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## **ABSTRACT**

The history of conservation is fraught with conflict between strategies employed by powerful actors (i.e., experts, governments and capitalists) and local actors (i.e., farmers, fishermen, herders, indigenes and other marginalized groups). Conservation memories of experts derived from the writings of literary, journalistic, and scientific publications can be compared to local memories drawn from ethnographic research, or in the case of this study, an auto-ethnography of the author's childhood to expose the perceptions and practices that influence the broader forces directing landscape change. Utilizing a landscape biography approach that weaves together the conservation memories of locals and experts it becomes apparent that high-profile actors marginalized the conservation practices of locals in their quest for something new. Local conservation landscapes and their memories were maligned or ignored while the literary memory of experts directed landscape change. Texts act as memories given that people will remember places and landscapes derived from their readings (Delyser 2005). Finally, this study demonstrates there is a niche to be found in a cultural geography that focuses upon environmental conservation.

## INTRODUCTION

Conservation has a long history (Dilsaver and Young 2007). Since humanity began to transform the world they protected and maintained landscapes that were important to their heritage (Johnson 2005), religion (Atkins, Simmons and Roberts 1998) or resources (Grove 1995). Twentieth-century protected landscapes tended to focus upon “the natural environment, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem integrity” (Mitchell and Buggey 2000, 35). These conservation landscapes are not natural however, they were created by invoking memories of past landscapes that appeared natural: this we term wilderness (Cronon 1996).

*Wylder ness* originally meant the lair of wild beasts (Stilgoe 1983). Today, wilderness is the defining vision of nature protection. The traditional ‘park and preserve’ ideology, stemming from the development of national parks such as Yellowstone, focuses upon the preservation of ‘wilderness.’ Wilderness has been defined as “terrestrial, freshwater or marine areas that are mostly intact in terms of habitat, faunal assemblages, and biological processes. Low human impact and population density are defining factors” (Strahler and Merali 2007, 510). Wilderness is, of course, landscape perception (Cronon 1996). Most wilderness regions have long histories of cultural landscape change. This makes the

development of parks and preserves a political-ecological issue which addresses such injustices and consequences as conservation refugees, environmental security, and violence over resources (Stott and Sullivan 2000; Robbins 2004). The idea of wilderness, however, has come under criticism because it involves a dichotomy between nature and culture (Cronon 1996). Some academics have called for the removal of this distinction noting that cultural landscapes can meld these divisions (Zimmerer 2000).

In the southeastern U.S., for example, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) have partnered to form the Altamaha River Bioreserve. The justification for the bioreserve is the preservation of rare and endangered animals, plants, and natural landscapes within the Altamaha river corridor. A charismatic species that may have influenced the establishment of the bioreserve is the history of the Franklin Tree. Discovered by William Bartram in the eighteenth century the tree subsequently disappeared in the wild. Today it only exists in gardens and botanical collections. The idea that a specimen may still exist in the Altamaha watershed is a possible factor in protecting the region. To this end TNC has identified the Altamaha River as one of the world's last great places (TNC 2005). In a pamphlet published by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) of Georgia defines a bioreserve as "a landscape usually large in size with naturally functioning ecological processes containing

outstanding examples of ecosystems natural communities and species which are endangered or inadequately protected” (TNC n.d.). This landscape-scale approach incorporates cultural landscapes since it attempts to conserve nature on a wider scale usually centered on watersheds or mountain ranges. This approach is not “fortress” conservation in the traditional mode of creating parks that exclude people (Adams 2004).

The recent turn towards incorporating humans within conservation regions mirrors academic research in conservation geography (Bonta 2003; Zimmerer 2000). Increasingly, geography/anthropology has recognized the role of humans in fostering biodiversity and in nature conservation (Sauer 1966; Cronon 1983; Denevan 1992; Zimmerer & Young 1998; Zimmerer 2000; Balee 2006; Steinberg 2010). Other scholars have noted the emotional and sensory role that place has in conservation (Raffles 2002; Bonta 2003). This dissertation will add to the above literature by using the cultural geography approach to memory in arguing that conservation areas could benefit from greater acknowledgement, and meaningful inclusion, of past human-environment relations.

#### MEMORY AND CONSERVATION LANDSCAPES

Landscapes of nature conservation are memorial landscapes (Figueiredo 2007). According to Cronon (1995, 69)

*I celebrate with others who love wilderness the beauty and power of the things it contains. Each of us who has spent time there can conjure images and sensations that seem all the more hauntingly real for having engraved themselves so indelibly on our memories. Such memories may be uniquely our own, but they are also familiar enough to be recognizable to others.*

In other words wilderness or natural conservation areas hold memories. I suggest they exhibit two types of memories. One type is the officially inscribed memory. Edensor writes that

*remembering is a thoroughly social and political process...Although practices of inscribing memory on space are enormously varied, there are undoubtedly tendencies to fix authoritative meanings about the past through an ensemble of practices and technologies which centre upon the production of specific spaces, here identified as monumental 'memoryscapes' — mediatised spaces, heritage districts, and museums. (2005, 830)*

This type of memory is guided by the power to fix official memories in the form of cultural landscapes. I suggest that parks, wilderness areas and bioreserves are this type of memory. Another type of memory is guided by lived experiences.

These are memories of everyday life from within and adjoining conservation areas. Official conservation memories bury the everyday 'lived' memories of rural lifeways. Edensor notes that "dominant strategies of remembering tend to exorcise haunted places, for ghosts are fluid, evanescent entities and they disturb the reifications through which performances, narratives, and experiences of memory become fixed in space (2005, 829). In short, conservation landscapes such as parks and bioreserves are defined by officially inscribed memories while, through no fault of their own, are erasing local lived memories. This dissertation is an acknowledgement of both forms of memory and their role in nature conservation.

#### MEMORY, TEXT AND PRACTICE

What methodology can be used in the study of official and lived memories in relation to conservation landscapes? The study of memory is well-developed in geography (Johnson 1995; Withers 1996; Edensor 1997; Till 2003). I focus upon landscape as a geographical medium by which to investigate memory. While the definition of landscape is contested (Meinig 1979), for the purpose of this study I define landscape as the cultural and natural scene. According to Delyser

*Landscape is one of social memory's most powerful conveyors. Much of the meaning we as humans, as cultural beings, make in our lives is triggered by the*

*objects and artifacts around us, by the landscape. Thus while individuals may be stirred by personal memories on a visit to their childhood home, members of a group can be stirred by social memories when visiting landscapes of cultural significance for the group. (2005, XV)*

My approach to landscape memory is to examine the role of texts in defining officially inscribed memories and research practice/performance to define the memory of lived experiences.

Some social landscape memories are conveyed through literature (Delyser 2005; Hoeschler & Alderman 2004). Crang argues literary landscapes do not just describe places they invent places (1998, 44). I suggest some conservation landscapes are ‘memoryscapes’ created by literature. Figueiredo argues that Yosemite was invented through literature prior to the creation of Yosemite National Park (2007). I suggest the ‘official’ memory of the Altamaha River as a natural wilderness was invented prior to the recent creation of the Altamaha Bioserve. The literature that inspired this social memory is derived from the writings of scientists who traversed the area. I chose the eighteenth-century naturalist William Bartram, the founder of modern geology Charles Lyell, the early twentieth-century chemist Charles Herty and the early twentieth-century

botanist Roland Harper as four scientists whose writings and images most closely reflect a focus upon the natural state of the river.

The examination of individual biographies in geography is not new. Wykoff has declared that “biography is wedded to geography” (2006, 146). Naylor points out that many geographers have developed a ‘local’ or ‘microhistorical’ turn in their research by investigating “the life histories of individual people, practices of place, or the social lives of objects, whether forgotten, remembered, treasured or discarded”(2008, 267). Samuels suggests that landscape biography is the study of how individuals are authors of landscape. Samuels’ approach is both simple and elegant. One fine example is Gay Maria Gomez’s, *A Wetland Biography: Seasons on Louisiana’s Chenier Plain* (1998). Research into landscape biography is concerned with the *impressions*, or thoughts of a landscape, and landscape *expression*, the material manifestation of landscape. Accordingly, the goal of any landscape biography should be to identify authors, their intentions “whether rational or irrational, right or wrong, good or bad to find the meanings they ascribe to a landscape already given, and to find the means whereby they mold their environments to create meaningful landscapes” (Samuels 1979, 65).

The primary sources for landscape biographies can be found in “diaries, letters, books, poems, paintings...archival collections” and interviews (Samuels



1979, 65). In my study of the conservation landscapes of the Altamaha watershed, I suggest that the landscape impressions of four key scientists were responsible for shaping the landscape imaginary that empowered environmental change. Not all of their landscape impressions directly influenced landscape change. These impressions became memories that influenced the later development of nature conservation landscapes. These historical impressions are public memories derived from literary sources such as exploration narratives and scientific reports. According to Withers, “memory, variously stored as archival records, embodied in individual representations and symbolized in practices, is the very ‘stuff’ of history” (2005, 32). Therefore, historical descriptions of the Altamaha can live on as memories to guide conservationists in how the Altamaha landscape should be restored. I suggest that there are two historical impressions (i.e., memories) of the Altamaha that are attached to the conservation landscapes of the river. The memory of the Altamaha as a paradise or wild jungle—in either case unspoiled by people—and the memory of the Altamaha as a declensionist landscape where humans had caused severe damages to the natural world. This binary of paradise and degraded landscape is a common theme in southern environmental history as it is for many environmental histories worldwide (Davis 2006). As Europeans colonized new lands many times their descriptions are of unspoiled landscapes. As time goes by memories of these paradisiacal landscapes are juxtaposed against synchronic degraded landscapes. This can be seen, for example, in the mantra of

biological restoration and conservation whose goal is to create a pre-European landscape as if that is the 'natural' state of the environment.

Once, southern rivers were a part of everyday life. Everyday life refers to 'everyday' movements, activities and practices that form places (de Certeau 1984). People lived and worked on and in waters engaging in such practices as fishing, agriculture, bathing, worship, transportation, as well as drawing water for household use. Modernity has divorced people from water. Water is now hidden in modern society. It moves through waterworks of underground pipes and comes out our faucets and into our baths from sites we no longer have a personal association with (Kaika 2005). Subsequently, the Altamaha River has become divorced from everyday life, contributing to the image of the river as natural. Everyday life on rivers, such as the Altamaha, is now a memory. Landscape biographies tend to focus upon elite persons who hold the power to direct landscape change and leave behind texts that allow them to be remembered (Samuels 1979). Conservation landscapes, however, also hold hidden memories. In other words, landscapes are created by countless individuals who leave behind few traces of their lives. Their memories are many times a landscape biography of livelihoods. In the Altamaha watershed local people recall rural practices and events that took place in and around areas that are now considered natural. Their landscape biographies describe agriculture, hunting, fishing, baptisms, family dinners, swimming,

childhood games, meeting places, etc. I utilize personal remembrances as well as primary and secondary documents in this study. Moreover, the goal of these historical geographical investigations is “to discover how landscape can be reanimated by intimacy in conduct and encounter” (Lorimer 2006, 515). The product of such investigations are “landscapes told as a distribution of stories and dramatic episodes, or as repertoires of lived practices” (2006, 515). Lived memories utilize the concept of landscape as embodied practices. Practice and performance in geography developed from Thrift’s idea of non-representational theory (2007). Non-representational theory suggests geographers have become too comfortable with representation and that there should be a turn towards understanding geographies through action and movement as a move away from representation. Recent approaches to landscape as practice have included scholarly articles on walking (Wylie 2002, 2005), gardening (Lorimer 2005), driving (Merriman 2007), hunting (Lorimer and Whatmore 2009), and mountain-climbing (Della Dora 2008). In conclusion, landscape memories, in this case memories of conservation landscapes, can be studied using both texts and practices as a guide to understanding the role of people in conservation landscapes.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

Conservation landscapes are contested and memory is at the heart of this dispute. Memories that support a conservation landscape may contradict the lived memories of past practices. Personal memory and historical officially inscribed memories are contested as the powerful decide historical ‘truth’ (Withers 2005). It is not my intention to compare local versus state or private nature conservation as if one is superior to another. My interests are in how contemporary conservation landscapes retain multiple or multivocal memories. Those of powerful interests—the state or NGOs—are usually reflected in the material form of protected parks and preserves but within these areas are sites which recall the lived practices of people who once inhabited these regions. I highlight this fact by making each chapter in this dissertation draw from the experiences of one or two individuals and the era of their writings and experiences in the Altamaha watershed. By doing this, I hope to underscore the historical, scientific, and literary nature of conservation landscapes and to discuss how lived memories get displaced through contemporary conservation strategies that ignore the multiple strategies and conflicts that produced them in the first place.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

After the introduction, chapter one is a physical overview of the Altamaha watershed. This chapter focuses upon three regional divisions: the delta, upland

savannas and floodplain. These divisions represent the primary broad natural landscapes of the watershed and the habitats that working communities (i.e., slaves, herders and loggers) adapted to and regional political-economic change (e.g., rice, timber, turpentine and conservation) exploited. Memories of past conservation can be found among the members of both of these groups. Next, chapter two addresses the conservation ethic of the region's indigenous inhabitants.

Native American toponyms are memories/legacies of indigenous conservation practices. For the purposes of this study, indigenous conservation practices are those everyday practices that maintained landscape biodiversity. In the wider Altamaha watershed the Muskoegan Creek people named landscapes for their aesthetic qualities, maintained resource landscapes, and practiced restraint in utilizing landscapes deemed sacred. While these practices do figure in the collective memory of the contemporary southeast these toponyms remain as memorials to Creek values.

Chapter three investigates the literary memories of landscape perception. Eighteenth century travel literature characterizes the Altamaha as a wilderness. Not wilderness as a dangerous land but wilderness as a paradise waiting for settlement. The collective memory of the Altamaha as an aesthetically pleasing

wilderness comes from William Bartram whose writings, I suggest, greatly influence contemporary conservation.

Chapter four examines African-American conservation in the Altamaha delta. African-American conservation is focused upon cultural landscapes such as rice fields, communities and sacred sites. Two important caveats: one, while these sites are cultural they represent human-environment relationships that contribute to biodiversity, and two, some of these sites have no cultural features. Memory, both in the past and the present, influences the conservation of places such as Ebo Landing and links the region to legacies such as rice foodways.

Chapter five, like chapter three, focuses upon the literary memories of wilderness. Instead, however, of an aesthetically pleasing wilderness, nineteenth century travel writings of Deep South rivers and wetlands describe dangerous jungles. In this chapter, I use the writings of Frances Kemble, an actress and wife of a rice plantation owner, Charles Lyell, a geologist who visited the Altamaha delta, and the maps of James Hamilton Couper, a plantation owner. Collectively their writings describe the delta as foreboding and dangerous, a landscape that could only be deciphered through science and, once understood, could be improved and reclaimed. The literary memory or legacy of their writings,

however, perpetuates the wilderness idea of the Altamaha for contemporary conservation.

Chapter six suggests that local people who live along the interior floodplain of the Altamaha River practice conservation. Local communities conserve landscapes not for reasons of biodiversity but as a way to maintain traditional practices of hunting, fishing and herding. For most families these traditions are no longer needed for survival. Memory of past practices and lifestyles influences both the maintenance of a distinct identity and conservation. The floodplain of creeks and the Altamaha River itself helps to resist enclosure allowing it to serve as a commons for hunting, fishing and herding. I utilize auto-ethnography as a way to investigate memories of traditional practice and local conservation.

Chapter seven investigates memory and the conservation of longleaf pines. I use two sites to illustrate the relationship between memory and longleaf pine conservation. Charles Herty, a chemist from the University of Georgia, was the individual most responsible for widespread longleaf pine conservation and destruction. An historical marker dedicated to Herty illustrates how memorial landscapes misrepresent conservation. The second site is the location of some old growth longleaf pines in the Moody Forest Nature Preserve. These trees are culturally modified trees (CMT): relicts of Herty's influence upon the turpentine

industry. They serve as memorials to local conservation recalling the Moody Family who lived humbly while preserving some of the last remaining old growth longleaf pine savanna and bottomland hardwood forest in the southeastern United States.

Finally, chapter eight describes Roland Harper's literary or scenic memories of the Altamaha Grit region. This region was the last to be settled in the Altamaha watershed. It is the interior region of rolling sandhills and grit rock outcrops that stretches across south-central Georgia. Harper, a University of Alabama botanist, travelled extensively throughout the region in the early twentieth century. His notes, articles, maps and photographs serve as a scenic memory of the region which, I suggest, influences contemporary conservation. His writings also indicate that he valued geological features, such as grit outcrops, as memorials to a natural past not as memorials to the historic national past. Regardless, Roland Harper created lasting scenic memories that undoubtedly influence geoconservation in the Altamaha watershed.

The significance of this study is that it brings people back into nature conservation using memory: an approach that has not previously been utilized. This dissertation contributes to cultural geography literature by focusing upon nature conservation. Cultural Geography, with the exception of Bonta (2003), has



not addressed conservation. This study seeks to place people back within conservation landscapes by researching the role of memory in the Altamaha River Bioserve.

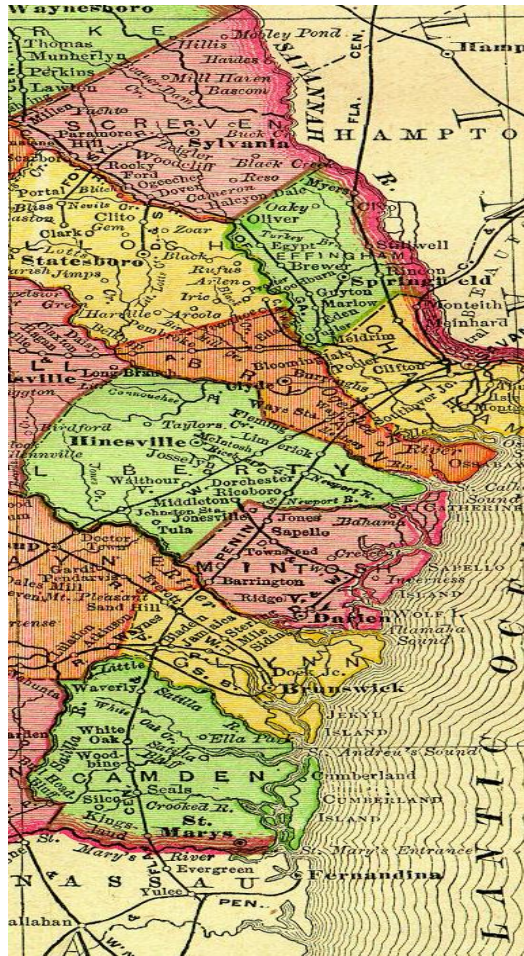
## *Chapter One*

### **THE PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE ALTAMAHA WATERSHED**

The Altamaha River is probably the largest local river you've never heard of. In terms of area its 14,500 square mile basin (Figure 1.1) is the second largest on the Eastern seaboard (Lenz 1999). Given its size one would think this area would have garnered more attention. It has, however, remained a backwater in Southern history and a black hole in the New South's development map, at least until now. This chapter is an overview of the region and its biophysical landscape of the Altamaha watershed.



**Figure 1.1** The Altamaha Watershed, Georgia. The upper forks are the Oconee in the North and the Ocmulgee in the South. They meet forming the Altamaha River. Source: Wikimedia Commons.



**Figure 1.2** Detail of the Georgia Lowcountry from an 1895 color map of Georgia. (<http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/histmaps.htm>)

## THE LOWCOUNTRY

The South is a vernacular region. A vernacular region is a region perceived to exist by its inhabitants. This is in contrast to a formal region whose boundaries are defined by one or more characteristics or a functional region defined by spatial interaction (Jordan 2009). The Deep South is a vernacular region within the South defined by its location further South and by its association with a strong southern identity. States mostly associated with the Deep South include South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Within the Deep South lies another vernacular region known as the Lowcountry (Figure 1.2). The lowcountry consists of the land found along the South Carolina and Georgia coast. The lowcountry is undefined like most vernacular regions. I suggest, however, that the lowcountry can extend over 100 miles into the Georgia and South Carolina interior.

In the Georgia lowcountry no other element appears to shape the land and lifeways more than water. The lowcountry falls within the South Atlantic Coastal Plain of the southeastern United States. Its climate is humid subtropical with over 200 frost-free days per year. Summer temperatures are in the 90s with many days over 100°. Rainfall is abundant with anywhere from 20 -60 inches of rain a year. The region experiences many thunderstorms contributing to high Spring rainfall. This well-watered land contains many creeks and rivers. The Altamaha River, the location for this study, crosses the lowcountry from the interior coastal plain to

the Atlantic coastline. Its watershed exhibits the three major natural landscapes of the region; the delta, the pinelands and the river floodplain.

## WATERSHED

### *Fluvial Action*

In ages past, ocean currents shaped their sandy depths into contours whose designs were etched into the earth: waves rolled against ancient shorelines, waters receded leaving traces such as sand, landforms, and fossils in their wake. One such residue of past natural processes is Shell bluff, which juts out over the Savannah River. This bluff was an ancient reef that became buried in sediment after some ancient cataclysmic event. Preserved in the bluff are giant oysters from this ancient time. William Bartram, an eighteenth-century colonial botanist from Pennsylvania, mentioned them in his travels, as did Charles Lyell, the eminent nineteenth-century English geologist. Currently, paleontologists are investigating them as a window into ancient environments (Pavey 2006). Moreover, there are other traces of deep-time hydrology.

The boring of deep wells brings forth ancient shells. Carolina Bays, ponds, vernal pools and depressions stray across the coastal plain as if the waters refused to recede. Sandy ridges snake across the open pine savannas where waves once washed against their beaches. Indigenous peoples used these ridges like highways

(Ray 2005). Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings in *The Yearling* (1938) wrote of homesteads being built upon ‘islands’ in the Floridian interior, and later, Southern plantation owners escape ‘the war’ by retreating to their summer homes on these same sandhills where they avoided malaria when the heat of summer released their miasmatic vapors from the swamplands. In the middle of these patterns the Altamaha winds like a sinuous snake roiling across a great sandbar.

### *Topography*

Topographically the coastal plain begins at the fall line where the piedmont slopes create minor waterfalls and rapids: fall lines refer to where water travelers had to haul their crafts around the falls. The coastal plain continues unabated till it reaches the edge of the continental shelf eighty miles offshore. Here lies Gray’s Reef, the reef named for Milton ‘Sam’ Gray, former curator at the University of Georgia Marine Institute on Sapelo Island. Gray’s Reef is located about 18 miles offshore from the mouth of the Altamaha River. The reef itself is located about 60 feet underwater. This reef is not actually a coral reef. It is a limestone outcropping surrounded by a sandy ocean floor. This rock outcrop has a varied topography of ledges caves, troughs and overhangs which attract a diversity of marine life. Species include sponges, corals, urchins, sea cucumbers, shrimp, squid octopus, lobster, mackerel, sharks, and manta rays. This natural habitat is protected by a 17 square mile marine sanctuary created in 1981.

