, 1937**

When the rains stopped for most American farmers in 1930, they did not for most in Florida. Amidst national economic Depression and widespread drought in the spring and summer of 1930, affecting seventeen million people, Florida had above normal rainfall. Hernando County farmer J.T. Daniels, grower of eggplants, squash, and peppers, announced in the *Brooksville Journal* that 1931 had been the “Best in History.” And he was optimistic that farmers would continue producing banner crops for years. By 1932, many Florida papers cited “Boom conditions” for agriculture in the Everglades.

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323 Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 11-12.
Truck growers in West Palm Beach shipped vegetables northward all winter long for significant profits.\textsuperscript{325}

Home agents such as Floy Britt carried out the primary mission of home demonstration during the 1930s, the “live-at-home” program.\textsuperscript{326} The program focused on ensuring rural self-sufficiency and year-round gardening, dairying, poultry raising, and canning. Racially divided from the beginning in Florida, Black farm and home demonstration agents served the large population of rural Black Floridians. As of 1925, nearly twenty-five percent of farmers across Florida were African-American.\textsuperscript{327} Black home demonstrator Floy Britt helped establish a number of community gardens in the early 1930s. Working among rural Black Floridians, each of Britt’s community gardens provided food for twenty-five families (see Figure 51 below).\textsuperscript{328}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure51}
\caption{Florida Family in Their Garden Picking Strawberries\textsuperscript{329}}
\end{figure}

Many rural folks left northern states during the 1930s to stake out a better life in Florida. Together with those whose families had lived on the Brooksville Ridge since the

\textsuperscript{325} “Farming Boom in Everglades Continued,” \textit{Brooksville Journal}, 21 January 1932.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid., 48-53.
\textsuperscript{328} Barbara R. Cotton, \textit{The Lamplighters}, 51-53.
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid., 52.
1850s, many of these people shared the same canning materials. They were becoming Floridian together. Leonard Malicoate and his family left their native Kentucky, where he had been on the relief rolls, to seek out an independent farm life in Brooksville in 1936. They rented a small farm, paid twelve dollars for a young ox, made their own implements, and interplanted six acres of corn with peanuts and another six acres of peanuts. Learning from the experiences of locals, Malicoate was successful enough at producing food for his family and selling surplus to add a cow, hogs, and chickens to the farm.  

Many others had successful businesses adapted to local conditions. For example, a community of Czech Americans raised eggs and poultry in Masaryktown (Hernando County). Florida’s Brooksville Ridge was no Dust Bowl in terms of food. With the large number of small farmers during the 1930s, there was no time in history when more food was produced for local consumption on the Ridge.

Home Demonstration clubs in Dade City met regularly in the courthouse, in the “demonstration room,” opening exhibits to the public to display their “fruit and other canned goods, and a variety of handiwork.” According to statistics collected in the early 1930s, the Household Science Institute found a significant revival in home cooking and home baking throughout the South: “Hundreds of little boys who formerly were given nickels and dimes to buy goodies and sweets now find the home cookie jar bulging, and thousands of husbands sit down at night to home-made hot breads, pies, cakes, puddings, and pastries.” Before the well-known “Victory gardens” of World War II, there was a clear local commitment to home-grown and homemade foods on the

330 “$12 Ox Helps Hernando Family Keep Off Relief,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 3 September 1936.
332 “Home Demonstration Clubs Hold Exhibit Tomorrow,” Dade City Banner, 24 March 1933.
Brooksville Ridge. According to Miss Standley of the Farm Security Administration, who came to the Ridge to advise women of Hernando, Citrus, and Pasco counties on canning budgets: “Many of the women working with us are already expert canners. Last year they put up over 5000 quarts of fruits, vegetables and meats. But there are always a lot of new tricks about canning to be learned. We expect all women who possibly can to attend meetings and brush up on their canning techniques.”