As we move over the Atlantic striking the coast barrier islands names reflect the indigenous, Spanish and English history of the region. Ossabaw Island is a Creek name while Jekyll Island is an English name. Other names are English versions of Spanish place-names such as St. Simon's or St. Catherine's Islands. Other Spanish names were given English names such as Jekyll Island, which was named Isla de Ballenas or 'whale island' in Spanish (Lenz 1999). Presumably they were aware of the Right whales offshore. Spaniards were attempting to establish colonies along the coast. In 1526 Vazquez de Ayllon with a small fleet of ships and 600 colonists landed on Sapelo Island near the mouth of the Altamaha. They christened their new settlement San Miguel de Gualape. After several months, most of the colonists, including Ayllon, had died from disease and a lack of food. The colony was abandoned and the survivors returned to the Caribbean (Hoffman 1990; DeVorse 1992; Axtell 1997; Hudson 1997). Later, moving from their settlement of St. Augustine the Spanish colonized the Georgia coast by establishing missions on many of the barrier islands christening them with Spanish names.

Moving upriver from the mouth of the Altamaha, marsh islands in the delta maintain English names that date to the colonial Georgia settlement. Some are named for natural features such as Wolf Island but many are named after people; particularly plantation owners. Islands in the Altamaha delta that occurred in the

estuary, where salt and freshwater meet, were transformed into rice plantations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such estuarine islands include Champney Island, Carr Island, Butler's Island, Rhett's Island, Camber's Island and Broughton Island. Historically, the entire coastal plain region has always been either underwater or adjacent to a coastline.

During the Miocene Period, 25 million to 7 million Years Before Present (YBP), the ocean reached to where the fall line is today, while as recently as 20,000 YBP the waters terminated at the edge of the continental shelf (Miller 1998; Pillsbury 2006). Accordingly, the rise and fall of the ocean produced distinct geological regions: the Altamaha Uplands and Coastal Georgia regions. The area of the Altamaha Upland that covers the upper Altamaha is known as the Vidalia Upland district. These rolling hills contain Tertiary and Miocene sediments composed of sand and kaolin with deposits of sandstone and claystone that are somewhat resistant to weathering (GDNR 2005). This means that Coastal Georgia is composed of Tertiary and Quaternary sands and clays. These sediments and their corresponding terrace formations are the result of past marine deposition similar to that which can be seen today along the contemporary barrier islands (2005). This geology has, naturally, shaped the distribution of the region's vegetation.



## DELTA

Where the Altamaha meets the Atlantic it creates an ill-defined delta. Deltas are formed by sediment washing down rivers and accumulating near where they empty into the ocean. This accumulation creates a landform usually triangular in shape, but not always, where a tidal wetland estuary is maintained. The Altamaha does not have a delta per se, but it does have a wide area where sediment is deposited into tidal marshes and numerous swamps and marshes are rife with creeks and rivers. In addition to tidal marshes one finds freshwater marshes, tidal pools, tidal creeks, estuaries and sounds, oyster reefs, and beaches (Wharton 1977).

### *Barrier Islands*

The Altamaha delta stretches from the cypress swamps of Lewis Island to the waves breaking on Blackbeard and south to the marshlands of Sea Island. I recall shrimping trips with my family in the 1970s and 1980s. We piled into the back of my Uncle Albert's pickup and headed to the coast off St. Simon's Island. Upon arriving we unpacked his 60 foot seining net and waited for low tide. Seining for shrimp required four men to pull the net over the shallow waters off the beach or offshore near sandbars that formed from the outgoing tide. I remember them hauling in loads of shrimp, sand sharks, horseshoe crabs, and jellyfish all writhing in a mass on the beach. An offshore pull after dark could sometimes strike a little

fear into people not used to it. I recall one guy who, while pulling the net, got startled by a dolphin who rolled on the surface spouting water in the air. He took off for the sandbar as fast he could while everybody laughed at him. Another time someone was startled by eyes staring upwards from the water and dropped the net. Everyone cursed him for missing our chance to scoop up some flounder which were lying on the sandy bottom. We usually managed a cooler full of shrimp that we would freeze and eat throughout the year. These trips were to the outer barrier island beaches and spits.

Barrier islands are formed from shifting sands. They are young in geological time. A pause in rising sea levels 4,500 years ago maintained Georgia's barrier islands in their current locations. Their beaches and sandbars, however, are constantly being shaped by currents and tidal action. One such sandbar is Pelican Spit; named for the pelicans that frequent its shores. A spit is a long usually narrow sandbar connected to a mainland. Spits form when sediment is pushed along the edge of a beach by wind or tidal currents. Some spits may become submerged forming islands at the end of the sandbar. Pelican spit completely submerges during high tide and forms an island as the tide lowers. While a significant natural landscape for marine life and it has been designated a bird island by the state of Georgia and given protected status. The island is a nesting site for Royal and Caspian terns, avocets, pelicans, and cormorants (Lenz 1999).

### *Salt Marshes*

About a third of all tidal salt marshes on the eastern seaboard are located in coastal Georgia (Figure 1.3). Salt marshes stretch between the barrier islands to the mainland and can be anywhere from four to six miles wide. Amidst these marshes are tidal pools that consist of low lying areas where the water does not drain off leaving steep sides from years of scouring. Unlike these pools much of the salt marsh is drained by the tidal creeks and rivers that form an intricate network across the marshland and a topographical profile that moves from tidal creek landscape and ends at the marsh border of islands. Consequently, at low tide, these marshlands are drained of water and as the tide comes in, the creeks fill up the marshlands (i.e., tidal flats) which in turn shape the vegetation patterns of estuaries (Wharton 1977).



**Figure 1.3** Salt marshes off of St. Simon's Island. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

### *Estuaries*

Estuaries are regions where salt and freshwater mix; a transition zone between the river, salt marshes, and the ocean. Given the great flow of the Altamaha that pushes the saltwater back towards the ocean the estuary only extends around twelve miles upstream from the coast. Overlapping and further inland lay freshwater and riverine marshes and tidal cypress swamps. Cypress trees give way to saltmarsh vegetation of smooth cordgrass and relict rice plants amidst tidal creeks and rivers. Marine animals utilize these estuaries as areas of protection until adulthood. Such denizens of the Altamaha estuary include plankton, white shrimp, fiddler and blue crabs, many species of fish including croaker, flounder and sheepshead as well as marine mammals such as the manatee (Lenz 1999). This productivity led to its reclamation for agriculture. Continuing inland from the estuary, where the saltwater ends, freshwater patterns of marsh and cypress swamps begin.

While there are some natural freshwater marshes, many are the result of human activities. By 1850, the estuary outside Darien had been transformed into rice plantations where property lines were drawn over the waters and canals crisscrossed the marshes. Almost the entire upper-center of the Altamaha delta was converted into rice fields. Today, many of these freshwater marshes are crisscrossed with relict agricultural canals.

## SAVANNA

The characteristic landscape of the interior coastal plain, away from the coastal marshlands, is the longleaf pine savanna. This landscape was once a fire tolerant forest of widely spaced longleaf pines that grew upon a wiregrass plain. Fires created this landscape. Longleaf pines (Figure 1.4) need fire to regenerate and the wiregrass is adapted to fire producing flourishing savannas after burning. Moreover, wiregrass animals were adapted to this landscape. The wiregrass savannas once supported herds of whitetail deer and bison. Diamondback rattlesnakes resided in the sandy dens of gopher tortoises on the forest floor. Indigo snakes, the longest snakes in North America, prowled the underbrush looking for rodents and other snakes to eat (Lenz 1999). In the treetops red-cockaded woodpeckers created holes high up longleaf pines. Their nests resulted in sap that dripped down the pine and discouraged snakes from invading their hollows. This region was known more for its lack of water than for its waterscapes but this is misleading. Natural waterscapes on the coastal plain—outside of the major rivers—include branches, pocosins, creeks, cypress ponds, gum ponds, Carolina bays, bay swamps, bog swamps, cypress savannas, savannas, herb bogs, springs, and sinks (Wharton 1977; Ray 2005). Moreover, amidst these flatwoods are many rivers and creeks including the Altamaha.

## FLOODPLAIN

### *Landforms*

The Altamaha River floodplain has the physical characteristics of an alluvial graded stream of the coastal plain including specific landform and biogeographic landscapes. Landforms include meanders with their associated meander necks, scars and river islands. Meanders cut off from the river are referred to as oxbow lakes. Some of these oxbow lakes are still occasionally connected to the river by sloughs depending upon the water level. Other sloughs simply empty water into the surrounding floodplain. Sloughs are branches of water that divert into the surrounding land. Backswamps however, make up the bulk of the floodplain. These low-lying areas are filled with sloughs and ponds. When the river floods the backswamps are inundated leaving areas of high land as islands. Floodlines can be seen up the sides of trees as you make your way through the floodplain backswamps.



**Figure 1.4** Old-growth longleaf pines in the Altamaha Uplands. Source: Photograph in the author's collection.

### *Biogeographies*

Amidst these alluvial river landforms are numerous natural habitats (Wharton 1977; GDNr 2005). Along the edges of the river near sand or mud bars are groves of willow trees whose limbs snake out over the ground. Meanders, sloughs, oxbow lakes and ponds are some of the landform features of the floodplain (Figure 1.5). Along their edges rise towering cypress and tupelo trees. In their lofty perches, Ivory-Billed woodpeckers once called them home as did the Carolina parakeets both of which are now extinct. Underwater, at the base of the cypress and tupelo trunks, can be found mudfish, blue, channel and yellow catfish, along with redbreast warmouth and other fish species including the rare robust redbreast. Further down in the mud lie alligator snapping turtles. Alligators rest upon the sandbars and mudbanks but their numbers are low and they usually avoid people. Southern rivers are many times abundant in scavengers. A scene from Mississippi author, Tom Franklin's, *Smonk or Widow Town: Being the Scabrous Adventures of E.O. Smonk and of the Whore Evangeline in Clarke County, Alabama Early in the Last Century...* (2006), illustrates the imbroglio of scavengers that attack decaying flesh in southern waters. He writes of a dead body tangled in a fishnet on the side of a steamboat that

*throughout the night [had attracted] a pulsing contingent of catfish, carp, grinnel, gar, sucker, alligators, and even a few river-lost sand sharks disoriented*

*by fresh water had followed the boat, swirling in the ooze. In the morning light, enormous orange crawfish with their pinchers clicking rode the body, one arm of which trailing in the water was festooned with moccasins attached at the fang. When one became too blooded it fell loose and sank in the clouds in the sky in the river. (2006, 31)*



**Figure 1.5** Meanders, sandbars, oxbow lakes, sloughs, and meander scars on the Altamaha River. Source: Google Earth.

Scavengers were and are an integral part of Southern culture in the same way that ravens and wolves figure in the stories of Northern Europe and the Pacific Northwest, vultures in India, and scarab beetles in North Africa. A footnote in geographer Mark Bonta's, *Seven Names for the Bellbird* (2003), points out that



buzzards once flew in large flocks over the city of Charleston, South Carolina. I imagine some fed upon the dead bodies of slaves that were dumped in the coastal marshes: slaves who died in the Charlestonian barracoons were removed to this giant graveyard.

In the higher land of the backswamps, only annually flooded, lie forests of oak, hickory and other hardwoods. Deer, turkeys and wild boar haunt these forests disappearing among canebrakes that stretch along the edges of sloughs and under the boughs of ancient oaks. Tree hollows serve as home to black bears, opossums, and raccoons. Moving further towards the pine uplands higher ground supports groves of live oaks while along the edges of creek bottoms magnolia and bay trees form groves that shade the shallow blackwater as it moves across the sand towards the sloughs.

In conclusion, the biophysical character of the Altamaha watershed can broadly be divided into three landscapes: the delta, longleaf pine savanna, and the river floodplain. These landscapes contain a variety of habitats and significant biodiversity. Habitats include estuaries, barrier islands, salt marshes, and flatwoods. In these habitats are found numerous plant and animal species including some rarities including the indigo snake, gopher tortoise, and manatee.

## *Chapter Two*

### **MEMORY, INDIGENOUS TOPONYMS AND CONSERVATION IN THE GEORGIA BACKCOUNTRY**

Toponyms, or place-names, can suggest past settlements and landscape practices (Coned era et al. 2006). Most riverine place-names in the Georgia backcountry derive from the Muskoegan Creeks. While archaeologists have discovered evidence of human presence in the southeast as far back as the Pleistocene, the indigenous societies of the latter Holocene are better known. In the eighteenth century Altamaha backcountry the Muskoegan Creeks maintained and developed lifeways amidst one of the most biodiverse regions in North America. The commercial image of the ‘crying Indian’ and the concept of the Indian in the wilderness has created an image of Native Americans as the original conservationists. Scholars, however, have shown that Native Americans could be as devastating to the environment as anyone else (Denevan 1992). How then to approach conservation and native peoples? Some native peoples created humanized landscape mosaics that fostered biodiversity. They were stewards of a heterogeneous landscape mosaic (Silver 1990). The goal of this chapter is to identify the importance of nature in the cultural landscapes of the Creeks. Bonta suggests a way to interpret the role of nature in cultural landscapes is to

investigate local names for aspects of the natural world (2003). In this chapter I suggest that Creek place-names indicate that they embraced natural places in a way that fostered protection and biodiversity.

#### MISSISSIPPIAN SETTLEMENTS

The spread of Mississippian culture into the southeast after 800 A.D. marks the greatest cultural transformation of southeastern landscapes up to European colonization. Mississippian civilization at its height spread from what is today Missouri southward to Louisiana eastward to Florida and as far North as Virginia. Features of Mississippian cultural landscapes include ceremonial or earthen temple mounds, dwellings, gardens, fields, ponds, canals, and city walls. Many if not most of Mississippian settlements were located along rivers where fish and shellfish supplemented an agricultural base of corn, beans, and squash. Cahokia, the largest Mississippian city with a population estimated at 30,000, was located in the rich bottomland of the Mississippi across from what is today St. Louis (Hudson 1997; Davis 2006). In the Altamaha watershed, on the banks of the Ocmulgee River, the Ocmulgee mounds (Figure 2.1) are well known examples of relict Mississippian urban landscapes.



**Figure 2.1** Ocmulgee Mounds near Macon, Georgia. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Ocmulgee was still occupied during the Spanish incursions of the sixteenth century. Between 1500 and 1540 the conquistadores associated with Ponce de Leon, Cabeza de Vaca, and Hernando de Soto explored parts of the North American southeast. Of these de Soto was the only one to cross through Altamaha watershed (Hudson 1997). The Spanish introduced diseases such as malaria and small pox which devastated Mississippian populations (Crosby 1993). Thousands lost their lives to disease (Denevan 1992). By the time later Spanish, English and French explorers moved into the region the populations had coalesced into smaller tribal groups.

## GUALE, TIMUCUAN AND CREEK

The Spanish encountered two tribal groups along the Altamaha River. On the coastal barrier islands were the Guale. Known Guale villages were located on St. Simon's Island; south of the mouth of the Altamaha River. Timucuan villages were thought to be located on the southern bank of the Altamaha River and at the forks. These two nations were influenced a great deal by the Spanish who established missions in the larger villages. As the Spanish were pushed southward by the English these native peoples went with them. By the eighteenth century the Guale and Timucuan had retreated with the Spanish as they were pushed South by the British (Worth 1995).

Other indigenous peoples moved into the Altamaha region and established settlements. Chief among these were the Creeks. The Creeks are a Muskoegan speaking people made up of numerous tribal groups (White 2002). Their territory extended from south-central Georgia across Alabama and into Mississippi and northward into central Tennessee. A few Creek Indians remained along the Altamaha into the second half of the nineteenth century. According to an interview published in a local history of Appling County, Georgia

*the late Joe (Joseph R.) Dunn, who was reared by Mr. Eli Warnock remembered Mr. Warnock telling about finding an Indian, his wife, and one child*

*on an island on Big Creek. He felt sorry for them and carried them to Alabama, hoping they could get on to a reservation from there.* (Barron 1981, 16)

These may have been the last indigenous people to live along the Altamaha River marking the end of their cultural landscape but not necessarily their landscape legacies.

#### MUSKOEKAN CREEK TOPONYMS AND CONSERVATION

Anthropologist Robbie Etheridge notes the heterogeneity of the Creek cultural landscape. She writes that

*old fields, canebrakes, glades, groves, prairies, savannahs, swamps, hammocks, rivers, creeks, terraces, rock outcrops, coppices, longleaf pine forests, mesophytic mixed forests, and southeastern mixed forests—certainly Creek country was an environmental mosaic. Most of this historical landscape is now gone, lost to ranching, cotton, timber, and other commercial enterprises. But even in the eighteenth century, Creek country was not a pristine wilderness, despite the rhetoric of the time. Rather, Creek country was a human-landscaped environment, and a human presence was everywhere in evidence.* (2003, 53)

The above narrative characterizes humanized landscapes that were managed by the Creek nation. By the eighteenth century, the Altamaha watershed was in the territory of the Creeks who applied their names to early Georgia surrounding waterways. These toponyms are mnemonic devices illustrating Creek land-use aesthetics and practices which suggest indigenous conservation.

Waterway toponyms were suggestive of aesthetic appreciation. The word Chattahoochee (Cvto-Hoc-ce Hvc-ce/cato-ho:cc-i-hacci) means the color of pebbles and rocks making the river an aesthetic scene to the Creeks. Monumental waterscapes included wehadkee (ue-hvtke/oy-hatk-i) (white water) and chatakofska (cvto-hvoke) (deep rock) (Martin & Mauldin 2000; Etheridge 2003). Furthermore, practices are represented through fishing and bathing. Waterscapes such as shoals were used for fishing and hunting but only during designated times. Fisheries were maintained by designating specific rivers and even shoals as township territories; an indicator of environmental management. In fact, the word thlotlogulgau (tato-kalk-a) means fish ponds referring to a waterway amenable to fishing. Other waters were for bathing; going to water, for example, was a ritual among the Creeks that could occur many times in a single day (Martin and Mauldin 2000; Etheridge 2003). Moreover, they designated hunting territories which were managed and protected.

The Creeks maintained hunting landscapes for the larger mammals of the southeast they deemed of value; deer, bison and bear in particular. They were also aware of, utilized, and maintained many vegetated landscapes including hiyucpulgee (hvyakpo/hayakpo) savannas or prairies and canebrakes (coha-apat-I (kohv/kohaV) which served as hunting territories and maintained wildlife species. Hunting territories and their landscapes were maintained by Creek townships but were also enforced at the levels of province and nation (Martin and Mauldin 2000; Etheridge 2003). These lands were maintained with fire that cleared out the underbrush and created the edges and landscape diversity that many species required (Etheridge 2003). Canebrakes in particular were excellent hunting landscapes for deer, bison and bear (Etheridge 2003; Stewart 2007). These place-names are suggestive of practices such as bathing and hunting but they do little to evoke affect.

How did the Creeks feel about these landscapes implying true stewardship and care? One clue comes from an Indian agent named Benjamin Hawkins. According to Hawkins, the Creeks established bear preserves or a “beloved bear ground” (Grant 1980, I: 294; Etheridge 2003). As such each town had its own bear reserve where bear populations were hunted but also protected and maintained (Etheridge 2003). This single comment brings to light the fact that the Creeks purposely



created conservation landscapes devoted to black bears, and suggests they likely did for other desirable wildlife and plants.

## CONCLUSION

Native American settlement history in the Altamaha watershed illustrates that the region was never a wilderness. Sixteenth century Spanish chroniclers write of the Mississippian peoples who inhabited the Altamaha interior. Seventeenth century missions on the coast and interior rivers chronicle the Timucuan and Guale peoples. As their hold on the region dwindled they retreated with the Spanish opening up the region to settlement by the Muskoegan Creeks. It is the Creeks who left a lasting legacy on the Altamaha River through place-names. This chapter is not meant to romanticize Native Americans as the original conservationists. Instead, I suggest that place-names show the meaning of nature in the lives of the eighteenth century Creeks. Instead of the Creeks as being at-one-with-nature or destroying nature place-names indicate how they used (practices), and protected nature creating landscapes of biodiversity.

### *Chapter Three*

## **LITERARY MEMORIES, WILLIAM BARTRAM AND THE MYTH OF THE ALTAMAHA RIVER WILDERNESS**

The Argentinean writer Tomas Borges recounted the story of an empire whose cartographers created a map that grew larger as it strived for exactness and a 1:1 scale that it encompassed all the land (Borges, translated by Andrew Hurley, 1999). The making of a wilderness region is similar to this fictional map. Wilderness is an idea mapped upon a region. Denevan calls this the pristine myth: the belief that the landscape of North America was undeveloped by humans when Europeans landed on its shores (1992). This myth is repeated over and over again by travelers through many regions of North America including the U.S. South. This chapter examines the wilderness myth of Georgia's Altamaha River found in literary memories: maps and writings that created a memory of wilderness.

### **AN AGRARIAN UTOPIA: THE WILDERNESS MYTH OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SOUTHEAST**

Borrowing from ancient geographical knowledge early European mariners believed that climates, peoples, and landscapes would be the same, or at least similar, across the same latitude (Crosby 1986). It was this conceit that led to a search for Mediterranean lands on the other side of the Atlantic. They sailed into

the open ocean bringing with them centuries of travel narratives: Greek, Roman, Arabic, and others. Landing upon the Azores and Canary Islands followed by the Caribbean and the South Atlantic coast of North America they extended a Mediterranean geographic imagination across the Atlantic. Historian J.H. Elliott summarizes this view when he posits that “Arcadia and Eden could now be located on the far shores of the Atlantic” (1992, 25). Moreover, this Eden was characterized as a landscape full of possibilities: an agrarian utopia. Agrarian utopias have a long tradition in the literary history of the Americas. According to Rodriguez, an agrarian utopia discourse is the imagination of early explorers and contemporary developers who thought “the jungle [or as I would argue any colonial natural landscape], projected into the future, should look like a place of fair cities, good roads, burgeoning villages, and huge fields, where once only wilderness stood” (Rodriguez 2004, 169). Utopian narratives are foundation stories that encourage settlement (Nye 2003). It was this agrarian utopian image that promoted development in the eighteenth century American southeast.

#### BRITISH COLONIZATION OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHEAST

The Virginia Colony, established in 1607 at a site the settlers named Jamestown, proved difficult for the English. Increasing death tolls every summer from disease and lack of fresh water stymied English colonialism on the South Atlantic seaboard for at least two decades. By the middle of the seventeenth

century the Virginia colony's population and economy was expanding. The latter seventeenth century saw the rise of Charlestown on the Carolina coast. It did not become economically significant until 1680 when wealthy families from Britain and sugar planters who abandoned Barbados settled. While the English were interested in the Mediterranean latitudes of North America—believing they would produce desirable Mediterranean commodities—they ignored what would become Georgia (Earle 2003). The Georgia lowcountry with its wide rivers, miasmatic swamps, and extensive coastal marshlands acted as a buffer to the Spanish whose minimal barrier island settlements—some as far north as St. Catherine's Island—remained viable until the 1680s. This is in spite of English raids, some by native allies such as the Chichimeco, a Nahuatl term borrowed by the Spanish to describe Indians on the frontier of New Spain, or Mexico. It was used in the southeast to describe enemy warriors of unknown origin who attacked the settlements in Guale on the coast of Georgia. Their true origins remain unknown. However, some believe them to be stray Erie displaced from the Iroquois wars in the Northeast (Smith 1987 cited in Worth 1995). By the end of the seventeenth century, these Chichimecos would drive out the people of Guale—a Spanish province named after the local inhabitants in what is today coastal Georgia—leaving it vacant (Worth 1995). It is into the 'empty' and unused landscape that settlers from the British Isles would assume had no history and awaited their improvement.

The Altamaha, known by the Spanish as Rio de Santa Isabel, was in the center of the province of Guale. Mission towns were located on barrier islands along the coast stretching from the Ogeechee River to the St. Johns. The Altamaha provided a means of establishing a single mission, Santa Ysabel, at the forks, deep into the backcountry. The Altamaha at this time was a means of travel into the interior by the Spanish and the native inhabitants of Guale: a space defined by transportation. By the eighteenth-century wars with the Chichimeco, the Yamassee and Carolinian raiders had created the Altamaha as a spatial buffer between the Spanish and English (Worth 1995).

#### MAPPING AND COLONIZING THE GEORGIA WILDERNESS

Colonial Georgia, including the Altamaha River, was promoted as a paradise. According to historical geographer Louis De Vorsey, early Georgia was promoted in maps made of the region as well as by investors who envisioned “a potential cornucopia of tropical products” (1986, 35). This vision (i.e., impression) of paradise has been called an agrarian utopia (Rodriguez 2004). In 1717 Sir Robert Montgomery proposed the development of what he called the Margravate of Azilia (Figure 3.1). *Margravate* is a term for a border territory. Geographic analogs can be found in the marches of Scotland and the use of the term markland by the Vikings in referring to what is today Newfoundland. Their use of the term referred to a forested border territory. The map of this margravate shows an

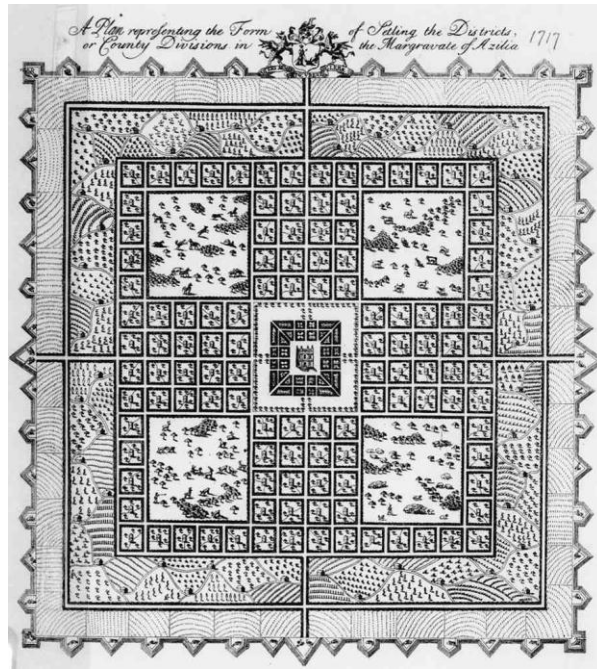
idealized town and countryside. In the center of the map is an urban settlement surrounded by individual properties with large deer parks interspersed. On the outskirts of the gridded properties lies the agricultural countryside denoted by fields. This is an enlightenment utopian vision of an orderly countryside. The Margravate never came to fruition but the term nevertheless is an appropriate description for the Altamaha given the volatile political nature of this border between the Spanish and the English resulting in an empty wilderness (De Vorsey Jr. 1982).

In 1733, prior to the establishment of the Georgia colony, Benjamin Martyn wrote that a traveler might undertake a journey to Georgia in order to witness

*towns, which are rising at distances along navigable rivers: flocks and herds in neighboring pastures, and adjoining to them plantations of regular rows of mulberry trees entwined with vines, the branches of which are loaded with grapes; let him see orchards of oranges, pomegranates, and olives. (C. C. Jones 1878, 46)*

Accordingly, boosterism, in the form of statements such as this promoted Oglethorpe's establishment of the Georgia plantation. In 1732 Oglethorpe and a group of London Trustees were given a Crown grant to the lands between the

Savannah and Altamaha Rivers. On February 12, 1733 James Oglethorpe, soldier and social reformer, established the colony of Georgia with the backing of a group



**Figure 3.1** Margravate of Azilia. Source: The Digital Library of Georgia.

of London Trustees. They believed a New World colony would benefit Englishmen who were in debtor's prisons and those Europeans who were experiencing religious persecution. Oglethorpe's establishment of the Georgia colony was funded by a group of London Trustees, or benefactors, who imagined a profit from the establishment of Mediterranean crops in the region (Figure 3.2). In 1730 a petition for the establishment of the colony of Georgia was presented to

parliament. Oglethorpe and a group of London Trustees committed monies for the establishment of a colony between the Savannah and Altamaha Rivers.

Oglethorpe's utopia was a society for the disenfranchised debtors of London: a colony without lawyers, slaves, or liquor populated by egalitarian landowners. This social utopia was shelved by the London Trustees who were more interested in the agrarian utopia of a Mediterranean garden plantation that produced silk, olives, and wine for export. Regional agricultural experts from Italy were embedded within the colonial Georgia towns to experiment with producing Mediterranean crops as well as to teach the colonists agricultural production techniques for producing these specialty commodities; silk in particular. Mulberry trees, as food for silkworms, did become a part of the Georgia landscape but not as ubiquitous as these investors would have liked. "The geometric division of space...often helped investors more than homesteaders" (Nye 2003, 290). The combination of experimental gardening with Mediterranean crops and Oglethorpe's notion of social reform resulted in a colonial landscape of compact bluff settlements with urban gardens but failed to produce the profits the investors would have liked and did not produce successful homesteads. The surrounding countryside was left as a pasture for domesticated and wild animals that provided meat and hides with a scattered settlement pattern. Savannah was the flagship city



on the Savannah River and Darien and Frederica were towns in the Altamaha Delta that buffered the Spanish.

The city of Savannah, founded upon Yamacraw Bluff on the Savannah River, was the main town of the Georgia colony. From this settlement Oglethorpe extended the colony's territory to the mouth of the Altamaha River with the founding of the settlement of Darien. The Darien colonists were highland Scots, warriors who were meant to serve as a buffer with the Spanish. Control of the territory however, remained tenuous at best. This was settled, for a time, on the American battleground during the War of Austrian Succession, or as it was locally known The War of Jenkin's Ear (Sullivan 1992). The War of Jenkin's Ear (1739-1748), a conflict that began with the alleged Spanish punishment of cutting off the ears of smugglers, resulted in the English control of the region surrounding the Altamaha watershed. The English suffered a setback by losing the battle fought at St. Augustine and Fort Mose in North Florida. In 1742, the Spanish brought the war to the Georgia frontier where they encountered Oglethorpe and the Darien Highlanders at St. Simon's Island. Claymores and tomahawks in hand, a force of Scots and Indians attacked the Spanish in the marshlands. What became known as The Battle of Bloody Marsh left the region in the hands of the British (Sullivan 1992).

The Altamaha region however was not free of turmoil. Surveying was a precondition to Euroamerican settlement and landscape change. The creation of new spatial arrangements usually conflicted with Native American geometries (Nye 2003). During the nineteenth century steamboat captains yelled ‘bow to the white, bow to the Injun’ referring to the direction of the bow turning towards the North bank controlled by Georgia or the South bank controlled by the Creeks. The Spanish still controlled Florida so the hinterlands south of the Altamaha remained a no-man’s land of thieves, pirates, native warriors, bootleggers, and cattle herders. On these margins land surveying was contested. The naturalist William Bartram witnessed such an episode when he accompanied a survey party guided by a Creek contingent in the Oconee River borderlands. The Creeks corrected the boundaries being established by the surveying party after much arguing (Slaughter 1996). This event suggests that not only was the region not a wilderness but that its colonization and mapping was contested by its inhabitants. In conclusion, Euroamericans mapped an agrarian utopia onto the early Georgia landscape.



**Figure 3.2** Oglethorpe introducing the Yamacraw to the Georgia Trustees.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

#### WILLIAM BARTRAM'S ALTAMAHA WILDERNESS SCENES AND SITES

British rule of the eighteenth century Georgia lowcountry resulted in expanded settlement south to the Altamaha River. Edenic literary images helped to push settlement in the region. The writings of William Bartram (Figure 3.3) reinforced this wilderness myth of an empty land waiting to be colonized.

William Bartram (1739-1823) was a botanist who wrote a travelogue of his excursion in the southeast during the years 1773-1774. His time in the Altamaha watershed was spent visiting the delta and Sea Islands, canoeing upriver, and traversing the upper Oconee River, a northern branch of the Altamaha. Bartram's

travel narrative of the lowcountry is filled with Mediterranean imagery and themes: a climate light and sunny, perfumed smells, open vegetation, and clear waters. After spending a few days in Augusta, Georgia, Bartram set off for Savannah. On the road that skirted the river he met an immigrant from Ireland who accompanied him. In discussion with his friend from Eire, Bartram learned



**Figure 3.3** William Bartram. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

that he had left the cool and rainy maritime climate of his native land with dreams of establishing a plantation of Mediterranean crops—wine, currants, raisins, figs, olives, and lemons—in the humid southeast of North America (Slaughter 1996, 459). This chance meeting suggests that the European and Euroamerican imagination continued to embrace the long-held idea that the American southeast was a landscape ready to be transformed into Mediterranean gardens.

William derived a love of nature from his father, John Bartram, the Royal botanist for the American colonies. While William's writings garner more

attention, John was a celebrated botanist and natural historian known in Europe as well as America. John, however, was a man of rougher times. A product of an earlier America marked as much by the exertion of colonizing the howling wilderness as by the investigation of its denizens. He was a man as much at home with the ax as he was familiar with the pen. The American historian, Thomas Slaughter, thinks that John's rough exterior was a result of the many deaths in his family. His mother Elizah died in childbirth in 1701. In 1711 his father was killed by Indians in North Carolina. Many of his children died as well. His son Richard died at the age of three around 1728. A daughter named Elizabeth did not live very long after childbirth. Finally, later in life, his daughter Ann died at the age of thirty-six. Loss and hardship turned John into a realist and practical man. Slaughter writes "what an insecure world he lived in...[where he] feared the loss of people, of things, of financial security, and of others' esteem" (Slaughter 2005). John's practical realism sits in opposition to William's romanticism which is illustrated by his perception of the Altamaha wilderness.

A Philadelphia botanist, Bartram was commissioned by John Fothergill of London to explore the southeast for unusual plant species. In the spring of 1773, he set sail for Charleston South Carolina to begin his exploration of the southeast for "rare and useful productions of nature" (Slaughter 1996, 27). He journeyed from Charleston to Savannah making his way along the coast to the Altamaha

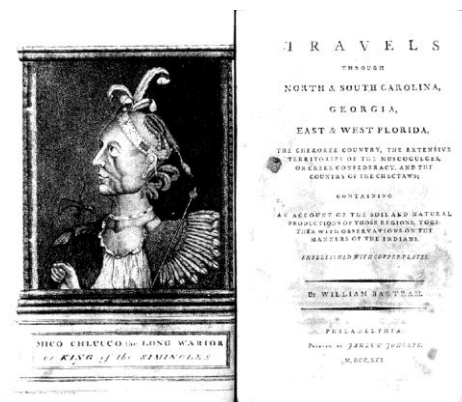
River “passing through a level country, well watered by large streams, branches of Medway and Newport rivers, coursing from extensive swamps and marshes” (Slaughter 1996, 33). South of the Altamaha, while moving across the coastal plain down to the St. Mary’s river, Bartram encountered “high open forests of stately pines, flowery plains, and extensive green savannas” that “perfumed the air whilst they pleased the eye” (Slaughter 1996, 40). During his excursions into the Floridian landscape he observed “troublesome cane swamps” (1996, 40), anthropophagous alligators (1996, 115), savannas populated with “droves of cattle herds of sprightly deer, squadrons of the beautiful fleet Seminole horse,” and “flocks of turkeys” (1996, 167). The Floridian sinks and spring-fed rivers contained “incredible numbers of crocodiles” and fish (1996, 180). The piedmont and coastal plain regions of the Georgia backcountry were characterized by “large rich savannas, or natural meadows, wide spreading cane swamps, and frequently old Indian settlements, now deserted and overgrown with forests” (1996, 56). He was intoxicated with the heat, flowers, and the many wonders of nature such as “the tyger [mountain lion], wolf [red wolf], and bear [black bear]” that, at the time, could still be found on the barrier islands of coastal Georgia (Slaughter 1996, 31). The above narrative suggests Bartram utilizes scenic imagery to characterize the wilderness utopia of the early southeast.

William Bartram's writings (Figure 3.4) are a form of boosterism promoting settlement in the eighteenth century southeast. Bartram himself tried his hand at developing a plantation on the Floridian frontier even though the results were an utter failure. His promotional writings are a part of the history of boosterism in colonial Georgia. Bartram's impression of the Altamaha can be characterized as picturesque and pristine. The picturesque images from his writings would have a lasting impact upon the public's wilderness memory of the region.

Picturesque landscapes are defined as "having the elements or qualities of a picture; suitable for a picture; spec. (of a view, landscape, etc.) pleasing or striking in appearance; scenic" (OED 2009). The picturesque is a landscape aesthetic that developed in eighteenth century Britain. This concept of vision threaded through tourism, architecture, literature and art (Whyte 2002). Tourism in particular developed the use of the picturesque aesthetic. William Gilpin (1724-1804) was a British publisher of picturesque tourist guides that promoted a simple form of the picturesque as a landscape that would make a good painting. Gilpin's basic approach to landscape provided a framework and a continuing tradition among tourists. He popularized the picturesque and turned it into a new way of visualizing the world. According to the architect Renzo Dubbini,

*the picturesque was used between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a code for defining and composing landscape scenes. From Gilpin to Turner or Ruskin, it asserted itself as the art of composing scenes and as a system for analyzing the environment on the basis of material objects, their cultural matrix, and the influence that their environment had exerted on them. (Dubbini 2002, 5)*

While Price and other early writers of the picturesque might disagree, I agree with Dubbini that the picturesque was a framework for composing landscapes. Accordingly, engineers, and I suggest scientists as well, began to use the picturesque as a way to illustrate the relationships between technology, nature and local culture serving as a visual proposal of landscape change (Dubbini 2002). I suggest that William Bartram's *Travels* (1791) was a form of promotional literature that utilized Gilpin's concept of the picturesque to represent the Altamaha River and its hinterlands as a utopia.



**Figure 3.4** Title-page to Bartram's *Travels* (1791). Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Bartram admires the landscapes already created by the colonists. He writes that travel is easy and refreshing along a road that “is strait, spacious, and kept in excellent repair by the industrious inhabitants; and is generally bordered on each side with a light grove, consisting of...trees and shrubs...entwined with bands and garlands of Begonia...overshadowed by tall and spreading trees, as the Magnolia” (Slaughter 1996, 33-34). Waterscapes consisted of canals on the edges of the road that were bordered by magnificent trees “all planted by nature, and left standing, by the virtuous inhabitants, to shade the road and perfume the sultry air” (1996, 33-34). This is the hydrological picturesque; viewing the land through the lens of plentiful water and the possibilities for the landscape. Furthermore, colonial planters utilized the coastal barrier islands as ‘useful’ places of recreation very much like we use them today.

According to Bartram, Sunbury is a

*pretty town [that] is situated on the sound opposite St. Catherine’s Island [north of the Altamaha delta]. There are about one hundred houses in the town neatly built of wood framed, having pleasant Piasas round them. The inhabitants are genteel and wealthy, either merchants, or planters from the country who resort here in the summer and autumn, to partake of the Salubrious Sea breeze, Bathing and sporting on the Sea Islands.* (Slaughter 1996, 431)

The coastal landscape was a recreational pleasure landscape conserved for its scenic beauty and activities such as swimming, picnicking and hunting. He continues his admiration of the waterscape writing that, “on the sea coast of Georgia, I consented, with a few friends, to make a party of amusement at fishing and fowling on Sapello, one of the sea coast islands; we accordingly descended the Alatomaha, crossed the sound and landed on the North end of the island” (Slaughter 1996, 224). He described his camp as “a pleasant situation, under the shade of a grove of Live Oaks and Laurels...on the high banks of a creek...winding through a salt marsh, which had its source from a swamp and savanna (1996, 224). From this site he could see “a comprehensive landscape; the great ocean, the foaming surf breaking on the sandy beach, the snowy breakers on the bar, the endless chain of islands, checkered sound and high continent all appearing before us” (1996, 225). This quote suggests that the English almost immediately prized this landscape and visualized the waters of Georgia as a utopia.

The agrarian utopia, as mentioned above, is expressed by William Bartram as a pristine landscape created by God and as an Arcadian landscape of classical mythological features. According to historian Donald Worster, the Arcadian vision and the Christian pastoral vision could both be found in eighteenth century thought. Worster writes,

*in contrast to the Arcadian ideal, which grew out of pagan culture and carried along in its subsequent revivals the paraphernalia of satyrs, nymphs and the goat-god Pan piping on his flute, the Christian version focused on the image of the Good Shepherd...[who] was more ascetic and otherworldly than his Arcadian counterparts. (1977, 26)*

Bartram's Christian pastoralism was a product of Natural Theology. Natural Theology, or Natural Philosophy, is the study of the role of God in the creation of the natural world (Livingstone 2003). Bartram expresses his belief in Natural Theology in the very beginning of his book. Moreover, Bartram equates scenic nature with natural theology. He writes, "this world, as a glorious apartment of the boundless palace of the sovereign Creator, is furnished with an infinite variety of animated scenes, inexpressibly beautiful and pleasing, equally free to the inspection and enjoyment of all his creatures" (Slaughter 1996, 13). In particular, Bartram suggests that vegetation forms the ideal scenic landscape. He says that

*perhaps there is not any part of creation, within the reach of our observations, which exhibits a more glorious display of the almighty hand, than the vegetable world; such a variety of pleasing scenes, ever changing throughout the seasons, arising from various causes, and assigned each to the purpose and use determined. (Slaughter 1996, 13)*

The above narrative not only suggests Bartram's scenic natural theology but also is indicative of the enlightenment concept of natural economy whereby nature is formed by God to contribute practical uses for humans (Worster 1977). Finally, Bartram's *Travels* are literary memories applied to sites scattered throughout the southeast.

Throughout the southeast the Bartram Society has established a Bartram Trail and has placed markers at sites where Bartram commented upon a particular scene or discovered a particular species of plant or animal. These "sites of memory" (Nora 1989) are derived from his *Travels*; as such I have referred to his writings as literary memories. One site in particular has come to represent the Altamaha as wilderness; the place where the Bartram's discovered the Franklin Tree; named in honor of Benjamin Franklin (Slaughter 1996, 375). According to Bartram,

*this very curious tree was first taken notice of about ten or twelve years ago, at this place, when I attended my father on a botanical excursion...we never saw it grow in any other place, nor have I ever since seen it growing wild, in all my travels, from Pennsylvania to Point Coupe, on the banks of the Mississippi, which must be allowed very singular and unaccountable circumstance; at this place there are two or three acres of ground where it grows plentifully.* (Slaughter 1996, 375-6)

A specimen was collected by Bartram and can be found in gardens throughout the world. Since then, many naturalists have searched for wild specimens but none have been recovered. In many ways, finding the Franklin Tree would be the holy grail of southeastern botany like finding the Ivory-Billed woodpecker would be for ornithology. This literary memory of the Franklin Tree, like the wilderness images in Bartram's travels, turns the Altamaha into a wilderness where contemporary botanists might be able to discover "rare...productions of nature" (Slaughter 1996, 27).

#### CONCLUSION

The wilderness myth of the Altamaha River is a product of literary memories derived from maps and travel writings. Eighteenth-century travel writers describe an agrarian utopia. Agrarian utopias describe areas of profound beauty and possibility. These are foundation narratives that influence settlement. Surveying and mapping, another textual form if you consider geography writing about the Earth, transforms wilderness into humanized landscapes. This resulted in conflict with people who did not fit into these new geographies. William Bartram's *Travels* (1791) serve as an example of the literary memory of wilderness as agrarian utopia and native conflict.

This memory is derived from wilderness scenes and the sites where he describes unique plant and animal species. It can be inferred that contemporary conservation in the Altamaha watershed builds upon this memory. According to Nye, the goal of wilderness restoration is “to return to the historical moment before the national grid had been imposed” (2003, 298). The site where the Franklin Tree was discovered has a marker placed there to commemorate this discovery as representative of a natural past; an historical moment before landscape change and the tree’s extinction in the wild. This site therefore, is not simply to commemorate Bartram’s discovery but it also commemorates the wilderness past that held such natural specimens.

## *Chapter Four*

### **CONSERVATION AND THE PRACTICES OF MEMORY: AFRICAN-AMERICAN LANDSCAPES IN THE ALTAMAHA DELTA**

The Altamaha delta can be considered part of a larger African-American region that includes the U.S South, Caribbean and the northern part of South America. The slave trade brought African cultures to the New World where they established their traditions and an African-American cultural landscape. Today the Altamaha delta is predominately a nature preserve with a growing suburban landscape on its edge; both of which act to erase the history of African-Americans in the delta. Some “sites of memory” (Nora 1989) in the delta have no distinguishing cultural landscape features: they appear to be natural landscapes. Regardless these sites/landscapes are places where events of historical importance to the African American community occurred. This chapter will focus upon the practices of memory associated with lowcountry rice culture and the memorial site of a mass drowning of slaves on St. Simon’s Island.

**TO BE SOLD**, on board the  
Ship *Bance-Yland*, on tuesday the 6th  
of *May* next, at *Afbley-Ferry*; a choice  
cargo of about 250 fine healthy

**NEGROES,**

just arrived from the  
Windward & Rice Coast.  
—The utmost care has  
already been taken, and  
shall be continued, to keep them free from  
the least danger of being infected with the  
**SMALL-POX**, no boat having been on  
board, and all other communication with  
people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

*Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.*

**N. B.** Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the  
**SMALL-POX** in their own Country..

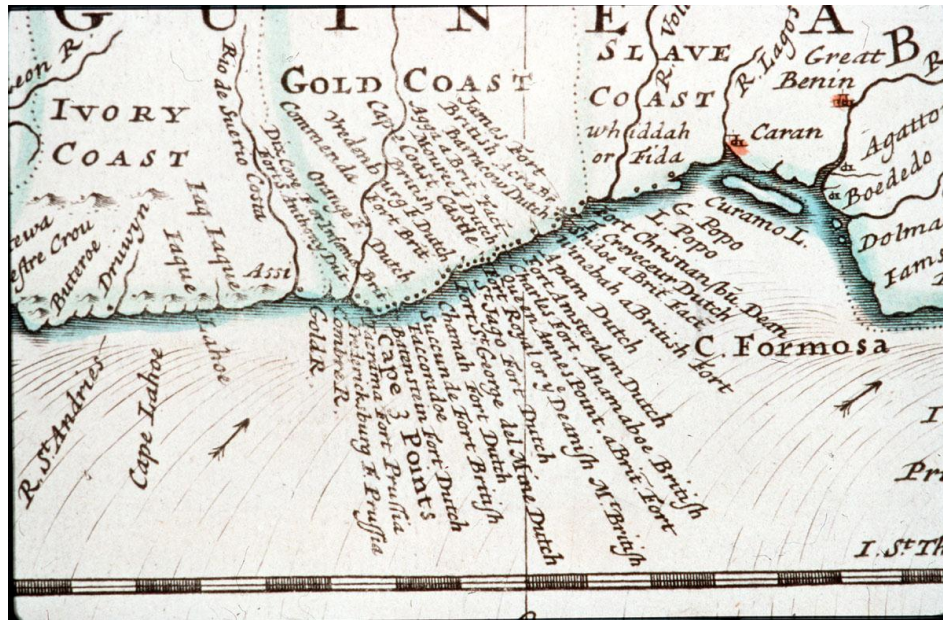


**Figure 4.1** Advertisement for Charleston slave auction. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-10293 as shown on [www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org), sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library.