Home Demonstration agents provided information and resources, but it was local women who took leadership in conducting “canning bees” and in organizing and maintaining clubs and community canning centers, such as the one at Lecanto. Since 1919, that local leader was Letha Fender in Citrus County: “she has instructed four home demonstration agents, making known to them the territory and people with whom they were to work. She has been for seven years the efficient intermediary between the state office and the county.”

During World War II, federally-imposed rationing led to the flourishing of home and community canneries along with Victory gardens throughout the Brooksville Ridge. In early 1941, some 250 Citrus County 4-H girls were involved in both a “farm and a home project, such as raising poultry, gardening, sewing, foods and nutrition, home improvement, etc.” Demonstration agent Miss Keown suggested the importance of the independent farm family and the work of 4-H youth: “As a line of defense in rural areas and in every farm home, we must recommend a garden, an orchard, milk, and plenty of

335 “Madison Farm Women Hold “Canning Bees”,” Citrus County Chronicle, 13 July 1939.
home canned fruits, vegetables, and meats.” These efforts supported the 4-H mission to help keep young people “in touch with the finer things of rural life.”

After the war (see Figure 52 above), international food shortages still affected the people of the Brooksville Ridge, so they kept growing and canning: “much of the credit in Citrus County during the war years was the result of the action of club women in instructing women in other families in food conservation and preservation. Now in post-war days these same women have pledged themselves to assisting the work of succor for starving people over seas.” Through cooperation and demonstration, the Lecanto Home Demonstration Club continued a community garden project started many years earlier. The garden yielded “thousands of cans of vegetables…put up for the school lunch room” and the women “planned a working schedule for the community whereby all vegetables can be cared for.”

In Citrus County alone popular Homemakers Clubs

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337 “250 4-H Girls Are Listed in County,” *Citrus County Chronicle*, 27 February 1941.
340 Ibid.
under the supervision of home demonstration agent Mrs. Doris Turner included the Lecanto Club, Hernando Club, Pleasant Grove Club, the Oak Grove Club, and others. In 1946, together they broke many records: “Gardens, 321; canned products, 25,474 containers; chickens raised, 15,462; new garments made for family members, 12,968.” Canners proudly exclaimed “today’s home builds tomorrow’s world.” Many of the clubs bought war bonds in hopes of improving their club houses and supplies after the War and planned to continue their community work and exhibits at the county fair.  

Organized groups of canners flourished on the Brooksville Ridge at least since the first decade of the twentieth century. Through two major wars, the Great Depression, and even a post-war affluence enjoyed by so many Americans, residents of the Brooksville Ridge continued canning and nurturing a regional culture. These rural folks were a socially and ethnically diverse group, black, white, Czech, Anglo, Greek, Catholic, Protestant, but they were all Floridians. By no means easy or perfect, regional culture was forged with an ethos of subsistence and modesty and encouraged by the practical necessities of war and scarcity.

**Practicing Seasonality: Settled Landscapes of Florida**

Just as fertility involves cultural practices, requiring the shaping, directing, and nourishing work of people (like the ancient, managed longleaf forests of Florida Indians), seasons similarly require a practice. Seasons do not simply come and go “on their own;” they are cultivated, prepared, worked on, and ensured. Florida is a vast state; it has no seasons. But regions of Florida do. We can use a number of records of local culture to trace the way local people find meaning in landscape. By tracing these carefully, we can

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341 “14,000 Cans of Vegetables and Meat, is Record,” *Citrus County Chronicle*, 16 May 1946.
capture a rich, and very place-specific, sense of seasonality. This is more than “adaptation” to a place or an environment, it is creative and productive; it requires constant practice. This is the work of a culture of the land, an agriculture that produces more than commodities (see Figure 53 below).