## THE SLAVE DIASPORA

Most ancestors of African-Americans came to the New World as part of the slave diaspora: the forced migration of Africans as a part of the slave trade. While most Africans were ushered into the Caribbean or South America at least 400,000 did get sold in the United States. Regional patterns of African population distributions show that the regions of the U.S. with the most African-Americans can be found in the plantation districts of the South referred to as the “plantation crescent” (Aiken 2010, 121). In particular, the BlackBelt—named for its black quality soil—has high proportion of African-Americans given that this was the cotton growing region of the Southern U.S. Macon, Georgia, situated on the Ocmulgee tributary, is one city that is an example of this population distribution that falls within the wider Altamaha watershed. The other major region of high African-American population is the lowcountry of South Carolina and Georgia: an historical rice plantation district. Planters in this district wanted Africans from West Africa and Madagascar who had expertise in rice planting (Aiken 2010) (Figure 4.1). Many, if not most, Africans came from the Slave Coast: they were then sold to slavers who housed them on African offshore islands in fortifications (Figure 4.2).

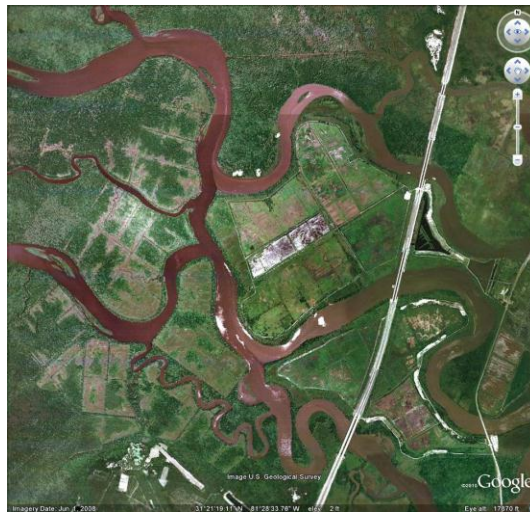


**Figure 4.2** Detail from "To the Right Honourable Charles Earl of Peterborow, and Monmouth, & c. This map of Africa, . . . is most humbly Dedicated by . . . H. Moll Geographer" (London, n.d). The map was published by John Bowles, Thomas Bowles, Philip Overton, and John King. (Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; slide DS1995-588) as shown on [www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org), sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library. Note the British and Dutch forts lining the coast.

They were then transported across the middle passage to plantations or cities such as Savannah and Charleston. Today there is still a high African-American population density in the lowcountry. There are even communities known as Gullah on the South Carolina coast or Geechee on the Georgia Coast who retain African cultural traditions including a syncretic language known as Gullah. These settlement patterns resulted in high African-American populations in the piedmont and the Georgia tidewater.

## RICE CULTURE

Slavery and rice culture moved southward out of the Carolinas into Georgia, establishing a coastal plantation economy that would last until the Civil War. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, rice plantations would become the primary cultural landscape of the estuaries and river deltas of coastal Georgia. Georgia, following South Carolina's example, built a hydraulic society centered on rice agriculture. The Altamaha river delta was particularly suited to the growing of rice. It contains numerous islands that extend from the interior river to the Atlantic (Figure 4.3). These islands were prime rice growing environments being situated at the edge of fresh and saltwater. The freshwater savannas and cypress forests that covered these islands were inundated by water with the rise



**Figure 4.3** The Altamaha Delta. Note the gridded lines in the upper left corner of the image. These are relict irrigation canals used in tidewater rice agriculture. This landscape, while controlled by planters, was a product of African agricultural knowledge. Source: Google Earth.

and fall of the tide. Until the Civil War these environments played a major economic role in the region. After the Civil War many planters attempted to keep their rice plantations afloat, however, the disintegration of slave labor and abandonment of the coastal plantation rice fields created empty landscapes once full of industry (Stewart 1996; Carney 2001; Pillsbury 2006).

#### FORGETTING AND REMEMBERING THE ROLE OF AFRICANS IN RICE AGRICULTURE

Mundungus. An odd word to begin with. The etymology of mundungus can be traced to the Spanish meaning a pig's intestines: a smelly subject that probably gave rise to its meaning as rotted or at the least extremely smelly tobacco. If you have ever walked in the marshland at low tide with the odors of fish carcasses, salt, and mud you would understand mundungus. Not exactly the odor of rotten tobacco but smelly none the less. Out of this smelly imbroglio comes what was, and still is, referred to as Carolina Gold; a West African long-grained rice. Rice landscapes are the most enduring legacy of African watermen in the Altamaha delta. An article in Harper's New Monthly Magazine entitled, *The Rice Lands of the South* (1859) attempts to trace the origins of such rice culture in the lowcountry. One genesis says that in 1694 a landowner by the name of Thomas Smith discovered an abandoned Madagascar craft with a cook's bag of rice which was planted in his garden and given to neighbor's after it was proven successful. Another story credits a Mr. Woodward while yet another points to the efforts of a

Mr. Dubois who was a treasurer for the East India Company (Addison 1859, 724). Already the origins of rice production in the lowcountry had been placed in the hands of Europeans who totally ignored not only African knowledges but removed the origin of this rice to Madagascar instead of West Africa. Geographer Judith Carney, in her book, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2001), addresses the origins and development of rice culture in the lowcountry. Her research posits that the landscapes of rice culture were a product of West African knowledges and imaginations not Euroamerican as has traditionally been suggested.

According to Carney, the fresh water and the tidal hydraulics operated by slaves created them based upon West African traditions (2001), however this “black rice hypothesis” has been disputed (Eltis et al. 2007, 1332). Many slaves came from West Central Africa, the Kongo region, not the Gambia River region where rice production was located (2007). Furthermore, once European planters learned the methods of rice production in the eighteenth century they did not necessarily require the specific expertise of slaves from rice-growing regions. This is apparent in the fact that there were no discernible differences in the numbers of Gambia River slaves in the rice growing districts of South Carolina and Georgia versus tobacco growing regions (2007). Regardless of these debates, African-Americans created a home for themselves in New World environments.

To speak of African-American communities in the Altamaha delta is to speak of the slave trade. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Africans were removed to the New World by Dutch, English, Spanish, Portuguese and U.S. slave traders. Planters from the coastal Carolinas and Georgia preferred African slaves who had the skills and knowledge to grow rice. Thus, it is hard to separate African folk traditions from historical capitalist rice production which in the antebellum South allowed for the retention of African folk culture (Carney 2001). African slaves worked on rice plantations in the Altamaha delta where they were isolated and left to their own devices under a task system that required a certain amount of labor to be accomplished leaving additional time for community and family activities. Isolation and the task system allowed for the formation and maintenance of African-American communities known as Gullah in South Carolina and Geechee in Georgia.

Rice agriculture and preparation are practices remembered by the local African-American community. There were two types of rice agriculture: estuarine and inland. Inland rice planting occurs along the interior floodplains of the Lowcountry Rivers such as the Savannah and the Ogeechee. Estuarine rice planting occurs where the salt and fresh water meet in the tidal marshes. These areas of marshland and uplands were quickly surveyed and divided into a mosaic of property boundaries stretching over both uplands and salt marshes. The

lowcountry rice plantation was a tropical simulacra of African agrarian landscapes. The tropical look and feel of the Altamaha Delta was, in part, a product of the transformations wrought by African slaves who turned the delta into a neo-subtropical African landscape complete with rice fields, African gardens of okra, watermelon, and peas, and West African folk houses and cemeteries. Towards the end of the eighteenth century rice plantations had become the dominant socioeconomic landscape of the estuaries and river deltas of coastal Georgia. South Carolina, and subsequently Georgia, built a hydraulic society centered on rice agriculture (Carney 2001). In those marginal places where the rice fields ended and the cypress trees or marsh began is where slaves made places of their own. These wilderness spaces were as much a home for the slaves as they were haunted and untamed to the planters. In the antebellum past, slaves, many times, would engage in *petit marronage* or ‘layinout’. They would shirk off plantation responsibilities or sneak out to gather food along the coast, in the marsh, and river swamps (Giltner 2006). They made homemade cast nets and fish traps for crabs, shrimp and mullet. They gathered oysters and caught turtles by hand. The delta waterscape of turtles, fishing, shrimping, and oystering is worth preserving not only for the benefits of maintaining biodiversity but also for the preservation of local foodways and subsistence experiences. Rice, while an African import, has, regardless of race, become a regional foodway for all lowcountry families.

I grew up about forty-five minutes from the coast at the interior edge of what could be termed the lowcountry. Like the nineteenth-century Altamaha homesteaders in Caroline Miller's Pulitzer-prize winning novel, *Lamb in his Bosom* (1933), our lifeways were connected to the coast. In fact the culture of the coastal plain has been influenced so much by French, Spanish and African cultures it has been referred to as the Creole coast (Jordan 2002). Rice, for example, was a staple in our household that hearkened back to the production of rice in coastal plantations and delta homes. I recall my mother's fried chicken with rice and gravy. Most of America has potatoes with fried chicken, but not us. To this day I still associate rice with chicken whether it be fried or boiled like in chicken and rice. In the lowcountry this is still called a *pilau*, a Spanish influence. Mulatto Rice, a dish reminiscent of race and creolization in the lowcountry, refers to a tomato pilau; commonly eaten throughout the lowcountry. Rice culture, a product of the African diaspora, is remembered in the foodway practices embedded within the regional culture of the lowcountry and the Altamaha delta.

#### AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEMORIES OF THE EBO DROWNING

African slave societies in the Southern United States lived in enchanted landscapes. Waterscapes in particular were perceived as supernatural or phantasmagoric. According to Pile, phantasmagoria refers to the ephemeral qualities of a landscape (2005). One approach to the phantasmagoria is through



landscapes that are deemed mystical (Chamberlain 2001) or haunted (Richardson 2003). Accordingly, I suggest the African waterscape was both.

Waterways contained mystical places associated with a *genius loci* or spirit of place. African waterscapes were thought to be inhabited by the ‘cymbee’ or *simbi* spirits. Simbi spirits are nature spirits. They are neither good nor evil but both and as such they were respected by African slaves. In particular, these spirits were commonly found in the Africanized lowcountry. *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (1940) was a WPA Georgia Writers Project. Interviews among African-Americans in the Georgia lowcountry elicited numerous tales of spirits. The appendix lists for example spirits associated with food, death, animals, entrances, and rivers. Some even are referred to with specific names or descriptions such as plat-eye.

According to historian Ras Michael Brown, a geologist in 1843 encountered slaves in South Carolina who believed that local springs held spirits called “cymbees.” The geologist further notes that when a planter attempted to build a small wall around a spring an elderly slave argued this would drive away the cymbee (n.d.). Furthermore, interviews from the Georgia Writers Project in the 1930s resulted in establishing a link between African-American beliefs and

African traditions including a relationship between water and spirits. On the Gold Coast of West Africa

*Spirits of rivers and water-holes are greatly respected. They are most powerful spirits, too. They can slay men and they can bring much good fortune. To them are brought many sacrifices of fowls and goats, etc. It is said these spirits live below the river-bed. (1940, 241)*

These spirits helped form a link between the slaves and their ancestral homes while at the same time establishing themselves in a new place thus the waterscape was vital to the establishment of African communities in the New World. Accordingly, this link is evident in the story of Ebo Landing.

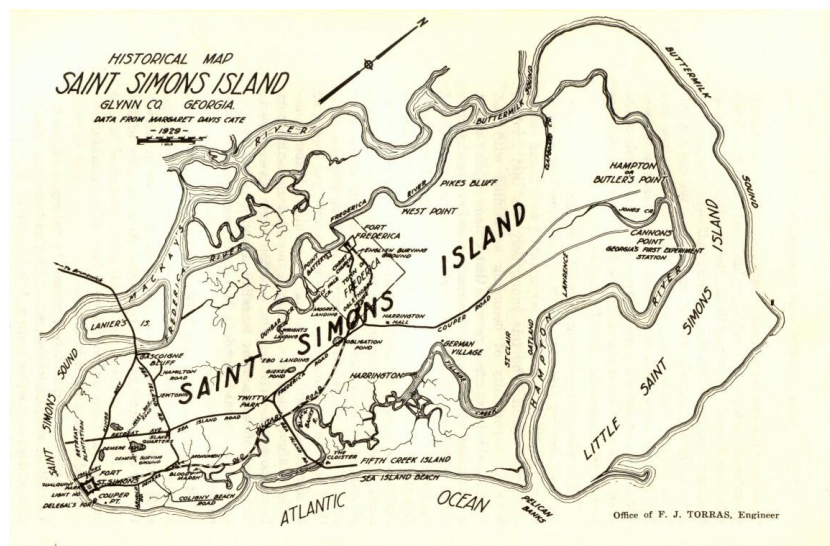
In the early nineteenth century a slave ship came into port on St. Simon's Island. They brought with them slaves for sale from the White Man's grave: those jungles of West and Central Africa, where many Europeans took ill with deadly diseases. You could smell the ship before it ever reached the dock; a smell of unwashed flesh and death where humans were chained and stacked like cordwood. Male rice farmers, their wives and children were marched onto the dock in manacles. They were arranged in a line waiting to meet their fate. The overseer and the slaver took little note of the group chained together near the end

of the dock. These were the Ebo: warriors whose country marks—scars on their faces that symbolized their tribal affiliation—and whose teeth were filed to points should have been recognizable to a rice planter. The Ebo never took to slavery very well. On this day the chained Ebo threw themselves off the end of the dock drowning in the waters of the marsh. It is believed they sang to the simbis as they drowned in an effort to be brought home. Local African-Americans say they turned into white cranes and flew back to Africa. Regardless, the spot where this occurred can still be found on Dunbar Creek: no sign, no recognition. The merging of water and the bodies of African slaves on this site created both a haunted and mystical place among African-Americans in the Altamaha delta.

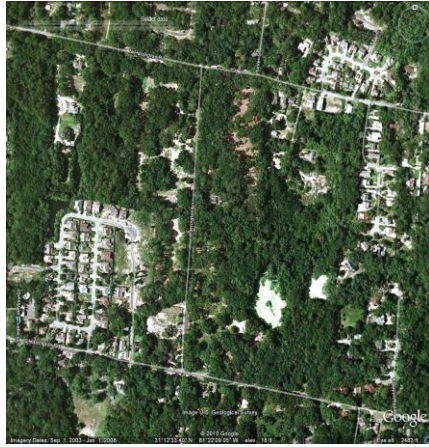
Even though there was not a memorial marking the site a group of scholars, religious leaders and Ebo descendants met on Labor Day 2002 to commemorate the sacrifice of their drowned ancestors. It is said that even today fishermen and crabbers avoid the site of their drowning thus commemorating an enchanted landscape. Most importantly however, the site has not been forgotten and remains important to the local African-American community (Hoffman 2002). According to French Historian Pierre Nora, the most important aspect of sites or landscapes of memory is that there must be a will to remember (1989): therefore, the site of the Ebo drowning definitely qualifies as a memorial landscape.

## THE CONSERVATION OF MEMORIAL SITES AND CONTEMPORARY IMPACTS ON THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

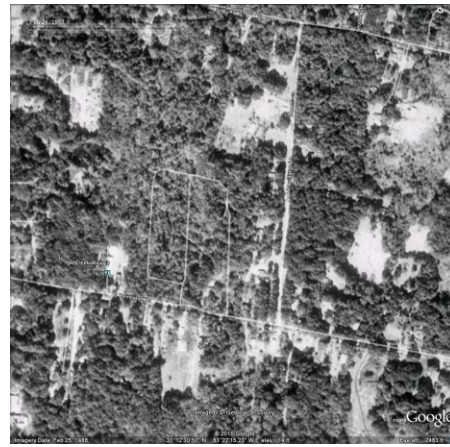
An article in the Christian Science Monitor entitled, *A fight to keep an island's black heritage*, notes that on St. Simons Island local African-American land values have increased to \$350,000 an acre influencing suburban development. Outsiders are “paving over their fish camps, filling in their baptism ponds, and clearing the deep woods where their ancestors drove cattle and kept hogs” (Jonsson 2002). African-Americans in coastal Georgia are losing their cultural landscapes prompting conservation battles.



**Figure 4.3** Map of St. Simon’s Island, Margaret Cate Davis, 1929. Note Ebo Landing after the word “Saint” on the map.



**Figure 4.4** South Harrison Road on St. Simon's Island, 1988. Source: Google Earth.



**Figure 4.5** South Harrison Road on St. Simon's Island, 2011. Note the increase in suburban development. Source: Google Earth.

I have noticed changes to these places over time. My childhood in South Georgia was punctuated with annual trips to the coast. My father and I fished in the tidal rivers and creeks between St. Simon's and Sea Island. Leaving our home in Appling County we drove down highway 341 passing miles of planted pines, swamps, and trailers adorned with confederate flags. After getting ice and gas in Brunswick we turned onto the F.J. Torras causeway that moved across the marshes to St. Simons. Right before you get to the bridge over the Frederica River we would turn left onto a dirt and shell road built above the marsh. This road ran for a couple of hundred yards stopping at a small house next to a tidal creek. In the meantime, years would pass by but we always took the same route. Over time we observed more and more changes; a new golf course here, new subdivisions

there. Some landmarks remained such as the Red Barn restaurant. This is where we turned onto Harrison: a road that led to a public boat ramp. In the 1980s this road ran through an African-American community made up of small vernacular houses sitting underneath large live oak trees. By the 1990s development had started to increase dramatically (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Thus, the year came when we had to drive through a subdivision that was built adjoining this island community just to get to the landing. Judging by the height of the fence separating the subdivision from the live oaks and ramshackle houses these new residents were not impressed by the local island landscapes. This fence represents the political-economic conflict over cultural landscapes in the Altamaha delta. The new residents want to own properties that take advantage of coastal viewsheds and recreation. As a result, what the cultural landscape consists of are suburban houses, subdivisions, condos, shopping centers, and golf courses which are displacing the traditional landscapes of local residents. Look at the names developers give to their high priced subdivisions. There is Hampton Plantation with seventy-five marsh-front lots and Oglethorpe Plantation with five marsh-front lots; a planter lifestyle, or at least landscape, for everyone who can afford it. Million dollar homes and expensive condos, are all vying for marshfront and beachfront property, extending their rights over a common domain—aquatic space and marshland; a regional case of rural gentrification (Walker and Fortmann 2003). Suburban development has begun a process which is slowly

privatizing Georgia's coastal marshlands leading to a top down landscape transformation in favor of the wealthy outsider.

## CONCLUSION

The Altamaha delta has a history of African-American settlement. Africans brought by the slave trade created homes within the confines of the plantation system. Significant places associated with this slave history are remembered by the current inhabitants. Ebo landing is one such place. While the contemporary Altamaha delta today is perceived as a nature preserve, its cultural history—the slave diaspora, rice culture, spiritual landscapes—denies the concept of the delta as a wilderness. In these places deemed natural were thriving communities who utilized local resources and attached meanings to the ‘natural’ landscape.

Memories of places, such as the Ebo landing, are suggestive of the close affiliation African-Americans have with the landscape and it suggests a way to place people back into areas of nature protection. In keeping with the theme of this study, I propose that traditional African-American cultural landscapes can contribute to both nature protection and reinserts people back into conservation areas. Like many enchanted and sacred natural areas worldwide, including Africa, Ebo landing and similar sites could be models for nature protection if they were not under threat from development.

*Chapter Five*

**JAMES HAMILTON COUPER, CHARLES LYELL, AND THE  
LITERARY MEMORIES OF THE TROPICAL ALTAMAHA DELTA**

The nineteenth century Altamaha delta was tropicalized by those who visited the region. The actress Francis Kemble and the nineteenth-century geologist Charles Lyell describe the landscape as one unfamiliar to the southern environment by using descriptive language characteristic of tropicality (Manthorne 1989; Driver and Martins 2005). Lyell, during his travels in North America, describes the subtropical Altamaha delta as a tropical landscape that could be understood using his concept of uniformitarianism. This interpretation was based upon his vision of the watershed and his position as a scientific traveler who already understood the watershed through images; charts, maps, diagrams, and models. A third commentator on the Altamaha delta was James Hamilton Couper. He used his education in hydrology to control and manipulate the waters of the delta to further production of Hopeton; his rice plantation. In this chapter, I show that the tropical Altamaha delta was authored by multiple writers. The significance of tropicality in the Altamaha delta is that it contributes to the image of a ‘natural’ river wilderness which becomes a regional discursive formation



(Peet and Watts 1996) even if this tropicality is not unique to the Altamaha or even to the Southeastern U.S.

#### TROPICAL IMAGERY

Jungles are a state of mind. If this appears confusing remember Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book* (1894) from snowy Vermont and Rousseau painted tropical scenes from greenhouses in Paris. During the nineteenth century the U.S. South, as well as other American regions, saw the tropicalization of their landscapes (Frenkel 1996; Stepan 2002); particularly riverscapes. Not only did writers paint the U.S. South with tropical brushes, they emptied it of human habitation and labor. These representations set up the pristine nature that conservationists later thought devoid of human influence and in need of protection.

Illustrations from *Appleton's* and *Harper's* magazines in the latter nineteenth century suggest that by this time the perception of a tropical U.S. South was firmly embedded in the American imagination (Gamble 2004). In particular, riverscapes were portrayed as tropical jungles, and typically by northern artists.



**Figure 5.1** A (sub)tropical scene of The St. John's and Ocklawaha Rivers from Appleton's Picturesque America Series.

The word jungle comes from the Indian language Hindi in which ‘jāngal’ meant a forest overgrown with vegetation. Specifically, it was applied to riverbanks. Tropical motifs can be found in nineteenth century Floridian illustrations. In *Appleton’s Picturesque America* Series an article entitled “The St. John’s and Ocklawaha Rivers, Florida” contains several illustrations suggesting the tropical nature of southern rivers (Figure 5.1).

Geographer Douglas Gamble has suggested that there is a close connection between the U.S. South and the Caribbean: even more so than the relation of the South to other regions of North America. He suggests that the U.S. South should be included within a wider “Southibbean” region (Gamble 2004). This makes sense given the similarities in climate and environments as well as the historical connections of ethnicity, slavery, and plantation economies. This ‘southibbean’ region roughly corresponds to the area suggested by anthropologist Charles Wagley in a paper entitled “Plantation America: A Cultural Sphere” (1965). According to Wagley,

*this culture sphere extends spatially from about midway up the coast of Brazil into the Guianas, along the Caribbean coast, throughout the Caribbean itself, and into the United States. It is characteristically coastal; not until the nineteenth century did the way of life of the plantation culture sphere penetrate far into the*

*mainland interior, and then only in Brazil and the United States. This area has an environment which is characteristically tropical (except in the southern United States) and lowland. (5)*

Wagley and Gamble have both proposed that the South is a part of a wider region that includes much of the Neotropics. Wagley however, points out that the South is not tropical, seasonal and diurnal temperature variations by definition disqualify it. Nevertheless, literary memories of the nineteenth century Altamaha delta are characterized as tropical. The writings of the actress Francis Kemble serve as an example of these literary descriptions.

Francis Kemble in, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation, 1838-1839* (1863) describes the remains of submerged cypress knees near Butler Island. She writes that “the banks of this canal, when they are thus laid bare, present a singular appearance enough, -- two walls of solid mud, through which matted, twisted, twined, and tangled, like the natural veins of wood, runs an everlasting net of indestructible roots, the thousand toes of huge cypress feet” (83). Assuming that these were the remains of coastal deforestation she writes that, “the trees have been cut down long ago from the soil, but these fangs remain in the earth without decaying for an incredible space of time” (83). What she thought were simply the

result of a deforested cypress swamp were the remains of ancient cypress forests submerged beneath the muddy waters of the delta.

This wilderness was also seen as a place of deformity and chaos. In 1838, while visiting the plantation owned by her husband on Butler's Island, Fanny Kemble describes a landscape so alien to one not familiar with the Altamaha delta but familiar to those who had spent time in the tropics. She wrote, "the whole course of this most noble river is full of shoals, banks, mud, and sand-bars" (Kemble 1863, 51). Continuing on the nature of the delta she envisions that, "the two elements are so fused hereabouts, that there are hardly such things as earth or water proper" (51). To her, the delta "is a fat, muddy, slimy sponge, that, floating half under the turbid river, looks yet saturated with the thick waves which every now and then reclaim their late dominion, and cover it almost entirely" (51). Its water is "cloudy and yellow, like pea-soup...rolling turbid and thick with alluvium, which it both gathers and deposits as it sweeps along with a swollen, smooth rapidity, that almost deceives the eye"(51). Animals in this unfamiliar landscape are "amphibious creatures, alligators, serpents, and wild fowl" (51). She imagines they "haunt these yet but half-formed regions, where land and water are of the consistency of hasty-pudding -- the one seeming too unstable to walk on, the other almost too thick to float in" (51). Her description captures the

intermingling of natural forms and elements whose abundance and constant change is a telltale sign to travelers that they were in a tropical wilderness.

#### CHARLES LYELL'S FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE ALTAMAHA

Lyell is regarded as one of the most important contributors to the field of geology in the early nineteenth century. His *Principles of Geology* (1830)—published 15 years before he set foot at Hopeton—set forth the idea of uniformitarianism, although he did not actually coin this term. This theory states that landscape or geological change over time is uniform. In other words natural processes that are occurring now are the same natural processes that occurred in the past, and thus the present is the key to knowing the past. On his grand tour of the world he found evidence for gradual geological change in such environments as the mud of the Nile, island formation in the Ganges delta, and the Ice Age fossils of Siberia. In *A Second Visit to the United States of North America* (1849), where he was searching for evidence for his theory, he writes upon his geological discoveries while touring the American countryside. Chapters seventeen through nineteen of his book describe his sojourn in the lowcountry and the Altamaha delta. He was there to meet an acquaintance, James Hamilton Couper, which afterwards prompted a continuing correspondence (O'Brien 2004).

Upon arriving in Darien, Lyell is escorted by Couper to Hopeton. Their ascent upriver ended when they reached the outskirts of the plantation. Lyell writes, “from the rice grounds we walked up a bank to a level table land, composed of sand, a few yards above the river, and covered with pines and a mixture of scrub oak” (Lyell 1849, 245). On this upland overlooking the river and plantation fields stood the main house. He writes that here “we spent our time very agreeably for a fortnight” (245). I imagine Lyell narrating a reflect from a daily notebook, telling an organized story of nature that displaces the very labor that made such stories possible in the first place.

I can imagine the two men stamping the mud off their boots and retiring to the parlor to spend the evening before a comfortable fire, it was December after all, discussing Couper’s plantation and his fossil discoveries. Lyell was interested in observing the natural processes of the delta made manifest by the slaves who labored in the tidelands. They made plans to explore the plantation and the lower delta all the way to the ocean. Lyell describes their outing through the delta in a language that evokes a tropical wilderness.

Lyell’s commentary upon the landscape and racial character of the Georgia lowcountry suggests this region was perceived as an extension of the plantation Neotropics. He writes that

*the scenery of the low flat island of Skiddaway had more of a tropical aspect than any of which I had yet seen in the United States. Several distinct species of palmetto, or fan palms, were common, as also the tree, or cabbage palm, a noble species, which I had never seen before. In some of the cotton fields many individuals were growing singly, having been planted at regular intervals to the exclusion of all other trees, and were from twenty-five to forty feet in height...In those fields where the negroes were at work, and where the cotton plants were still standing five or six feet high, with no other trees except these palms, I could well imagine myself in the tropics. (Lyell 1849, 243)*

Traveling further South the tropical landscape continued. On December 31st, Lyell took a steamboat from Savannah 125 miles down the coast to Darien Georgia; a small town located on the northern edge of the Altamaha delta. He writes, upon arriving at Darien “five negroes were very officious in offering their services, and four of them at length adjusted all our packages on their backs” (Lyell 1849, 243). It was a bright moonlit night as the procession made its way towards the inn “under some of the noblest evergreen oaks...their large picturesque roots spreading on all sides, half out of the loose, sandy soil...their boughs hung with unusually long weepers of Spanish moss” (243). “The next morning we were joined by Mr. Hamilton Couper, with whom I have corresponded on geological matters, and whom I have already mentioned as the



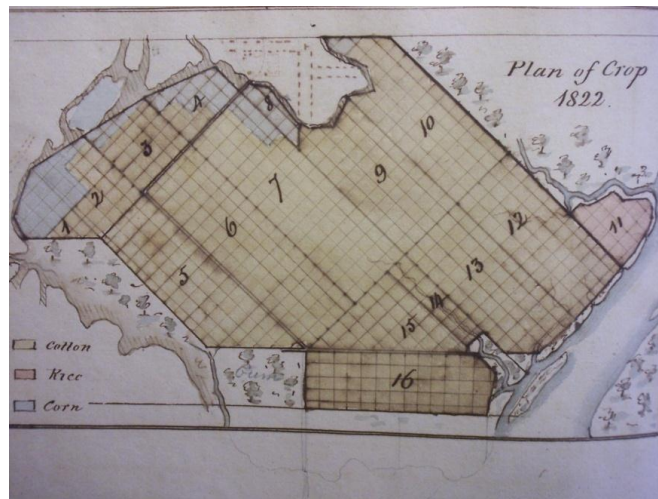
donor of a splendid collection of fossil remains to the museum at Washington” (244). Couper arrived “in a long canoe, hollowed out of the trunk of a single cypress, and rowed by six negroes” (244). Their ascent of the Altamaha presented Lyell with his first view of the river. He describes the riverscape as being “fringed on both sides with tall canes and with cypress...and many other trees, still leafless, which, being hung with gray moss, gave a somber tone to the scenery at this season, in spite of the green leaves of several species of laurel, myrtle, and magnolia” (244). On their way upriver they “saw no habitations, and the solitude was profound” (244). Solitude is a reflection of wilderness harking back to the isolation of ascetics in Hindu and Christian writings (Tuan 1998): it has been a common theme in wilderness writings ever since.

#### JAMES HAMILTON COUPER AND THE DESIGN OF HOPETON

James Hamilton Couper was the owner of Hopeton, a plantation that produced multiple crops on the edge of the Altamaha delta. In 1816 John Couper and James Hamilton bought a large tract of land from William Hopeton of Charleston, S.C. In 1763 Hopeton had received this property in a colonial land grant. Couper and Hamilton purchased additional properties—mostly delta islands—to form the 4,500 acre Hopeton Plantation; named after their friend they bought it from. In 1818 James Hamilton Couper, son of John Couper and a graduate of Yale University, became the manager of Hopeton and its six hundred slaves (Ferguson

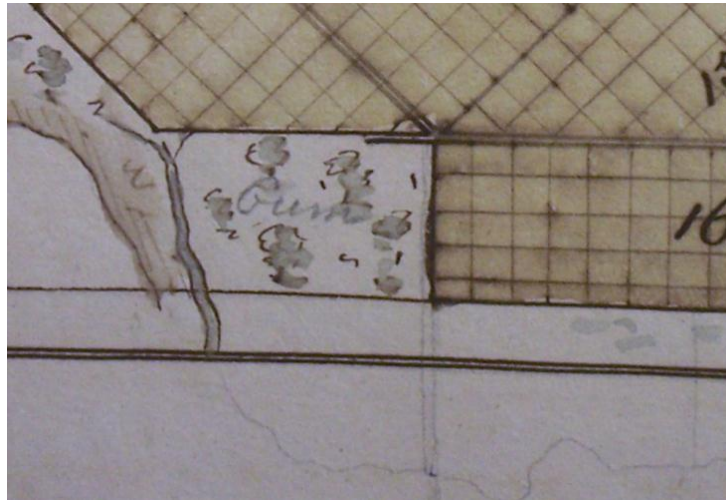
1994). Hopeton grew rice, sugar cane and Sea Island cotton but appeared to be most successful in the production of rice.

Couper, using knowledge obtained from the scientific literature of the day and from observations of hydraulic technology in the Netherlands, became the architect of plantation hydraulics at Hopeton. His plantation crop book suggests the manner in which he asserted control over the aquatic space of the delta wetlands. Hydraulic mastery is defined by the field maps in his crop book (Figure 5.2).



**Figure 5.2** One of James Hamilton Couper's agricultural maps of Hopeton Plantation, 1822. (Volume 3, Account of Cotton Picked at Hopeton, 1818-1831, This volume consists of yearly records for cotton, rice, sugar cane, corn, peas, and other crops; notes about weather, pests, quality of crops and other matters; and a color coded crop plan map for each year, 1820-1831 in the J. Hamilton Couper Plantation Records #185-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)

Lyell's travel narrative suggests the planters were engaging in a war against nature and the dichotomy between wild nature and reclamation in forming the estuarine grid. In the Altamaha delta, the appearance of submerged forests in the rice canals and cuts along with the landscape of chaotic trees fringing the river banks read as a tropical jungle. In 1822 Couper penciled in the word 'gum' on his plantation map indicating the type of forest on the outskirts of the fields. The placement of tree cover surrounding all of Hopeton suggests that the entire area covered by fields was once a bottomland forest (see Figure 5.3). The term "gum" usually denoted a tupelo tree which is a typical tree found in the seasonally or permanently flooded riverine wetlands. These rice swamps were also filled with cypress trees that needed to be removed. Tree removal in the seasonally flooded wetlands required building a platform next to the tree, sometimes twelve feet above the ground, to a height where the tree could be cut. The base of many of these cypress and tupelo trees were so huge they could not be cut at ground level so they were girdled and left to rot over the years. The slow decay of these trees is reminiscent of tropical change whereby the chaos of the jungle is difficult to impose the 'enlightenment grid' of agricultural management upon. The establishment of plantations was a war upon ancient forests. This section has described tropical wilderness as an impediment. Plantations, such as Hopeton, saw subtropical deltas as a wilderness to be conquered and improved.



**Figure 5.3** The term “Gum” penciled in on one of James Hamilton Couper’s crop maps, 1822. (Volume 3, Account of Cotton Picked at Hopeton, 1818-1831, This volume consists of yearly records for cotton, rice, sugar cane, corn, peas, and other crops; notes about weather, pests, quality of crops and other matters; and a color coded crop plan map for each year, 1820-1831 in the J. Hamilton Couper Plantation Records #185-z, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)

#### CHARLES LYELL’S TROPICAL DELTA

Tropicalization of the U.S. South was under way by the early nineteenth century when Lyell made his way through the southern states. According to Lyell, “the scenery...of Skiddaway [on the Georgia coast North of the Altamaha delta] had more of a tropical aspect than any which I had seen in the United States” (1849, 235). I suggest his mental geography of the U. S. South mapped it as an extension of the Neotropics; this is not unusual. Lyell was interested in observing the natural processes of the delta made manifest by the slaves who labored in the

tidelands. They made plans to explore the plantation and the lower delta all the way to the ocean. Lyell describes their outing through the delta in a language that evokes a tropical wilderness.

Charles Lyell and James Hamilton Couper's meeting in the Altamaha delta illustrates the globalization of scientific ideas through correspondence and travel as well as shows the materiality of those ideas as they were used to transform the plantation landscape. These elite ideas are dispersed through universities and like-minded scientists such as Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace influencing wealthy amateurs such as Couper. Lyell's ideas, enacted through Couper, erase slaves as participants much less the authors of the delta landscape transforming the landscape instead into a series of natural processes that science alone can unravel.

Travelers through the Deep South, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, were associating southern riverscapes with tales drawn from other travelers in the global tropical South. It made sense that in 1845 a wandering scientist would describe tropical spectacles in a land that a mere fifty years earlier was described as a Mediterranean utopia. Lyell's writings suggest that during the early nineteenth century the South was undergoing a process of tropicalization. Tropicalization, as a type of geographic imagination, was being applied to many other regions of the world it had never been associated with before such as North

Africa (Stepan 2002). Science writers who traveled the world were borrowing a textual attitude created by those who had already traversed tropical regions such as Humboldt, Darwin, and Wallace.

According to geographer David Livingstone, the reception and production of scientific ideas varies from place to place. Evolution, for example, appeared to go hand-in-hand with the tropical landscape. It is no wonder it received a cold reception in Russia where “a meager population and extreme climatic severity did not fit at all well with Darwin’s picture of teeming life-forms or Wallace’s lush tropical vegetation” (Livingstone 2003, 123). In the same manner the Altamaha delta was tropicalized given it’s similarities to those tropical landscapes visited by other European naturalists.

During the course of transforming the natural landscape into a rice plantation nineteenth century planters came across these submerged stumps underneath the saltmarsh. According to William Hodgson, Orientalist, linguist, and planter scientist from Savannah, the saltmarshes “undoubtedly were firm land, and covered with forests of cypress, oak, magnolia, tupelo, and other trees” since planters regularly discover “submerged and imbedded strata of the stumps of these trees, at a distance of four feet below the soil of tide marshes” (Hodgson 1846, 19). Couper drew what is possibly the first geological profile of the

Altamaha Delta for inclusion in Hodgson's lecture on the Megatherium entitled *Geological Profile from the Ocean to the Sand Hills in Glynn County Georgia* (1846). He points out these submerged forests referring to where the river, salt marsh, and mainland connect as an "Inland Swamp Formation with stumps" (Hodgson 1846).

On January 4, 1846 Couper and Lyell traveled by canoe from Hopeton to Couper's summer house on St. Simon's Island. Along the way Lyell describes vegetation changes, writing that "as we approached the sea and the brackish water, the wood bordering the river began first to grow dwarfish, and then, lowering suddenly, to give place entirely to reeds" (1849, 249-50). It must have been a low tide since he notes exposed "buried stumps and stools of the cypress and pine...in every section of the bank" (249-50). This observation sparks his imagination; illuminating past changes to the coastal landscape. He writes that, "the occurrence of these in the salt marshes clearly demonstrates that trees once flourished where they would now be immediately killed by the salt water" (249-50). He imagines that "there must have been a change in the relative level of land and sea, to account for their growth, since, even above the commencement of the brackish water, similar stumps are visible at a lower level than the present high tide, and covered by layers of sedimentary matter, on which tall cypresses and other trees are now standing" (249-50). These observations lead him to conclude

“the following sequence of events” (249-50). Sometime in the past “an ancient forest was submerged several feet, and the sunk trees were killed by the salt water; they then rotted away down to the water level (a long operation)” (Lyell 1849, 249-50). He observed this process in action when he “saw cypresses at Hopeton, which had been purposely killed by girdling or cutting away a ring of bark, which stood erect on the borders of the rice grounds after thirty years, and bid fair to last for many a year to come” (1849, 250). Over time “layers of sand were thrown down upon the stumps; and finally, when the surface had been raised by fluvatile sediment, as in a delta, a new forest grew up over the ruins of the old one” (250). Finally, Lyell saw the Altamaha delta as a tropical natural landscape that could be deciphered by science.

## CONCLUSION

Rivers in the nineteenth century U.S. South were perceived as tropical ‘jungles’. They were tropicalized in the sense that they were pictured as places with an overabundance of vegetation, fecund and rotting. Travel narratives, such as Kemble’s and Lyell’s are literary memories which evoke landscape imagery of a tropical delta. Kemble saw the delta as exotic tropicality while Lyell perceived the delta as a natural landscape to be decoded by science. James Hamilton Couper transformed the delta landscape by adapting his fields to tropical hydrological knowledge derived from Lyell, his education at Yale and fieldwork expertise



gained while in Holland. All, in their own way, authored the tropical wilderness image of the Altamaha delta. This tropicalization created a regional discursive formation in the form of a 'natural' image of the Altamaha given the imagery of deformity, chaos and jungle atmospheres as exhibited in the nineteenth century travel literature of the watershed.

## *Chapter Six*

### **LOCAL CONSERVATION AND THE LIVED MEMORIES OF HERDERS AND SWAMPERS IN THE ALTAMAHA BACKCOUNTRY**

The lived memories of the Altamaha backcountry are of rural livelihoods. The two livelihoods that most characterized the culture of the coastal plain backcountry were cattle herding and logging. Herders utilized the open savannas as a range for piney woods cattle, derived from cattle introduced by the Spanish in the seventeenth century. In the floodplains swampers cut timber to raft downriver to Darien on the coast. Memories of these activities continue to shape culture in the region even as the area is transforming to new economies and the natural landscapes are deemed wilderness. This chapter is an overview of the lived memories of herding and swamper communities on the edge of the Altamaha river floodplain and their role in local conservation.

#### **HERDERS**

*Savanna(h)* is a West Indian word used to define a grassland interspersed with trees leaving an open canopy. Initially, the eighteenth and nineteenth century wiregrass savannas of the interior coastal plain supported both a Native and European herding culture that utilized the wide-open spaces underneath the

longleaf pines (Jordan 1993). The cowpen culture of the Creole coast was uniquely adapted to this Caribbean rimland. Cattle were the descendants of Spanish herds: lean and wild they were capable of surviving in this southern wilderness that held such predators as black bears, alligators, panthers (mountain lions), wolves, and poisonous snakes. Herders called their cattle into cowpens in the evening for protection during the night (Jordan 1993; Sluyter 2009). This herding culture continued into the twentieth century. The herder's view encompassed the entire savanna landscape: the open longleaf pine savanna that was more grassland than forest, the creeks that snaked their way through this forest creating ecotonal edges between themselves and the savanna, hammocks that held large evergreen live oaks, and sandhills that rose suddenly up from the savanna floor that snaked across the coastal plain.

The flatwoods of the Altamaha hinterlands were settled by a Creole herding culture that, over time, was associated with Scots-Irish ethnicity. By the latter eighteenth century, the botanist William Bartram noticed that the “uninhabited wilderness...[of] high pine forests [and] dark grassy savannas” contained cowpens (Slaughter 1996, 39-40). He describes his encounter of

*a habitation...[where] the people received me very civilly. I staid here all night, and had for supper plenty of milk, butter, and very good cheese of their own*

*make, which is a novelty in the maritime parts of Carolina and Georgia; the inhabitants being chiefly supplied with it from Europe and the northern states.*  
(Slaughter 1996, 40)

It could be argued that a herding culture, had by the time of Bartram, fully established itself in this landscape. Herding had become a common practice in Spanish Florida, the American lowcountry and the Creek backcountry. Moreover, many southerners are thought to be the descendants of North Britains who drove their cattle with bullwhips and dogs along trails from the highlands to the lowlands and coastal ports of the Scottish shore (Fischer 1989; Jordan 1993).

Some of their folk traditions are evident in southern cultural history. While driving cattle out of the Scottish highlands they slept on the ground and ate blood pudding; a mixture of oats, milk, and blood taken from a cow's vein. A folk song entitled Young Emily illustrates this occupation in the lowlands of Scotland. The words, as sung by North Carolina ballad singer Donna Ray Norton (2008), are "young Emily was a fair maid, she loved a driver boy, he drove in the main for some gold to gain, way down in the lowlands low." North British is an accurate description given that the ethnic background of 'poor whites' in the South is debated by those who believe they are Celtic (McWhiney 1988), Anglo-Scots (Fischer 1989), or a hybrid population made up of "English, Celts, Germans,

American Indians, Swedes, and Finns” creating a new and unique culture (Jordan 1989, 9-10).

Regardless of national origin, the majority of backcountry southerners were known by the pejorative term ‘cracker’ (McWhiney 1988). Cracker is a North British term meaning braggart (Fischer 1989). Herding however, was a practice so associated with this group that the meaning of the term cracker became associated with the cracking of their bullwhips as they moved cattle across the open range of the U.S. South (Remington 1895). I remember as a child visiting my cousin J.J. His grandfather, Jack Craven, raised a great many cattle off of Ten Mile road in rural Appling County, Georgia. He was particularly fond of Brahmas. His barn contained bullwhips curled around nails on the wall. We would practice cracking those whips for the day we would become cow hunters. Southern cattle herders were descended from Anglo-Scottish border reivers: *reiver* is a Gaelic term meaning raiders or outlaws (McWhiney 1988). They migrated through the port of Philadelphia moving almost immediately into the Appalachian backcountry. They moved south along the Appalachian highlands diffusing into the piedmont and the



**Figure 6.1** A herder of the South Atlantic Coastal Plain referred to by Frederic Remington as a "Cracker Cowboy." Source: Wikimedia Commons.

southeastern coastal plain. Their culture was uniquely adapted to the backcountry environment: fatalistic, violent, and caring little for material possessions (Fischer 1989).