Figure 53. Fall 1929, Tracing the Seasons of the Brooksville Ridge

The journal of events on Chinsegut Hill, kept regularly by the housekeeper and later gardener of Chinsegut Hill, Lisa von Borowsky, humanizes the Ridge. During the fall of 1929, von Borowsky lists everything harvested from the farm: October 24th, first

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pea crop, first watermelon of the fall, November 23rd, first sweet corn, Thanksgiving Day, Cauliflower, December 1st, first Meyer Lemons on December 8th used for salad dressing, Romaine lettuce, December 8th, Cabbage December 9th, Eggplant December 10th, Parsnips December 14th. She notes an early December and late December frost during which they covered the gardens with sacks, protecting most of the vegetables, except the okra. That spring, in 1930, she notes the Magnolia bloom on April 7th, late April harvests of Broccoli and Surinam cherries, early May artichokes, late May corn and okra, and June lima beans and eggplant (see Figures 54 and 55 below).

What we see are the dates and the harvests, and some context here or there in the Chinsegut journal. What is left implicit are all the specific tasks performed by Lisa von

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344 1930s photograph of Lisa von Borowsky from the Lisa von Borowsky Collection, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. Lisa von Borowsky donated her land near Chinsegut Hill to the Audobon Society after her death in Brooksville; and Page from Chinsegut Hill Journal, Lisa von Borowsky Collection, UF Archives.
Borowsky and the farm laborers. Thousands of specific tasks performed in specific ways and at specific times that made their farm successful, and allowed the residents of the Hill to eat from their fields, pastures, and forests. In its often minimalist simplicity, the journal captures the particularity of place. This particularity is no more evident than where von Borowsky notes every species of bird “seen or heard” during the winter months on the hill (see Figure 56). What is left implicit here is her attunement to the specific surroundings, capturing the richness of the everyday.

Figure 56. “Birds seen and heard at Chinsegut Hill, January 17th-February 25th, 1930,” from the Journal of Lisa von Borowsky

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345 Chinsegut Hill Journal, Lisa von Borowsky Collection, UF Archives.
Overall, the Chinsegut journal is just one trace of just one farm among thousands of farms in Florida. But Florida is far from monolithic. Agriculturally, culturally, or ecologically, Florida does not divide easily into regions based on longitude or latitude. The journal, though it is one, offers us a glimpse of the particularity that is the Brooksville Ridge. It unifies a region through sacred temporality. The journal offers a sense of a place bound by the sacred time of work, experience, and close knowledge.

Beyond the specificity and particularity offered through farm journals, which trace time by harvests, animal movements, and blooming flowers, the records of Ridge canneries offer a glimpse into the seasons of local communities.

![Figure 57. The Lecanto Cannery](image)

The Lecanto cannery was (and remains) a building of many functions (see Figure 57 above). Originally built as “the Lecanto School” by the WPA in the 1930s, it was also used for cattlemen club meetings, community picnics, and arts and crafts demonstrations. It later became the County cannery when it replaced the “old barn” cannery, which was located just south on County Road 491 and had been there since the 1920s. The record books dutifully kept by Mrs. Annie Langley from 1946 to around 1972, and her daughter

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346 Lecanto Cannery, photo taken by author.
Mrs. Pearl Maynard through the 1980s and 90s offer us a particular rhythm of local work on the farm, in the forest, and in the cannery. For the years 1968 through 1970, a complete record of canning left by Mrs. Annie Langley displays a number of these details.

The Langleys, the Rooks, the Ogles, the Riggs, the Allens, and a hundred other families made regular use of the cannery. Although we do not see all the local practices in farm and forest that produced these harvests, we get a good sense of local time. For example, for the years 1968, 1969, and 1970, animal products, such as duck, stew meat, soup broth, and lard were canned in the middle of winter, between January and March. By March and April, they were canning turnip greens, mustards, and collards. In mid-May, it was string beans, blackberries, blueberries, and peaches, and by the end of the month, black-eyed and conch peas, and the first tomatoes. In early June, they canned cucumber pickles and green tomato pickles, hundreds of quarts of ripe tomatoes, the remainder of the peaches and plums, and the first corn of the year. By mid-June, the Lecanto cannery must have been overflowing in reds, greens and yellows. Tomato juice, tomato pickles, and tomato sauces, corn, okra, cabbage, and peas filled innumerable jars. The beginning of July meant figs, muscadine grapes, and plenty of peas. The month of August saw the first local sand pears, which were made into pear jam, relish, and mince meat, along with muscadine grape juice and jelly, green peanuts, and still more peas. Peas remained plentiful through September and peanuts were harvested, boiled, and jarred through October. Then came the fruits of the fall garden: green beans, squash, cucumbers, and still more peas in November. They canned fish in December and then the meats over the winter, starting the cycle all over again (see Figures 58 through 60).  

Figure 58. June 12, 1968- June 16, 1968

Figure 59. July 15, 1968- July 27, 1968

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350 Ibid.
The produce came directly from local orchard, field, or forest without spending time in refrigerators. It had taken decades, but a rhythm of the Ridge was palpable and palatable. This rhythm was made of a thousand practices that defined the landscape. The most exuberant harvests were from May until August at Lecanto, but harvests were year-round. This is a statistic that would vary significantly if we were to look at Gainesville, Plant City, Belle Glade, or Valdosta, Georgia. The colors, flavors, sensations, work, and community were the spiritual harvest of the Lecanto cannery. It was a place where food and a way of life were inseparable. For almost a century in Lecanto, someone could walk into a building with a bushel of southern peas in his/her hands and learn how to shell and conserve the harvest, free-of-charge.  

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351 Ibid.
352 Mrs. Pearl Maynard. Interview with author, November 11, 2011.
Little more than ten miles south of the Lecanto Cannery, on the same road, County Road 491, is the Hernando Rock Cannery (see Figure 61 above). In the early 1970s, a group of local women in the Annutteliga Hammock, which locals call “the Hammock,” just north of Brooksville, organized into the Hammock Homemakers and held a fundraiser to update an old WPA building from the 1930s. Together, they started the Rock Cannery. The group was led by Mrs. Virginia Jackson, who was born and raised in St. Petersburg and moved her family back to her husband’s ancestral land in the Annutteliga Hammock in the late 1960s. They wanted to live closer to family and to the land. They bought ten acres adjoining family land and she became a full-time homemaker. She did not know how to can or make soap, so she learned from a neighbor. And what her neighbors could not teach her she learned from reading *Foxfire* magazines, which were produced by a school in the Appalachian Mountains of Georgia during the 1960s. Based on oral histories, the magazines contained valuable demonstrations of successful rural life especially useful for someone who had been not born into country life.

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353 Hernando Rock Cannery, photo taken by author.
354 It is called the “Rock” cannery because it occupied a local limestone structure built by the WPA.
Many of the women had always canned and tended substantial home gardens, but with the public cannery they could can much more, and do it cooperatively. Together, they could share resources, such as pressure canners and pea shellers, and make good use of an historic County building. When they could not grow something themselves they “got in a van and sought it out.” By June 1975, the first year of the cannery, they canned over 2500 jars of food and shelled almost 150 bushels of peas and butter beans. In a booth at the 1976 Hernando County Fair, Mrs. Jackson and the Hammock Homemakers displayed a vast array of jars they had produced the previous summer. She told a local reporter that her group was constantly stressing “back to the land demonstrations.”

Similar community structures dot the Brooksville Ridge landscape, such as the limestone Spring Lake Community Center (see Figure 62 below).

Figure 62. Spring Lake Community Center

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356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
Agnes Perkins remembered her husband working on the W.P.A. crew who built the Spring Lake structure: “He and a crew of local men, paid by the federal Works Progress Administration, used limestone quarried from a pit in what is now the Withlacoochee State Forest and timber cut from the swamps near the Withlacoochee River.” Inside, the roof is held up by large exposed cypress logs. Opening in 1938, the building was first used to teach folk-dancing lessons, and later as a kitchen for a school that used to sit next to the community center. It included a small library and was a meeting place for countless groups including Boy Scouts, quilting groups, church groups, and numerous school plays.

Figure 63. Limestone Floral City Community House

See also Dan DeWitt, “Every limestone wall represents hope,” St. Petersburg Times, 16 August 2004: The community center is located on Spring Lake Road near the Hernando/Pasco County line.