On the other hand, the notion of backcountry adaptation is debated. While Fischer (1989) focuses upon the culture of the border reivers as the influence upon backcountry lifeways, Jordan and Kaups (1989) believe that adaptation to the backcountry environment was a process of Anglo-Scot acculturation from the Finns. Regardless of these debates, many poor whites in the twentieth-century South, those who fall under the appellation cracker, “hillbilly, peckerwood, honkie, doughface, raw-gum chewer, white trash, and redneck,” continued to practice traditional livelihoods characterized by open range herding, tending truck gardens, hunting, and fishing (McWhiney 1988, xv). While the cultural identity of these herders appears tied to northern Britain their cultural-ecological adaptations, for the most part, were derived from West Indian or Caribbean sources. Folk characteristics such as bullwhips, herd dogs, cowpens, and stock ponds point to a mixture of cultural influences. In conclusion, the cattle herders of the Deep South coastal plain consisted of a regional culture formed by a creolization derived from the mixture of British, French, Spanish, African, and Native American influences but were perceived as mainly Scots-Irish (Sluyter 2009).

## SWAMPERS

D.W. Meinig referred to the post-war South as “an exotic province to be explored and described” (1986, 193). And it was. After the Civil War, Northerners perceived the empty landscapes of the South, including the Altamaha River valley and delta, as a “wilderness” full of promising resources waiting to be exploited. The virgin pine uplands and the floodplain forests filled with tracts of cypress represented a southern economic frontier to northern investors. During reconstruction, northern timber barons bought thousands of acres of land while many small local farmers worked as laborers cutting timber and running log rafts down the river to Darien (Figure 6.2). It was during this era that the hydraulic culture of the Altamaha River reached its zenith (Stewart 1996; Morrison 2003). Many herders and yeomen farmers turned to logging.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century Altamaha was the focal point of the region. At no time before or since have so many people lived upon the river margins and floodplain. On the river itself there were loggers and raftsmen, commercial fishermen selling their catch right from their boats, engineers clearing snags and building jetties to direct the flow of water, and steamboat workers yelling, “bow to the white, bow to the injun,” determining the best direction for the boat to find the deep water and to avoid snags, rocks, and bars (Morrison





**Figure 6.2** Remnants of a log raft the author's great-grandfather ran on an Altamaha mudbank, 2004. Source: Photograph in the author's collection.

2003). This phrase was a remnant of the time when the Altamaha was a western boundary between the Creeks and the state of Georgia. Bow to the white referred to the north side of the Altamaha where European settlers had established themselves. “Bow to the injun” referred to the south bank where the Creeks maintained their territories (Morrison 2003).

As steamboats became ubiquitous on southern rivers, bluffs became the nodes in riverine transportation networks. These bluff landings would attract people throughout the countryside to sell goods, pick up mail, or pay for passage to towns on the boat’s route. Current residents who live along the Altamaha still retain place-names coined by poleboat and steamboat captains. Prominent bluffs along the Altamaha include Buckhorn Bluff, Eason’s Bluff, White Bluff, Sister’s Bluff, Beard’s Bluff, and Oglethorpe Bluff (Morrison 2003). On the river landings, people would wait for the steamboats to gather news, sell products, or hitch a ride to Macon, Darien or other points along the river (Morrison 2003). All this industrial activity would not only mark the zenith of hydraulic culture but also its death knell. The industrial activity on the Altamaha from the 1870s to the 1920s, in particular commercial fishing and logging, would leave a pauperate landscape in its wake (Williams 1989).



**Figure 6.3** A view of the Altamaha River in Wayne County, Georgia, 1903. Note the workboat moored on the bank. Today the river is empty of all but recreational boating. In the early twentieth century working boats were still a feature of the Altamaha riverscape. Source: RMHP.



**Figure 6.4** Photograph of a log raft on the Ohoopee River, a tributary of the Altamaha River, 1903. The livelihood of timber rafting was the focus of swamper culture. Source: RMHP.

The expansion of railroads in the South Georgia interior would turn people away from the river landings toward convenient railroad locations on the uplands outside the floodplain. Here, towns would develop in the wake of industrial activity that pushed activity away from the river and toward the interior piney woods. The new and cheaper transportation network afforded by railroads made the Altamaha watershed a relict industrial landscape (Williams 1989).

Those who chose to live in the riverine swamps where they would cut timber from boats during high water or pull them out wading through the snake infested wetlands were given the nickname swampers (Williams 1989) (Figure 7.4). The Altamaha River would become one of the major transport rivers in the southeast for the floating of longleaf pine and cypress to ports on the coast (1989). By the first decades of the twentieth century the floodplain timber had been depleted. Here and there the Altamaha swampers, who could no longer make a living running rafts to Darien, would remain on their small farms eking out a living by growing tobacco, raising a few cattle and hogs, and continuing to use the river and its floodplain to hunt and fish. They saw the river floodplain as useful nature but instead of mere extraction they created sustainable homesteads based upon traditional cracker livelihoods (Ray 1999).



**Figure 6.5** Graveyard of Little Rock Primitive Baptist Church on sandhills about half a mile from Lynn's Bridge on the Ochoopee River (graves covered with high neatly shaped mounds-shaped by paddle in foreground-some decorated with mussel shells, etc), 1915. The paddle and use of mussels suggests a strong riverine culture among those communities who lived in the Altamaha watershed. Source: RMHP.

The landscapes of these swampers would depend upon both a working knowledge and a sustainable resource ethic in relation to the river and the floodplain environment (Miller 1933). In conclusion, the seasonal practice of cutting timber and running log rafts for sale in Darien on the coast created a unique *genres de vie* or ‘way of life’ (Vidal de la Blache, 1911) for rural communities who lived on the margins of the Altamaha River floodplain (Figure 6.5).

#### REMEMBERING DAVIS LANDING: AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY OF LOCAL CONSERVATION

In this section I utilize auto-ethnography as a way to narrate the lived memories of local conservation. Auto-ethnography is the use of individual experiences by an author to investigate and understand wider cultural phenomena (Butz and Besio 2009). I suggest that my memories are lived memories of rural life and local conservation on the Altamaha River. While I do not suggest that every individual in the community I grew up in remembers these sites the same way, what matters is that these sites of lived practices are ‘memorialized’ in local memory even though they may not retain physical form. While the cultural landscapes associated with some of these practices may have disappeared, these sites where actions took place retain an “aura of the past” (Hoeschler and Alderman 2004, 349).

The Davis Landing community was founded in the early twentieth century by Lawton Davis (Grandpa Doc) on a rafting trip taking felled timber to Darien, Georgia (see previous Figures 6.2 and 6.4). After floating the logs to Darien, at the mouth of the Altamaha, ancient cypress and heart-pine timbers were then loaded onto ships that transported them worldwide. The timber rafters had to walk back upriver, some over a hundred miles, to get back to the logging camps or to their houses set back in the pine woods that skirted the river and spread across the coastal plain. On one of these trips back upriver my great-grandfather encountered a bluff overlooking the muddy waters, cooled by old-growth live oaks, with a savanna stretching beneath them leading to a half-moon lake. He bought this land thinking it would be a nice place to settle. The community that formed around Davis Landing, as the bluff came to be called, stretched from the river's edge into the longleaf pine uplands. His children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren carved farms along the branches (i.e., small creeks) that ran down the sandy hills into the river bottoms (Figure 6.8). These branches served as property boundaries. Our property, for example, was separated from my uncle's by a branch.





**Figure 6.6** Country store at Davis Landing, ca. 1960. An apartment was upstairs and the store was on the bottom floor. Source: Photograph in the author's collection.



**Figure 6.7** Country store during a river flood, ca. 1980. Source: Photograph in the author's collection.



**Figure 6.8** Farmland on the uplands above the Altamaha River floodplain, 2011. Note the thick growth of trees down the middle of the image. This tree line follows the curves of a creek which was set as the property boundaries. These creek lowlands many times will remain undeveloped as the creek shifts its course and the property line is always in question: an unintended local conservation landscape. Source: Google Earth.

Given that the water is never fixed, the actual property boundary was always in dispute. This meant that some of the trees and the environment along branches were left relatively undisturbed. Remote images of farms along the Altamaha River illustrate the unintended consequences of metes and bounds property boundaries (Figure 6.8). While this may be the creation of an unintended conservation landscape, I would argue it is still environmental stewardship given that it requires maintenance of the branch's natural landscape to maintain the property boundary.

When relatives or friends came to visit, my father enjoyed taking them on a tour of our woods. While the term 'woods' could refer to a variety of forested landscapes, to us it meant something specific. Our woods were the forests of the Altamaha River floodplain: characterized by wide-spreading oaks, tall and ancient cypress, large loblolly pines, hollow tupelos, and smaller ironwood. Underneath the canopy were canebrakes, sloughs, and ponds where dwelt turkeys, deer, bobcat, alligators, otters, indigo snakes, rattlesnakes, copperheads, and the occasional black bear. While I did not think so at the time, it is admittedly, a special landscape in the contemporary southern United States.

Local communities valued the swamp as a place to hunt and maintain populations of feral hogs. The main game animals were whitetail deer, alligator,

black bear and turkey along with raccoons and squirrels. I recall the walk to our deer-stand set far back near the river. It was a good couple of miles to the stand in the early morning darkness. I and my father walked in the dark underneath towering oaks, through canebrakes and in empty sloughs finally arriving at the stand that looked out over the river with the sandbar on the other side. While game animals were more populous, alligators and black bear remained scarce but their numbers have slowly increased. These old-growth oak trees preferred the higher ground above the sloughs. Feral hogs grazed on mast underneath these oaks and hid amidst the canebrakes that stretched for acres in the understory. These feral hogs were valued by locals who would set traps for them or catch them with dogs. Cypress hog pens in the swamp were built to house them where they were fattened for slaughter.

The swamp itself was full of places where storied livelihoods were played out; tales of fishing, hunting, cutting, timber, running cattle, or other occurrences of daily life. If you travel past my Grandpa Doc's house, turn at the edge of an old fence, cross the branch, you enter our patch field. I recall as a child sitting up at night with my father to keep wild hogs out of our corn; you could hear the grunts and squeals in the darkness as wild boar made their way through the stalks. Moving down the road you cross a slough, over a bridge made of sand and old bricks and concrete, into the swamp. The forest becomes darker and cooler here.

A floodline runs about twenty feet up the sides of trees. The road is little more than a track moving through the forest of water oaks, tupelo, and cypress. Sloughs smelling of rank plant litter run throughout the swamp.

The center of our community was Davis landing; a river landing on the edge of the Altamaha. It was here, as mentioned above, where the community was founded. It is also here where neighbors and family spent their summers, moored their boats, and gathered for Sunday dinners and birthdays. My great-grandfather sold this property to my Uncle who maintained a small store on the site (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7). He probably never made any money with it. Most of the merchandise he gave or sold to us local children. We would spend summers swimming off the sandbar and then go get a coke and a snack. All soft drinks in Georgia are cokes; unless you bought an RC Cola and a moon pie. The store had a concrete front porch with an old metal coke sign next to the door. Cane poles for sale leaned against the edge of the building. Inside was a dusty wood floor with a refrigerator to the left that many times held a watermelon that would be cut for everyone; on the right was an old soda cooler with a top sliding door. We reached in and got a bottle of coke. I was also partial to Fanta grape or orange soda. Large glass candy jars were behind the register and on a shelf in the back. Salted peanuts were dropped into your bottle of coke. There was an apartment above the store and a shelter that hung over the side. Under the shelter were johnboats in drydock

and other fishing equipment. Most everyone kept johnboats anchored on the bank in front of the store. Friends and family met here to show off their fish and relax after swimming. A large barbeque pit to the side was used for Sunday dinners. Men would stay up all night preparing barbeque for the next day. Tables were laid out under the trees filled with all kinds of good food. This place is a montage of live oaks, river swimming, barbeques and smoky fires, the slick feel of catfish, the taste of coke and peanuts, the smell of boat exhaust, and coffee. My Aunt Levita, who lived in the apartment above the store for a time, made the best breakfast complete with coffee and a touch of condensed milk for us kids. This store serves as a reminder of hidden places; of storied landscapes. It could only be reached by boat during the flood season. The water bounded the community from the outside world allowing their social history to continue unabated, for a time. This storied landscape was a protected place.

The slough was maintained so that boats could reach an oxbow called half-moon lake. Live Oaks on the landing were never cut shading the property. The barbeque pit was always there for the family to use. Over time some land was sold and more people came to use the property but it still remained the center of the community. Surrounding the landing on the South bank of the river were parcels of the floodplain owned by family members (Figure 6.9). This land was used for hunting and fishing. The floodplain contains deep holes where water, even during

the dry parts of the year, can be found. These were prime fishing spots. Similarly, I have been told my grandfather went ‘coonin’ for catfish—in Oklahoma they call it noodling and act like they invented it, but the tradition goes back to Native Americans. He would wade in the sloughs feeling around the bottoms of cypress and tupelo trunks for the slick feel of a catfish. I imagine his hand would be scraped by the rough sandpaper feel of the catfish’s mouth. Similarly I imagine slaves would catch fish in this manner feeling along for catfish, sometimes at night, to supplement their meager diet of rice, vegetables, and a little pork. Turtles too I imagine. I know how they did this. As children we would feel with our toes in the shallows of the sandbars for the rubbery backs of baby soft-shelled turtles. We would catch them avoiding their mouths which given a chance would nip the fingers. We let them go and searched for more watching them slither across the sand in the river. Finally, the destruction of these rural places came with commercial fishing and the recreational practices of outsiders.

I have memories of sandbars that stretched for a hundred yards in either direction; mullet jumping in the shallow waters inviting locals to fish for them with moss and treble hooks; ancient logs and stumps, eroded from banks sometime in the past, jutting out of the water where they were deposited by the current. Otters used the steep cut banks for play. We would occasionally see them slide in the water and run quickly back up the bank for another go. Not unlike





**Figure 6.9** Meanders on the Altamaha River. Note the amount of forested land alongside the river covering the floodplain. A change in the color variation of the forest in the center of the photograph is a product of the Google earth imagery not a land-use distinction. Ground-truthing and discussions with local inhabitants acknowledge that the land south of the river has not been cut in the floodplain for over 70 years. Many times local families, including the author's, will keep the floodplain in a natural state. This is a local conservation practice for the purpose of hunting and fishing. Source: Google Earth.



local kids who rolled down the banks of the slough that entered half-moon lake, an oxbow lake off the river, inside intertubes.

During times of flood the river stretched for miles into the surrounding forest. Roads became openings in the trees where we would motor boats out to the main channel. Locals adapted to the whims of the river. Trailers, sitting on telephone poles above the flood, became isolated by the waters. Fish used this time to spawn in the flooded timber. Underneath massive tupelo and cypress I recall catching the fry of mudfish in my baseball cap as we paddled through the flooded timber; a good time to set out trotlines or fish in the floodplain. My father recalls catching fish in a flooded cornfield that bordered the swamp. These storied waterscapes were protected and valued.

Aquatic sites might consist of particular tree sticking above water from the bottom of a slough remembered as an unchanging landmark since my great-grandfather's time. Sites can also change quickly such as the streams that form through sandbars as the river rises and falls. I can remember schools of mullet moving through the shallow waters of these sandbar streams; flashes of sunlight hitting against my ankles as they swam past me and disappeared into the murky depths of the cut-off. The movement of the waters in particular spots on the river are characterized as aquatic places such as whirlpools, eddies, and deep holes.

Other sites include log rafts stuck in mud-banks from the timber rafting era; known only by locals since they are underwater much of the year. Furthermore, drawing from the following narrative I suggest fishing influenced the protection of the Altamaha waterscape.

I used to get up at four in the morning with my father to check trotlines. Days before we had taken our boat upriver; landing on a sandbar we filled an old croker sack with sand tying the end of the trotline to the sack the other end we tied to a tree root on the bank. Motoring out into the current the line stretched behind us till it was tight and just a little upstream where we dropped it over the side. After placing all the lines with hooks on the trotline we went to find bait. If you knew where to look you could find Catawba trees in the swamp, usually just behind sandbars. Locals dug these up to plant in their yards to have worms close by just in case they got the bug to go fishing. In the spring the trees were full of yellow and black catawba worms eating the leaves off the trees. Other times we seined the shallow waters off the sandbar for minnows. Crawfish also made good bait. My father had devised a metal pole attached to an iron square surrounded with a wire mesh. We could throw this out over ditches and ponds and drag it along the bottom to catch crawfish. We kept them alive underneath wet moss in a washtub till we baited our lines.

I recall the darkness as we made our way upriver. I sat at the front of the boat, eyes streaming from the wind, scanning the water for the telltale sign of water swirling around stumps situated just under the water waiting to catch our boat-motor. We slowed to the edges of a bank or glided into a tree where the trotline was tied up. One morning we turned off the motor and paddled to the bank where our line was tied to the root of an oak tree leaning over the water. The river had rose overnight forcing my father to reach under a hollow log into the water to catch hold of the line. As he reached across the opening of the log we heard a sound similar to steam escaping a kettle: “hsssssss.” We backed off and looked up the hollow and there was an alligator situated just inside. My father had stretched his arm right across that mouth full of teeth. He disappeared out of sight leaving us to our line. I recall the cool of the water as I felt the trotline for the familiar tug that signaled a large flathead, blue or channel catfish was further down under the swift waters towards the center of the river. Fog rose with the daylight as we motored our way back to the landing with a boat full of fish. We kept them in the housing of an old air conditioner unit turned into a fish-pen that stayed half-in half-out of the water. All this in time to catch the school bus as it made its way up the dirt road to our house around six am. Accordingly, the river was protected by limiting development and maintaining fishing and hunting sites. Until recently, there was limited development along the river. Landings were limited and many were in the hands of local owners who controlled access to the

river. The sloughs and ponds of the floodplain were zealously guarded against outsiders attempting to access these areas for fishing or hunting. Finally, this short auto-ethnography illustrates rural memories of local lifeways suggesting an attachment to places and the reasons behind local conservation.

## CONCLUSION

Traditional rural livelihoods in the Altamaha backcountry were primarily focused upon herding and logging. Rural communities that formed on the edge of the Altamaha River floodplain engaged in both of these seasonal practices. This combination of yeomen herding/farming and timber cutting helped maintain these communities until after WWII. Locals retain memories of these livelihoods associated with sites where ‘Grandpa’ used to cut timber, fire woods, shoot gators, etc. I suggest that locals actively preserve areas for hunting and fishing but also to recall the past. This I term lived memories: the memories of past activities and the preservation of landscapes to memorialize these memories. Hunting and fishing are not only subsistence activities but also are practices which help people recall the past. This is accomplished through storytelling associated with places. This chapter has utilized auto-ethnography to illustrate the lived memories of rural events and practices which I suggest inspires locals to preserve the floodplain landscape not for nature, although that is a result, but as a cultural landscape.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **REMEMBERING CHARLES HERTY AND THE CONSERVATION OF LONGLEAF PINES**

Longleaf pines once covered the hinterlands of the Altamaha watershed. By the early nineteenth century logging and the naval stores industry had taken their toll on the longleaf pine. Charles Herty, a University of Georgia chemist, proposed a new method of turpentine to conserve longleaf pines. Given Herty's subsequent notions of pine plantations for paper using quick growing shortleaf pines, old-growth longleaf pines can be now be found in only a few forests throughout the southeastern U.S. In this chapter, I suggest that Charles Herty both saved and destroyed the southeastern longleaf pine thus creating the contemporary focus upon its preservation in parks and bioreserves. Two memorial sites focusing upon longleaf pines, one is at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro Georgia, the other is a small grove of protected longleaf pines in the Moody Forest Nature Preserve in Appling County Georgia, illustrate how landscape is used to memorialize conservation.

## CHARLES HERTY

Charles Herty was a native Georgia chemist born in Milledgeville on December 4, 1867 (Figure 7.1). His education led him to the University of



**Figure 7.1** Charles Herty. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Georgia (UGA) in Athens. He would subsequently earn a doctorate in chemistry from Johns Hopkins in 1890. In 1891 he became an instructor of chemistry at UGA. His lifestyle was that of a turn of the century academic: he taught classes, immersed himself in the university community, and established the first football team to grace the university. He left UGA after a dispute with Henry Clay White, his department chair (Reed 2005). This might have been the best turn of events that could have happened to him.

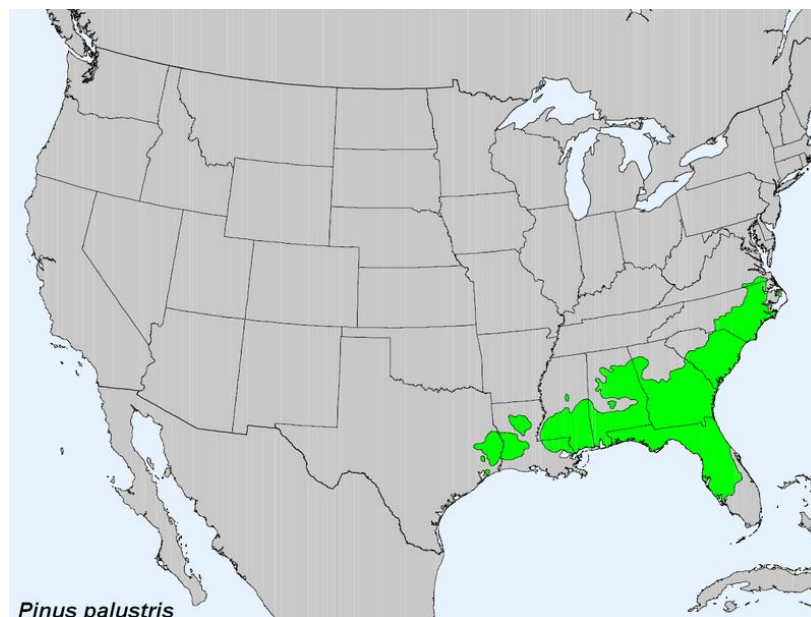
While at UGA he took a sabbatical in France where he was influenced by a lecture on pine resin and this inspired him to investigate the naval stores industry of the U.S. South. His interest in the southern turpentine industry led him to befriend Gifford Pinchot, head of the U. S. Forestry Division of the Department of Agriculture. With Pinchot behind him Herty made alliances with other universities and private companies and landowners to experiment on sustainable turpentine production (Reed 2005).

#### TRANSFORMING THE PINELANDS

The longleaf pine savanna would give way to a managed turpentine forest. South Georgia, in the 1870s, was still covered with a vast forest of relatively pristine longleaf pine timber (Figure 7.2). The trees in these now extinct landscapes were 3-4 feet in diameter and were not very close to each other: a wiregrass savanna interspersed with mammoth trees and prone to fires. By the early twentieth century the longleaf pine forests of the southern coastal plain were no more. Fellow South Georgian Janisse Ray, in her book, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (1999), writes of a letter that was penned to the Brunswick Georgia newspaper by a traveler who described his experience of passing through South Georgia from Brunswick to Eastman in 1858 and again in 1885. He writes “those grand forests—where are they? The trees, the grass, the cabins-where are they? Gone?” (100-101). The appearance of a decaying landscape suggested to Herty

that the predominate industry of the pinelands, naval stores, needed to be reformed.

In the year 1900 Herty introduced the question, “Is the naval stores industry worth preservation and continuation?” The correspondence he had with folks answering this question influenced his investigation into the industry. One B.J. Bullard, responded favorably to his question. His response is on stationery from the Southern Naval Stores Company, Commission Merchants, Savannah, Georgia.