361 Ibid.
Limestone structures throughout the Brooksville Ridge continue to symbolize a rural culture. The Floral City Woman's Club built a community center of limestone collected from local abandoned phosphate mines under the Supervision of John Ogden of the W.P.A. in the 1930s (see Figure 63 above). It has since held numerous groups and functions, including use as a recreation center for soldiers during World War II.\(^{363}\) There may be dozens of these community centers built in the 1930s of local Brooksville Ridge limestone.\(^{364}\) The structures are unique because they served rural communities, which each breathed life into them in different ways. Each is unique, but all are built of Ridge stone. And all are at least partly defined by the hammock lands that attracted Amasuran and Seminole communities, who hunted and pastured herds in nearby prairies and harvested fruits and vegetables from their soils.

For nearly a century, when tourists and visitors were getting sick of the Florida heat, many Floridians were getting the “summer sickness.”\(^{365}\) Canneries were in full swing all summer long and so too were Ridge towns. Cultural institutions such as cattlemen clubs, saddle clubs, homemaker’s clubs, corn and tomato clubs, and local athletic leagues unified and vivified a region. The cannery and community centers may be a little dusty, but the communities that birthed them have not disappeared. If you don’t know what to look for, then you might mistake them for having never existed.

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\(^{364}\) Another such building constructed by the W.P.A. on the Ridge is the Coastal Heritage Museum in Crystal River.  
\(^{365}\) “Baseball Season Starts Soon,” *Brooksville Sun*, 25 March 1932: “William (Billy) Risk, the man who hands out the pay-checks to ball-players around here, be it much or little, announces that the summer sickness will soon be on, the bug has bitten the business office and of course the disease is infectious and the players will be decorating the inner and outer gardens of the local ball field, the announced opening date being Sunday, April 3. The first game will be played between locals and a team from Ybor City. Players of the local team will be given out in the next issue.”
While all settlement requires some level of experimentation, settling a permanent home, becoming a Floridian, requires something else. The efforts of local women and men, boys and girls, offer countless lessons and examples. They brought the plants, seeds, and visions of their former homelands, they experimented; but they also selected, remembered what worked, and what did not. Far more than simply “adapting” to the land, becoming Floridian meant acquiring a deep knowledge that can only be attained by living very deeply in a place. They learned from experience, they saved seeds, they

366 Regional image, *Dade City Banner*, 31 March 1933, page 2: The same image was used in the Citrus County Chronicle throughout the early 1940s.
carried buckets and dibbles. In community canning, gardening, and the (re-)planting of forests, during a period of conservation, many residents of the Brooksville Ridge created. They traced the seasons; they developed a close knowledge of the land; they were inspired; they humanized the landscape. Long a source of human life, the Brooksville Ridge is also a source of identity. But this source remains deeply unacknowledged. Today, these landscapes are all but invisible. Few unities are perceived in the surroundings as sources of cultural, ecological, or spiritual life. And yet, residents of the Brooksville Ridge region have never depended on it and affected it more now than ever.
Conclusion

A Cultural Ecosystem

Sometimes when we dig deeper, instead of greater depth we find only our own reflection at the bottom of a well. Rather than dig a deep and narrow hole, I attempted to deal with the broad, but the pressing, question of what it means to be a Floridian. I tried to investigate how we experience Florida and how this experience is structured. Much of our experience involves landscapes, which are historical, and contain layers of meaning. By looking at local landscapes over time we get a better understanding of how regions develop, how they are meaningful to people through time, how they organize and use space. This helps us, current residents of Florida, better situate ourselves in regional landscapes and better contextualize our experiences of Florida.

Is there a genuine or authentic Floridian, an authentic way of living in Florida, an authentic way of responding to Florida? Can we see it in the stories of Crackers, Conquistadores, Seminoles, Cuban fishermen, or Greek spongers? Maybe it is in none of these examples. Maybe the true Floridian is the Floridian-to-come. I have had one central question under the surface while writing this thesis: was peninsular Florida ever settled after 1513? The question led me to investigate the meaning of settlement through a study of particular landscapes.