**Figure 7.2** Distribution of longleaf pine in the southeastern United States.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons.



We can assume he was involved in the Naval Stores Industry. On November 20, 1900 he writes

*Dear Sir:--*

*In reply to your inquiry of yesterday, I beg to answer, First, in my opinion, the naval stores industry is well worth preserving; Second, my observation has been that land is worth decidedly less to the citizens of a county, of section of the state, after the supply of naval stores has been obtained from the timber; third, I would say as an approximation, that not more than 10% of the turpentine land in this state is now under cultivation, and that the returns to the people from the entire turpentine belt is not equal to what was realized while the turpentineing was in progress; fourth, I do not know of any effort in this country to introduce the French method of collecting crude turpentine from the trees, nor of any process of distillation of turpentine other than that in use by the operators at large, throughout the country. Trusting this information may be of use to you, I remain,*

*Yours truly,*

*B.J. Bullard. (Charles Holmes Herty Papers henceforth CHHP)*

Bullard's letter draws Herty into investigating the decaying landscape of the pinelands motivated by the assumption that the land was losing value to the citizens of Georgia. Additionally, there is an opportunity to experiment with the use of the French system of turpentine. Although I do not have evidence for this, I imagine that during his earlier sabbatical in France while a professor at UGA, he observed French pineries.

#### *A New Technique for Harvesting Pine Resin*

The collection of resin in the Mediterranean has a long history (Robson 1921). Cultures have maintained sustainable woodlands for centuries: the coppice stands of Northwest Europe, the cork forests of Spain, the olive groves of the Mediterranean, and the cedar trees of the Pacific Northwest. Contemporary anthropologists refer to such specimens as CMT's (Figure 7.3). This sustainable harvesting is a form of conservation. Herty, in fact, credits his idea with observations of resin collection in the pine forests of southern France (Figure 7.4). The Greek philosopher Theophrastus (372-287 B.C.) writes of terebinth, Corsican pine, and Aleppo pine all being tapped for resin (Robson 1921). Why couldn't this technique be used in the southern United States? Another response to his question of conserving the naval stores industry suggested that reform was not limited to the industry itself but the practices of those people who lived in the Georgia pinelands.

J.P. Williams of J.P. Williams Company, a dealer in Naval Stores, and Cotton Factors, Wholesale Grocers, and Provision Dealers, also responded to Herty in 1900 by outlining the reasons why Georgia's pineries are in a state of decline:



**Figure 7.3** Cork tree in Spain, 2006. Example of a CMT (Culturally Modified Tree).Source: Wikimedia Commons.



**Figure 7.4** Harvesting pine resin in Landes, France. Note the cup used to collect the resin. Charles Herty was influenced by this technique. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

*Dear Sir,---*

*...I have been actively engaged in the naval stores business in Savannah for twenty consecutive years and have witnessed the destruction of the pine forest incident to the naval stores industry, followed by the sawmills, and I have come to the conclusion, after viewing the subject from every standpoint, that the people of Georgia are disposing of one of the most valuable assets of the state...the*

*depletion of the forest of its growth of yellow pine is not being compensated for in the conversion of the lands into agricultural purposes. (CHHP)*

The unsustainable practices of logging and naval stores had reduced the value of lands in Georgia. Williams continues

*The pine timber on these lands, up to a very few years ago, was regarded as the only thing of value and through a period of long depression in prices, both of naval stores and lumber, it being the result of overproduction, the naval stores operator and mill man utilized these forests and got no adequate return..tens of millions---yes hundreds of millions---of dollars have been squandered...You ask the question whether or not any effort is being made to restore the forest of yellow pine in any portion of the state. To this I answer, "No." (CHHP)*

This confirms that Herty had an opportunity to transform a major industry and save the south millions of dollars. Williams suggested that the transformation of the naval stores industry would be best served by controlling the practices of smallholders in the Georgia pinelands, particularly those who practiced open range herding. Unlike the southern herders whose view privileged the savanna, Charles Herty focused his attention upon the forest. His view, like the outsider view, saw a dying forest. His goal was to maintain and expand longleaf pine

production, both logging and naval stores, in the South. According to Herty the contemporary method of gum collection consisted of scraping the resin into a deep cut at the base of the scrape called the 'box' which acted to collect the resin. This deep cut would eventually kill the tree. In response to this problem Herty invented a cup-and-gutter system of gum collection. Herty describes this system as a "simple arrangement of two galvanized iron gutters each two inches wide and each extending across half of the sacrificed face of the tree at an inclined angle, serve to conduct the gum to an earthen cup hung just below the lower gutter on a nail" (CHHP) (Figure 7.6). This system saved the tree by "placing these gutters upon the trees in the first year" requiring only the removal of the bark "and a slight amount of sap wood in order to provide a straight surface for the gutter, which is slipped into a groove about a quarter of an inch deep made by a sharp blow from an ordinary broad ax. In this way the evil due to the box are completely avoided" (CHHP). Besides producing greater quantities and better-quality turpentine, Herty's method extended the productive life of the trees and made them usable at maturity as saw timber. By the late 1920s, some form of Herty's cup-and-gutter system was employed throughout the turpentine region of the South" (Reed 2005).



**Figure 7.5** The author's Uncle Jack scraping a pine tree, ca. 1935. Note the metal cup and gutter below the scrape: Herty's influence upon the industry. Source: Photograph in the author's collection.

In a letter to John H. Pitt in 1901, Herty suggests where he got his idea for improving the extraction method. Pitt writes "France was compelled to discard our present system of turpentine in order to preserve their forest, and I have been informed by my correspondent in Europe, that they have record of their trees being turpented regularly over a hundred years, while we virtually destroy ours within three or four years" (CHHP). In 1902, Herty concedes that "the kindly attitude of the press...places me in the unexpected attitude of being compelled to ask that not too much credit be given me" (CHHP). He credits the French with

this innovation, writing that “the use of a cup and gutter in collecting turpentine is nothing new, for such equipment has been used in the pineries of southern France during the past forty years” (CHHP). Prior to this method, naval stores were collected at the expense of the trees.

Herty’s vision of the longleaf pine forest led him to observe the forest and naval stores operations in Ocilla, Georgia. His observations suggest that his vision of the landscape had narrowed to simply the impact upon tree health ignoring the wider landscape. He observed the decay of pines. In a letter penned to John M. Egan in 1902, President of the Central of Georgia Railway, Herty defined the crux of the problem concerning the decline of the longleaf pine forest. He wrote “everyone is agreed, the turpentine operators included, that the principal reason for the constant moving of the industry westward is the ‘box’ a deep hole cut in the base of the trees at the beginning of the work” (CHHP). He goes on to define the manner in which the longleaf pine experienced a slow, decaying death by writing “this box is in no way connected with the production of turpentine but simply serves as a receptacle for the gum, produced by the weekly scarification of the sap wood of the trees above the box. The box weakens the timber at a point where the leverage is greatest so that it is easily blown down by any wind storm” (CHHP). Herty as did the forest service were observing impacts upon trees attempting to minimize their causes.



*Preventing Windblows, Fire, and Grazing Damages.*

Increasing windblows could have been one influential decayed landscape. Trees were observed to blow down easier when the tree had been tapped for resin. Windblows however, were also a natural occurrence in these forests making it difficult to determine if it was actually turpentine doing the damage. On October 2, 1898 a big storm struck the pine forests of Appling County, Georgia.

*Early Sunday morning a light rain was falling, accompanied by a brisk wind from the southeast. Both the rain and wind increased to such proportions within hours that the roofs of some buildings were being lifted and dashed to pieces. The high timber on the hills went down...It lasted until far into the night and the rain continued all night. The earth was porous from so much rain and so many trees were on the ground, one could walk miles going from log to log and not hit the ground. (Barron 1981, 174)*

Windblows were natural as was the water that occasionally flooded the flat landscape uprooting trees and leading to rot.

Another theory was that the numerous trees rotted where they stood. In the same letter to Egan he comments that “the water standing in the old boxes rots the timber at the base” (CHHP). This was probably true. Water however, was

ubiquitous across the pine uplands. There were creeks that overflowed, ponds that were permanent fixtures of the landscape as well as ephemeral ponds that inundated the pine woodlands every rainy season, and there was water that made it to the surface given the proximity of aquifers that lie right underneath the earth. The further towards Florida one got the more springs and sinks were apparent across the pinelands. The rotting of patches of longleaf pine were not uncommon. Loblolly pines grew in these wet places. Loblolly refers to a wet patch of ground similar to a wet savanna. Another critique concerns the impact of fire in the longleaf ecosystem.

Herty's letter to Egan continues on the subject of fires and his experiments. He writes "the fires passing through the wood each Spring, ignite the rosin in the old boxes and often burn the timber to a very harmful extent" (CHHP). This, of course, was attributed to poor whites who set fires to create pasturage except that fire is a natural function of the longleaf pine ecosystem suggesting that the turpentine method is the problem not fire. Since he did not expect any "legislation for the protection of these forests against the methods of turpentine operating" he began experiments to determine an improved method of extraction (CHHP).

Herders were thought by foresters to be the culprit of forest decline. They focused their attention upon two practices of piney woods life that was considered

detrimental to the pineries: maintaining the open range savanna through burning and the practice of an open range itself. In the same Nov. 20, 1900, letter referred to above, J.P. Williams wrote Herty commenting upon the problems associated with the destruction of longleaf pine forests:

*there are two agencies actively and unrestrictedly at work in the state of Georgia, which render it impossible for the forests to be restored, and it is within the province of the law making power to virtually eradicate them. The first of these agencies is the annual spring burning of the woods or forest. This is universal in the pine belt and it is done under the mistaken idea that if the woods are burnt once a year, they will afford a better pasturage for cattle. To the contrary, if the woods were left unburnt, the vegetation which afford food for the cattle would be more rank and of a much more nutritive quality. Besides the soil which is exposed to the sun, by reason of this annual burning, is depleted year by year to such an extent that after repeated burnings, its productive quality is impaired, and as a result, when the lands are cleared and put in a state of cultivation, they will not produce, except they are highly fertilized. (CHHP)*

This comment provides a window upon the way early twentieth-century timbermen misunderstood the role of fire in creating healthy forest ecosystems. Williams view is the exact opposite of today's prevailing understanding, and

especially the way pine is adapted to fire. Fire suppression proved the rule by later in the twentieth century. A landscape of fire towers was built to see above the pinelands in their search for smoke. Radio operators let firefighters know there was a fire so it could be attacked on a moment's notice. Fire was eradicated from the pinelands and at the same time criminalized traditional burning practices. Campaigns would be created to prevent fires based upon this faulty belief. I can vaguely remember burning off pastures. Firebreaks were plowed with tractors: long furrows snaking their way through the pines. We lit small fires, patrolling their edges to make sure they did not get out of hand. Cattle were herded between fields along the river bottoms to upland pine fields that had been burnt months before allowing the vegetation to be restored. Contemporary geographers know what the poor farmer and herders of yesteryear did; burning is a necessary component of the longleaf pine ecosystem not only producing a healthy forest but at the same time creating new luxuriant growths of wiregrass and sustaining coastal plain prairies. Many locals would become brainwashed by these state sponsored resource management beliefs.

Lastly, foresters attacked the lowly pig. In his letter Williams writes

*the other agency, which is equally as destructive, is the piney woods rooter, the hog peculiar to South Georgia. Nature endowed him with instincts and a*

*physical makeup, peculiarly fitting him for the work of destroying young and tender pines, during the first and second years of their growth...there is a certain amount of sacchrine matter in these roots, which exactly satisfies the palate of the piney woods rooter, and as a consequence of this, they make their attacks on these small pine trees, and never let up until they have extracted all of these roots, thus leaving the young tree deprived of its support. Hence it dies...As a result, the observer will see all over South Georgia myriads of these inferior varieties of pine growing where, only a few years ago, there was a magnificent growth of virgin forest of yellow pine. (CHHP)*

This attack upon the southern open range is a progressive perspective that does not take into account the coastal plain environment nor the social history of the southern coastal plain backcountry. While undoubtedly, bioinvaders, such as wild pigs, had an effect upon the longleaf pine savanna I suggest it pales in comparison to the harmful environmental impacts of the timber and early turpentine industry as well as fence laws.

The introduction and impacts of fence laws —laws requiring southerners to fence in their cattle thus destroying the open range—suggests why open range herding was an important cultural-ecological adaptation. Fences were used in the rural South to keep animals out of gardens and farmsteads but not to fence in

livestock. A literary description of fences and their use in keeping animals out of agricultural fields can be found in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, *The Yearling* (1938). She writes

*out in the scrub, the war waged ceaselessly. The bears and wolves and panthers and wild-cats all preyed on the deer. Bears even ate the cubs of other bears, all meat being to their maws the same. Squirrels and wood-rats, 'possums and 'coons, must all scurry for their lives. Birds and small furred creatures cowered in the shadow of hawk and the owl. But the clearing was safe. Penny kept it so, with his good fences, with Rip and old Julia, with a wariness that seemed to Jody to be unsleeping. (Rawlings 1938, 164)*

Later, when fences surrounding fields were removed or not used, range animals would get into gardens and fields. I can remember as a boy staying up all night with my father near our patch field that bordered the river swamp keeping out wild hogs. Underneath the live oaks, whose limbs spread across the field in the moonlight, the snuffles and squeals of the pigs could be heard in the darkness. We chased them out of the fields keeping watch for those that might turn at bay.

By World War II fences, a result of fence laws, were increasingly used to pen in livestock on private property preventing the range tradition from continuing:

somewhat. Some rural southerners, to the aggravation of wildlife officials, continue the practice of catching and releasing wild hogs in places they want them to flourish. To them, they are not an invasive species: they are an integral cultural-ecological adaptation. In his letter to Herty, Williams writes, “no one would be injured by compelling the farmer who owns the piney woods rooster to keep his stock enclosed” (CHHP). He did not understand the environmental impacts that fence laws would cause to coastal plain properties. The result of penning in cattle and hogs in the upland pine country of the Altamaha watershed was soil erosion. We had a hog pen located behind our house on a gentle slope that led to an ephemeral creek that snaked through the rolling uplands. Years of hogs rooting and wallowing on the site caused the earth to be grass free, the exposed soil eroded, oak trees were left with exposed roots, and the landscape became a waste. While less and less small farms have their own hog pens I can remember this being a common problem. If you drive the backroads of the South today you can still see this landscape or at least its results.

An article in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1931) puts it bluntly

*indiscriminate turpentining, no protection of the longleaf pine forests from fire, and absence of a stock law are the chief causes of the near extermination of*

*the longleaf pine in North Carolina and South Carolina, which drove the naval stores industry into Georgia and Florida. Similar methods have come near putting Georgia and Florida in the same condition. (Pratt 1931, 74)*

Charles Herty's landscape legacy is the almost complete transformation of the southern longleaf savanna into a managed pine forest. He conserved pine trees by developing new methods of harvesting pine tar, restricting the practice of setting fire to the wiregrass and open-range herding.

#### THE LANDSCAPE LEGACY OF THE ENDANGERED LONGLEAF PINE SAVANNA

If Herty's legacy was the conservation of the turpentine industry, then he is also responsible for turning the longleaf pine savanna into an endangered landscape in need of conservation. Start in Texas and drive east through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Upon reaching southern Georgia turn left, heading northeast, making your way into the Carolinas. The one ubiquitous landscape found mile, after mile, after mile is the straight and narrow rows of pine trees. These forests, if they can be called that, of young (i.e., less than 30 years old) shortleaf pines are such a common sight in the coastal plain that it is hard to imagine what the landscape was like prior to this industrial transformation.



The longleaf pine, once the primary tree of the sandy coastal plain arc from Virginia, south to Florida, then westward to East Texas, is no longer to be found over much of its former range. Mature longleaf pines can still be found in the suburbs of South Georgia towns, the Valdosta State University campus—if they haven't cut them down—and in parks such as the Moody Forest Nature Preserve. If these longleaf pines were islands they would be specks of sand sitting above a sea of human transformation.

Was the vision of a decaying pineries landscape rational? The short answer is yes and no. Did Herty's innovations, as in France, result in preserved forests or at the very least sustainable landscapes? Yes, but his answer to 'farming' the southern forest resulted in the development of pine plantations for the paper industry: a future landscape of a new sort of decay and decadence.

Living cup and gutter pines were harvested for decades in the twentieth-century South. The longleaf pine forest became one huge industrial landscape with cup and gutter pines stretching into the distance. Later, these forests were cut as the naval stores industry declined and pine plantations of young trees became the typical rural landscape. A result of this is the practical extinction of the southern longleaf pine forest with rare patches of trees left.

Although influenced by a decaying landscape, Herty focused solely upon improving production from individual trees not the conservation of forests. His invention of sustainable turpentine extraction was a boon to the turpentine industry and almost certainly helped to preserve many old-growth pine forests. Yet, his subsequent development of the southern paper industry doomed the pine woods landscape. In his zeal to transform the turpentine industry, Herty looked for a way to utilize “the industry's then-wasted products, the thinnings of young trees which had to be culled so that high-quality turpentine and saw timber could mature” (Reed 2005 ). Herty wanted to use these young trees to develop “a white paper and newsprint industry, something then restricted to the North and to Canada. The northern industry used spruce, not pine, for pulpwood, insisting that a high resin content rendered pine unusable for technical and economic reasons” (2005). In 1931 with money from the State of Georgia and a grant from the Chemical Foundation he built the Savannah Pulp and Paper Laboratory. From this laboratory he promoted and developed the use of immature southern pines as pulpwood for the paper industry.

Herty, who passed away in 1938, probably did not foresee that the turpentine industry would die while the paper pulpwood industry would boom. Indeed, how could he? The degraded pine lands opened the way for scientific forestry practices resulting in managed row crop forests, improved extraction methods in the naval

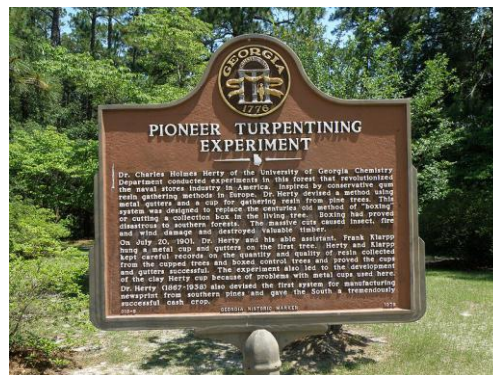
stores industry, and the harvest of smaller pines for pulpwood (Outland 2004). While this produced a conservationist forest that provided an on-going commodity, the sustainable old growth longleaf turpentine trees would be cut for saw-timber. The future of the Altamaha hinterlands lay in rows and rows of slash or shortleaf pines that never reached maturity. The longleaf pine savanna was practically extinct. One could say that Herty never saw the savanna for the trees.

#### LONGLEAF PINES AS MEMORIAL SITES

While researching Charles Herty and the transformation of the southern pinelands I encountered two memorial sites associated with longleaf pines. One at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro Georgia, the other is a small grove of protected longleaf pines in the Moody Forest Nature Preserve in Appling County Georgia. These two sites illustrate how landscape is utilized to memorialize conservation.

Georgia Southern University retains memories of Herty's scientific investigations. While looking for the library I noticed an old-growth longleaf pine. The twist in the trunk suggested it was a mature tree: a sign maybe that I was in the right place. The Zach S. Henderson library contains archived papers, photos and other documents of his research: a site of memory itself. I was, however, interested in another site: a memorial dedicated to Herty (Figure 7.6).

On the Georgia Southern campus is a small nature preserve memorialized in his honor. I was struck by the attempt to keep this area ‘natural’. A narrow trail winds its way through a woodland where nature was left to its own devices. Amidst the magnolias and oaks are mature longleaf pines: the centerpiece of this preserve. The look of this preserve, a natural scene, suggests it is meant to convey Herty’s role in conservation. Herty, however, did not preserve nature. He conserved longleaf pines as resources and subsequently transformed the appearance of the southeastern longleaf pine savanna into the look of industrialized woodland. Memory, in this case, has been used to manipulate the perception of conservation. While this small campus nature preserve is one type of conservation memory another is represented by a site in the Moody Forest Nature Preserve near the Altamaha River.



**Figure 7.6** Historical marker noting the efforts of Dr. Herty in improving the turpentine industry. This marker is located on the campus of Georgia Southern University in the Herty Pines Nature Preserve. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

In December of 1999 Miss Elizabeth died. At the age of ninety she was the last heir of a large swath of land that extended from the edge of the Altamaha River into the pine uplands of Appling County, Georgia. She was the niece of Jake Moody who left the property to his niece and nephews Caus, Wade, and Elizabeth. All three remained unmarried their entire lives. They kept a promise made to their Uncle Jake not to cut any timber unless it was necessary: a promise he had made to his own father. Upon her death the land passed to thirty heirs who put it up for auction in the local county seat of Baxley (Ray 2007). On October 2, 2000, all 3,500 acres of the Moody property was purchased by TNC of Georgia with more land to be added later. The ancient cypresses, tupelos, longleaf pines, indigo snakes, red-cockaded woodpeckers, swallow-tailed kites, and gopher tortoises were now protected from logging and development and other detrimental human impacts. One rare tree I found right off a dirt road on the edge of the Moody Forest: old-growth longleaf pines (Figure 7.7).

Old-growth longleaf pines are rare. Rarer still is to find those that were once used for gathering pine tar. These relict pines are the legacy of Charles Herty's transformation of the southern naval stores industry. While not a typical memorial landscape these pines, as a part of the Moody Forest landscape, help to recall the Moody Family and the lived memories of the region (for rural lived memories see chapter seven). The existence of these pines also recalls local conservation.



**Figure 7.7** Photograph of catface scars on old-growth longleaf pines in the Moody Forest Nature Preserve. This preserve is located in Appling County Georgia on the banks of the Altamaha River, 2004. Source: Photograph in the author's collection.

Janisse Ray writes that the Moody's cabin suggests that the family "utilized products at hand...conserved energy in every aspect...wasted nothing...and brought forth the quality of the longleaf pine and thus themselves in their everyday life" (2007, 78). In other words, longleaf pine and local conservation can be found in the biography of the Moody's landscape. The aforementioned promise not to cut timber illustrates that some local families were very much interested in environmental conservation. These pines are memorials dedicated to their concepts of conservation. As pointed out by historical geographer Craig Colten, southern conservation was focused upon local land-use (2006). The land might be used for economic or livelihood purposes in a way that did not damage or destroy the appearance of the landscape. Herty's proposal for turpenting

methods was obviously acceptable to this family but later transformations such as pine plantations were not. In fact, Elizabeth had requested that some small timbers be cut on the property to pay taxes. Janisse writes of inspecting the cut-over land noting the timber company had decimated the place cutting the old-growth longleaf and leaving the small slash pines (2007). Those longleaf that are left are a memorial to local conservation inspired by the Moody's and the legacy of greed that destroyed these once great forests. These two landscapes illustrate the way memory is utilized in longleaf pine conservation: to recall and manipulate the role prominent individuals played in state-based conservation and the role of locals in conservation.