Investigating and re-building our memory of Florida landscapes is akin to re-planting a forest. Only by repairing collective memory in Florida, can we begin to settle
Florida lands deeply, can we begin to build a permanent culture. To do so requires new practices. Such work, I suggest, can be seen among Floridians on the Brooksville Ridge by the 1920s and 30s. Many residents, through culture, necessity, or a sense of pride, cultivated settled landscapes. What was so unique about this period in Florida was how rural and sub-urban Floridians were celebrating and drawing deeply from their home. They shared their experiences, learned from the past, and tried to invigorate and encourage a localized, rural spirit in Florida. Far from perfect, these diverse and cooperative efforts left us with an inheritance of many settled, permanent landscapes amid the unsettled ones.

The forces of post-War America were great. Forces of consolidation, corporatism, and consumerism, long underway, were unleashed, relished, and literally concretized in an increasingly affluent America of the 1950s and 60s. In *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida*, historian Gary Mormino notes that the major forces propelling the state’s growth also shaped modern Florida agriculture. The Victory infrastructure required to sustain a nation at war led to “increasing specialization and the concentration of capital, and new levels of consolidation and scale.” It also became the foundation of modern Florida. From steamboats to railroads, to major highways and interstates, commerce and transportation were changing, but so were Americans. Urbanizing and sub-urbanizing like never before, smaller, independent farmers became noticeably scarce. The bulls-eye of an American culture of retirement and leisure, unseen anywhere in the world, descended upon Florida.\footnote{Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2005), 185-187.}
Despite the great forces of modern Florida, the Florida Dream, and a history of colonialism going back to Spanish occupation, many Floridians have been driven more by a spirit than a dream. Among the unsettled landscapes, the boomtowns, the industries and people who came and went, the exuberant short-term investors and profit-seekers, there are also settled landscapes. The infrastructure of war and colonialism may be our social, political, and economic foundation, but our cultural soul resides in our settled landscapes. Through the work of everyday culture many residents of the Brooksville Ridge traced the seasons, planted trees and gardens, and nurtured communities. Seasons were measured by gardens, and fields, and blooming flowers, by wild trees, and cultivated ones, by fattened deer and hogs, and by the local migrations of winged life. Seasons were not outside the human perception and experience of them. The beauty of spring, Marjorie Rawlings reminds us, derives from its familiarity: “its implications are stirring because we understand them.”

Figure 65. Dunnellon Boy and his Sister, Cane-pole Fishing, Withlacoochee River, 1950

This spirit continues in many rural and urban sections of Florida today: in local canneries, in organizations such as the Rare Fruit Council International, which is very active in west-central Florida, in private nurseries such as Just Fruits and Exotics in Crawfordville (which collects many locally-adapted and heritage cultivars), in non-profit groups like the Edible Plant Project in Gainesville, in the work of some University of Florida agricultural/horticultural researchers such as Dr. Bill Castle, who is currently working on growing and selecting from hundreds of pomegranate cultivars in central Florida, and thousands of small Florida growers around the state who save seeds and find great success growing and eating local food in Florida. The focus is on what we Floridians like to grow, plant, and eat; maintaining many traditions, but acknowledging that the work of culture is not done. We still need to walk through our gardens and select the best seed if we wish to attain the best expression of our locality, and ourselves.

I have attempted to excavate cultural landscapes, to peel back layers of human meaning, experience, and wisdom spread over specific lands, if only to make a region visible. The Brooksville Ridge is both a cultural and an ecological region. Not always experienced as a unity, it remains the source of life for a region. This unity is made all-too-clear when the system is abused.

In the heart of historic Hernando County cattle and orange country, a disaster became clear to many local residents in the 1980s. In a rural area near Brooksville, a homeowner noticed their daughter would get ill every time she came home from college. The water was tested and the homeowners found arsenic levels at over ten times the legal limit of ten parts per billion. With growing evidence of arsenic exposure and cancer, water testing in central Hernando County has revealed a broader problem of serious
arsenic pollution in the regional aquifer. Investigators trace the source of the arsenic to the lead arsenate used to introduce “improved” cattle and pastures into Florida in the 1920s to “beef-up” the industry for northern palettes. Hardy cracker cattle were required by the state to be dipped in large vats of an arsenic solution to kill ticks that would infect the sensitive purebred cattle brought from the north. Also sprayed in citrus groves to kill nematodes and fungi, arsenic-based solutions have remained permanent scars from an impermanent industry. Synthetic commercial fertilizers used on truck farms, groves, and pastures, and now lawns, often with the encouragement of state and federal officials, have also found their way into coastal springs. More than an isolated incident, to get a full picture of such problems we must follow regional landscapes over time.

We are united by the positive as well as the negative, by success and failure. A shared history exposes not only shared cultural landscapes but a shared ecosystem. Cultural understandings of the land have real consequences, both spiritually and chemically. What happens on the Ridge does not stay on the Ridge. Regional landscapes are the source of our drinking water; they affect the quality of the coastal springs, which affects the health of coastal estuaries, which in turn affects offshore seagrass beds, the source of treasured seafood and recreation. The Brooksville Ridge lies at the center of this cultural ecosystem. Instead of asking “what is my watershed?” in an area that “sheds” very little water, we have to ask “what is my ecosystem, what is my home?” Situated between four major watersheds, the region is more than just a high ridge descending towards plains in every direction, and towards the region’s major springs and

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waterways, the Ridge ecosystem is defined by human use and meaning. Despite the long history of abuse, we can recognize that amidst the impermanence also resides a settled, Floridian spirit. Understanding the layers of this cultural region shows us where we are scarred, but also our shared sources of identity.

Though few have recognized any cultural unity in the region, scientists of all kinds have published abundantly on the regional environment. Surveys of the hydrogeology, hydrology, watershed, river basins, and karst landforms, by the U.S. Geological Survey, Southwest Florida Water Management District and others have long suggested the natural unity of the region. The four following figures display ways in which scientists envision unity through watersheds, physical features of the surface, plant communities and soils (i.e. high pine lands, hammocks, low flatwoods), which determine evapotranspiration rates and the amount of seepage into groundwater channels, and the elevation of the Floridan Aquifer above sea-level, affecting groundwater flows (and the source of much of our drinking water). These studies reveal a region whose ecological fate is thoroughly united (see Figures 66 through 69 below).
Figure 66. A Ridge amid Four Watersheds: Withlacoochee (1), Coastal Springs (2), Hillsborough (3), and Anclote (4)\textsuperscript{373}

Figure 67. Physiographic Regions of West-Central Florida\textsuperscript{374}

\textsuperscript{373} “Springs Coast Comprehensive Water Management Plan,” Southwest Florida Water Management District, 2001, 12.
Figure 68. Evapotranspiration Subregions of Brooksville Ridge Region  

Figure 69. Potentiometric Surface of Upper Floridan Aquifer below the Brooksville Ridge  

375 Ibid., 41.
What I have tried to show in this thesis is that the Brooksville Ridge has long been a cultural region, a region of shared landscapes. Its deepest layers are not of limestone, but of the memories and experiences of people who have made the land meaningful. The source of \textit{lyngbya} in our springs is more than chemicals. The problems in our Coastal Springs and in our local drinking water supplies are as much cultural problems as anything else. Recognizing and visualizing our long history of regional cultural interdependence may be a great step towards healing not just an ecosystem, but our home. If being a Floridian means anything, it might mean having a special skill to perceive the subtle. The ability to read the subtle gradations in elevation that leads south to one of the largest wetlands on earth, for example. But also, the ability to differentiate what Marjorie Rawlings called Florida’s “shades of green.”

\footnote{376} Though its ascents and descents, its peaks and valleys, may be imperceptible to visitors, they contain the shades and gradations of shared cultural and ecological layers. These are the layers of the Brooksville Ridge.

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