## CONCLUSION

Charles Herty authored the longleaf pine landscape in two ways. One, he protected the trees for the production of turpentine through his writings which influenced the development of laws restricting the setting of fire and the maintenance of the open range for pigs and cattle. This effectively destroyed the traditional longleaf landscape of open range herders. Two, by turning the longleaf pine savanna into a managed woodland, he paved the way for shortleaf pines to become a row crop for the paper industry. The quick growing shortleaf quickly replaced the longleaf as the dominant tree of the coastal plain leaving the longleaf savanna to become an endangered landscape.

On our section of the floodplain, the woods stretched from the river's edge about a mile or two till they reached the pine uplands. In the uplands very little longleaf pine forest remained. Only the Moody Land retained the old growth longleaf. We no longer even thought of the pine uplands as forest. To us, it was like an agricultural field with a long history of human transformation. Political and economic changes in the twentieth century had forced families to adapt to the changing times leading to massive landscape changes in southern pinelands. Roads, fields, pine plantations, telephone and power poles are now characteristic of the modern landscape of the piney woods. Down from the piney woods was the edge of the river swamp. The swamp remained untouched by ax or development. While in the past our timber on the floodplain had been selectively cut it still retained a wild state. Old growth trees were left, animals were abundant, and the flooding of the river made it difficult to access except by locals. Human impacts upon the Altamaha environment had bounded the river and creek bottoms creating internal frontiers: areas where nature existed in a more 'natural' state than the pinelands. These landscapes are memorialized in two sites which present differing conceptions of conservation. One site is dedicated to Herty but does not reflect his role in landscape transformation the other, while not a typical memorial site, recalls local conservationist attitudes.



## *Chapter Eight*

### **ROLAND HARPER, CONSERVATION, AND THE SCENIC MEMORY OF THE ALTAMAHA GRIT REGION**

The Altamaha Grit region, characterized by rock (grit) outcrops, was defined by Roland Harper, a botanist from the University of Alabama, who also established that the natural habitats of the early nineteenth century Altamaha backcountry were in danger from development. His writings also reflect his values towards geoconservation and the establishment of parks. It could be said that Harper authored the conservation landscapes of the Altamaha Grit region given that he established the natural baseline for the region through his literary memories (i.e., writings, maps, photographs). This chapter examines Harper's writings of the Altamaha Grit region to illustrate his perception and lasting scenic memory of the Altamaha Grit country.

#### **SCENIC MEMORIES OF THE ALTAMAHA GRIT REGION**

Harper's research begins by understanding geography. In 1910 he wrote a letter to Professor Walter S. Tower of the University of Pennsylvania saying

*My idea of geography is that it is the science which inquires into the causes of the areal distribution of things, or at least discovers correlations between the*

*distribution of different kinds of things. These things may be taxonomic or morphological groups of animals, plants, races of men, customs, dialects, political parties, trade routes, topographic types, isothermal lines, crops, industries, useful materials, or hundreds of other things that you have already thought of. (RMHP)*

In a letter he wrote on June 14, 1910 addressed “Dear Ackerman” Herty enclosed a copy of a “proposed course of lectures on forest geography” (RMHP). His forest geography course devotes a significant amount of space to “factors influencing plant growth and distribution” such as air, water, soil, and organisms (RMHP). While there were a few scientists who described the geology of Altamaha Grit before Harper, he is responsible for the complete description and characterization of the Altamaha Grit Region: a result of his geographic approach to geology and vegetation.

The Altamaha Grit region (Figure 8.1) lies in South-Central Georgia from the Fall line almost to the Florida line covering some twenty counties and 11,000 square miles. Its boundaries are marked by changes in topography, such as an



**Figure 8.1** The Altamaha Grit Region as seen from the newly built courthouse in Reidsville, Georgia, 1904 Source: RMHP.

escarpment, or in some cases a change in vegetation from pine barrens to broad-leaved forests (Harper 1906). The characteristic landform of this region is its grit outcrops (Figure 8.2). “The outcrops occur either on hillsides in the open pine-barrens, in beds of streams, or on river-banks. The hillside outcrops show usually a fine-grained conglomerate consisting of small quartz pebbles and grains of sand cemented together” (1906, 21). These sandstone outcrops occur both on riverbanks and hillsides throughout the region. Harper characterizes “the topography of the region [as] typically "rolling," and quite pleasing to the eye, in

comparison with the flatness which characterizes most pine-barren regions”  
(1906, 22).

The topography and habitats in the region are described in detail.

*In the typical rolling country every little valley contains a small and often intermittent branch, bordered by more or less swamp. In some cases the very head of a branch is not surrounded by swamp, but is occupied by moisture-loving herbs. Such a place is known as a “dreen” [drain]. The branches of course unite into larger streams (creeks and rivers) at longer intervals. (1906, 23-27)*



**Figure 8.2** Altamaha Grit Outcrops as shoals in the Ochoopee River, 1904.  
Source: RMHP.

It is landscape discoveries such as ‘drains’ where endemic species of plants reside that makes Harpers writings important for contemporary conservationists. Another landscape feature of the Altamaha Grit region is sandhills. “Sand-hills...border the swamps of nearly all the creeks and rivers [and] consist merely of homogeneous deposits of Columbia sand, sometimes at least 25 feet deep and over a mile wide (1906, 23-27). The sand-hills are another landscape of endemic diversity (Figure 8.3). “They are most delightful places to explore, being free or nearly free from mud, dust, briers, snakes, mosquitoes and other discomforts, and on them the botanist continually encounters pleasant surprises in the way of rare plants” (1906, 23-27). While sandhills, branches and grit outcrops define the topography of the Altamaha grit region Harper identifies the vegetated landscapes that are also features of the region and are interspersed within the topography.

His “Map of an imaginary typical portion of the Altamaha Grit region” (Figure 8.4) illustrates those natural landscapes that define the Altamaha Grit region. They are “rock outcrops: DPB, dry pine. Barrens; IPB, intermediate pine barrens; MPB, moist pine-barrens; BS, branch-swamp; CS, creek-swamp; P, cypress pond; S, sandhills; SP, sand-hill pond; SB, sand-hill bog; H, hammock; N AS, non- alluvial swamp” (1906, 33-37). I suggest it is apparent that Harper defined for modern conservationists the Altamaha Grit region, thus establishing a



**Figure 8.3** Sandhill in the Altamaha Grit Region, 1904. Source: RMHP.



**Figure 8.4** Map by Roland Harper showing the natural landscapes of Georgia's Altamaha Grit region. Source: RMHP.

natural landscape baseline as an archived scenic memory from which future conservation decisions could be made.

#### A VIEW FROM THE RAILCAR WINDOW: SCENIC MEMORIES OF HUMAN IMPACTS

According to historian Robert Kohler, the end of the nineteenth century did not mark as Frederick Jackson Turner famously said the end of the frontier. Instead, the American landscape simply transitioned from a two-zone landscape of undeveloped and developed to a mosaic landscape of inner frontiers surrounded by civilization (Kohler 2006). The places most unsuitable for development remained wild places. Such inner frontiers in the South included swamps such as Georgia's Okefenokee and Virginia's Great Dismal and the longleaf pine savannas of the South Georgia coastal plain. The Altamaha Grit region, as was most of the Altamaha watershed, was an inner frontier. Although the development of railroads in the region meant progress was shrinking this frontier and at the same time offering access to scientists such as Roland Harper and his brother Frances who was doing research in the Okefenokee Swamp. Travel by road, prior to the twentieth century, would have made research in this region exceedingly difficult.

Dirt roads in the Altamaha uplands are either hard-packed clay or sand. Spring and summer storms make them difficult to travel: creeks swollen with running

water, slick mud that can easily send a car spiraling into the ditch. That is the nature of South Georgia: sand, clay-mud, storms, and pines. In 1970s South Georgia, there were a few wagon-track roads left: grass growing between two lines in the sand where wheels have eaten their way through the vegetation. As time passed these tracks became legitimate dirt roads: clay or sand with deep ruts. Many of these roads were created by local communities or by loggers in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A two-path lane through the pinewoods later scraped with horse-drawn road graders. Over time these roads ceased to belong to the community. The county appropriated them. Occasionally, they would send out road-scrapers to clean and maintain the roads: industrial-sized tractors with a flat blade underneath that pushed the dirt to the sides, filled in ditches, and flattened the road. Roads were constantly muddy with deep ruts, eroding into the properties along their edges. Locals took it upon themselves to maintain them when the county failed. Travel has always been difficult in the Southern states. Historically, travel narratives describe southern roads as “awful,” “proverbially bad,” “wretched,” and “dreadful” (McWhiney 1988, 220). Regardless, by the first decades of the twentieth century roads were increasingly a feature of the South Georgia landscape. It does not mean however, that they made for easy traveling. Southern dirt roads still presented problems.



Harper avoided traveling long distances on roads. Imagine taking a wagon through muddy ruts. Endless pine savannas where freshets could over run creeks in an instant. Spring thunderstorms, lightning overhead, rain beating down the canvas of the wagon. It is no wonder Harper preferred to do his fieldwork by train. "In December, 1910, the writer had occasion to cross the Altamaha Grit region or middle third of the coastal plain of Georgia from north to south near its center, by a new route, the Georgia and Florida Railway." He traveled from "its southern terminus (in Florida) to Douglas, and two days later, from Douglas to Swainsboro"(Harper 1912, 241). Trains are a civilized way to travel and a scientific tool. I can imagine him in a houndstooth suite, coffee sitting upon the table, smell of pipe tobacco [I imagine all Gilded Age explorers smoking a pipe] wafting through the compartment: a gentleman scientist poring over maps and botanical field notes. Seated comfortably in a railcar, he observed the countryside at leisure. Gandy dancers laid tracks: the sheen of sweat and black bodies in the sun, the sound of hammers and song drifting across creeks and pine woods. Cracker farmers in overalls and wide-brimmed hats worked gardens and fields whose turn-rows stretched to distant pines. Dusty soil shimmering in the heat. Shingle cutter camps in groves of cypress trees as the train crossed bridges that ran over blackwater creeks with sandbars the color of refined sugar where deep pools held longnose gars and the glitter of orange in the shallow straits tinged light brown from leaf tannins marked the passage of redbreast. He saw it all from

his seat: including the tiniest of plants. His notes list plant species caught with a quick glance. I imagine him quickly scribbling

*Adiantum Pedatum L.*

*Eragrostis Simplex*

*Rhaphidophyllum Hystrix*

as the train sped by.

The railcar window was a frame that highlighted landscapes better than individual plants: sandhills for example.

*It happens that most of them lie off the main highways of travel, and consequently have been little studied by other persons than the writer. One may travel by the usual routes from Macon to Savannah, Brunswick, Valdosta, or Thomasville, right across the Altamaha Grit region, without seeing a sand-hill. On the two most direct routes from Savannah to Jacksonville, sand-hills are seen only at the Altamaha River, and going from Savannah to Waycross and Bainbridge, a distance of 237 miles, the only sand-hills crossed are those of the Altamaha and Satilla rivers. But from the newer railroads of South Georgia (four*

*or five hundred miles of which have been built since 1900), sand-hills are visible at many points. (Harper 1906, 23-27)*

He saw landform patterns: the fall line, sand-hills, outcrops, and escarpments. Over time he could identify the topographic boundary between the lime-sink region and the Altamaha Grit region as easy as recognizing the Fall line: all through a railcar window.

Peering out the window of his passenger car he observed that “the first 50 miles north of Valdosta the country is comparatively level, not quite as much so perhaps as the flat pine-barren region nearer the Atlantic coast” (Harper 1912, 241). Just south of the Satilla River the railroad—as one travels northward—descends rather suddenly, as if leaving a plateau, and from there to Swainsboro and beyond the topography is mostly what might be called submaturely dissected by normal erosion” with ponds still very common (1912, 242). The train crossed shallow branches where he observed valleys “thirty or forty feet deep” (1912, 242). As his train reaches the region surrounding the Altamaha River he notes geomorphological changes resulting in valleys that “show a tendency to depart from the characteristic broad V-shape and become flat-bottomed, and ponds are scarce (1912, 242). Along this route “the native vegetation is of course on the whole decidedly of the pine-barren type” (Harper 1912, 243). Habitats observed

from the train include “dry, intermediate, and moist pine-barrens, branch, creek and river swamps, cypress ponds, sand-hills and hammocks” (243).



**Figure 8.5** Grit outcrop exposed by railroad, 1903. Source: RMHP.

The train was both a boon and a detriment to the landscape in Harper’s mind. Trains cut through the landscape (Figure 8.5). The destruction of so much timber left freshets, or floods, to roar across creeks with sudden rainstorms impeding the progress of railroads. He was disturbed by changes to the coastal plain landscape. By the 1930s Harper’s correspondence starts to comment upon forest destruction in the South. On March 13, 1937 in a letter to W.L. McAtee of the U.S. Biological Survey concerning erosion and wildlife protection he suggests that New South progress is to blame for the destruction of natural landscapes. Harper attacks New South progress saying “one of the most alarming recent developments is the rapid

destruction of our forests, with the development of good roads and motor trucks” (RMHP). The threat of roads and automobiles to the American natural landscape was being recognized across the country but it was first noticed in the South. Harper continues in his 1937 letter to W.L. McAtee pointing out that “a generation ago some forests were pretty well protected by their inaccessibility; but now no tree is safe from exploitation any more, and our forests are being rapidly reduced to ragged remnants and eyesores” (RMHP). Harper recognized that the forests of his grad school days were no longer representative of the magnificent southern arboreal landscape instead they were, in his words, “eyesores,” now being used as wasted resources and submitted to the degradation of assisting automobiles—the perpetrators of their destruction—by having road signs affixed to them. He further comments on the impact of logging and turpentine. “The pine timber, where not already destroyed by farmers, has been severely culled by lumber and turpentine men, and only two patches of “round timber” (i.e., that which has not been turpented) were noticed” (Harper 1912, 243). While human impacts upon the environment were profound—as in Harper noting that he was “hardly ever more than a mile from a cultivated field”—his field research showed that “the ravages of civilization had not yet been great enough to prevent one’s seeing more native species of plants in nearly every mile of the journey than can be recorded in the two or three minutes it takes to travel that mile” by train (243). Timber trams allowed companies to access previously

isolated stands of timber whether they were ancient pines deep within the forest miles away from any road or cypress trees located in previously inaccessible bays, swamps, or creek bottoms. Nevertheless Harper found discovery in destruction. The scars left by trains opened geological cross sections to Harper. Rail lines cut through human landscapes such as indigenous burial mounds leaving the soil exposed for investigation. Railroad bridges crossed rivers where he observed geological profiles as banks eroded into the waters.

On September 19, 1920, Harper took the train to visit a friend: one J. Walter Hendricks, who was teaching in Douglas, Georgia. On the train between Cordele and Tifton he noticed a change in topography and vegetation. Without realizing it he had entered the Altamaha Grit region. The perspective from the train window led to what could be described as an A-HA moment: a red-letter day! Geology, he realized, influenced botany (Harper 1967, 7). While waiting for the next train at the Tifton station between 3:30 and 5:15 pm he noticed a loblolly (i.e., wet pine-barrens) nearby. He immediately set out to prove this theory to himself. It must have seemed odd: a well-dressed passenger sinking to his ankles in a bog stooping to examine every little weed. Harper did not mind any ridicule. The result of this fieldwork was the discovery of two new plant species (7-8). So begins his fascination with the Altamaha Grit region and his approach to looking for lonely physical geographic 'islands' that may hold endemic species.

The middle of August 1901 found Harper in Saffold, Georgia's rail station: not a town but a stop that served the farms of the surrounding countryside. The station agent kindly offered him lodging for the night. Moonlight was kept out by the shutters, which had to remain closed since there were no screens to keep out mosquitoes. After his meal of chicken and biscuits he went over his day's notes by candlelight. Island tells, he thought, include elevated landscapes—sand-hills, hammocks, ridges, and grit outcrops—and depressions—wet pine-barrens, bays, loblollies, sinks. These were the areas that would lead him to discoveries. Expectations of future discoveries occupied his dreams as the post and ticket office was robbed downstairs. He was however, not detained after his breakfast of chicken and biscuits: again (Harper 1967).

Railroads opened up for Harper the inner frontier of the Altamaha grit region. Moving quickly over the countryside he could identify the location of natural landscapes—grit outcrops, sandhills, bogs—that both lead to the discovery of endemic plant species as well as helped Harper to define the extent and boundaries of the Altamaha Grit region.

#### MEMORIALIZING LANDFORMS: ROLAND HARPER'S GEOCONSERVATION VALUES

In the United States, landforms have served both as memorials to our wilderness past and to our regional and national history. Roland Harper preferred

that landforms be preserved as the former. As such, he was an early advocate for geodiversity and geoconservation. According to geographer Murray Gray,

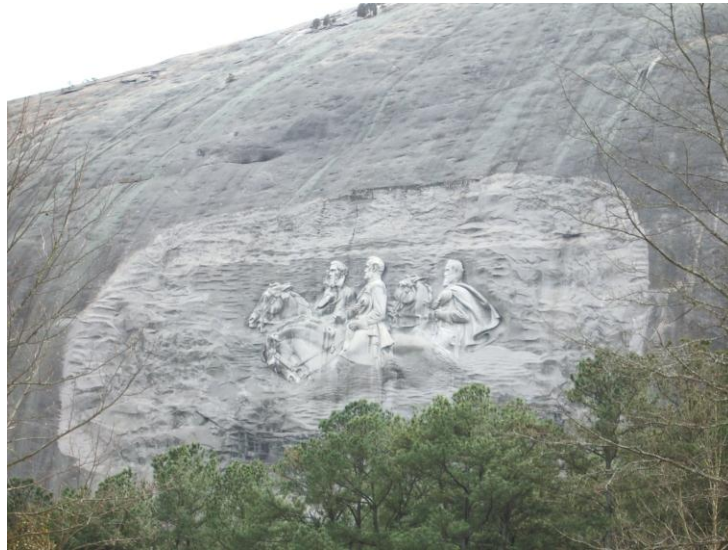
*Geodiversity can be defined simply as the natural range (diversity) of geological (rocks, minerals, fossils), geomorphological (land form, physical processes) and soil features. It includes their assemblages, relationships, properties, interpretations and systems. (Gray 2004, 8)*

The protection of geodiversity, termed geoconservation, is based upon human values. I suggest Harper's values towards geoconservation are both intrinsic—nature should be free of human interference— and scientific while at the same time he abhors aesthetic values which led to the creation of in parks and tourism.

On January 22, 1916, Harper penned a letter to Mrs. W.H. Felten of Cartersville Georgia, a writer for the Atlanta Semi-Weekly Journal, concerning “a project to deface the steep side of Stone Mountain with carvings of Civil War scenes” (RMHP) (Figure 8. 6). He describes this plan as “a colossal and extravagant piece of vandalism” perpetrated against “one of the great natural wonders of the United States” (RMHP). He suggests, “instead of allowing it to be mutilated further the State ought to buy it and preserve it as a natural monument for all time” (RMHP). This suggests Harper thought, like many early



preservationists, that parks should be developed to preserve the natural monuments of the United States.



**Figure 8.6** Confederate Memorial on Stone Mountain, 2009. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

This is suggestive of intrinsic values applied to natural landscapes although he did believe that some landscape should be utilized by people suggesting functional values. He points out “there was some economic excuse for the spoilation of Tallulah Falls and Okefinokee Swamp, two other great natural wonders of Georgia...but there is apparently none in this case” (RMHP). To him “it does not seem very appropriate to disfigure it permanently with nineteenth-century scenes that happened in other states” (RMHP). This carving will turn

Stone Mountain into a “billboard” (RMHP). He remarked, “few people will benefit by it except the sculptor (who is not Georgian at all)” (RMHP). He advises, “a thousandth part of the estimated cost of the sculpture would pay for a comprehensive report on the state’s forests...and thus benefit all the intelligent citizens of Georgia, and not merely one foreign (northern) sculptor” (RMHP). While Harper embraced the intrinsic value of nature he does not seem completely opposed to the conservation of natural resources. He does however eschew the development of conservation parks given the aesthetic values of nature which foster the development of recreation areas not preserves.

In an aforementioned letter Herty wrote to W.L. McAtee of the U.S. Biological Survey (1937), he describes conservation as a “popular fad...to make parks of our few remaining bits of virgin forest” (RMHP). Parks are created “partly on account of the job-making possibilities of the scheme, and partly for the benefit of petting parties, joy-riders and other thoughtless pleasure-seekers” (RMHP). He complains that

*perhaps it is better for a forest to be reserved as a park than to be left to the mercy of the lumbermen; but as soon as a park is established the masses demand good roads to and through it, and a swimming pool there if at all possible...Other “improvements” than swimming pools, such as bringing in animals and plants*

*that do not belong there, are sure to be attempted in the parks sooner or later, all of which does more harm to scientists than good to pleasure-seekers. (RMHP)*

In his mind these developments are so harmful and inane he ends this particular letter by writing, “I am not making any plans beyond 1950, for I don’t think we will have much civilization left by that time” (RMHP).

Roland Harper was an advocate for geoconservation. His letters, which illustrate his preference for preserving landforms as wild natural features, can be linked to his research on the Altamaha Grit region. In doing so, a supposition can be made suggesting that Roland Harper would have been wholly behind the preservation of his Altamaha Grit outcrops.

## CONCLUSION

Roland Harper’s writings form an archived scenic memory that defines and describes the Altamaha Grit region, identifies endemic species and their locations on an early twentieth century inner frontier as well as suggests his values towards geoconservation and conservation in general. What conclusions can be made concerning the Broxton Rocks and the memory of Harper’s writings? I suggest his writings contribute to the ‘personality’ of the Altamaha watershed as a conservation region by memorializing the natural landscapes of the Altamaha Grit

countryside. The contemporary remnant landscapes of the Altamaha Grit region are in need of preserving so as not to lose the characteristics described in his travels throughout the region. Meanwhile, Grit outcrops rise from pine savannas, waterfalls run over stone while ferns and mosses lie amidst the cool recesses of the outcrop, trees rise from their floor, their tops peeking out of the outcrop's crevasses as they snake across the stony structure where birds from Caribbean isles rest on the warm sandstone as it heats up in the midday sun.

## CONCLUSION

In 2001, the natural qualities of the upper Altamaha River floodplain were deemed too important to be lost. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources created the Moody Forest Natural Area as an extension of the wider Altamaha River Bioserve. The justification for the purchase of 3,500 acres and other areas that make up the bioserve is the preservation of rare and endangered animals, plants, and natural landscapes within the Altamaha river corridor. To this end TNC has identified the Altamaha River as one of the world's last great places (The Nature Conservancy 2005). While TNC utilizes a landscape scale approach which recognizes that people can no longer be totally separated from conservation areas, their preserves (e.g., Moody Forest Nature Preserve) still create the impression that the Altamaha is an undisturbed wilderness. Other sources, such as the New Georgia Encyclopedia, back up this impression by writing that "the river and its floodplain swamps and marshes are among the most undisturbed habitats in the state, although increasing population in the Coastal Plain and pressure from development are threatening their pristine nature" (Gibbons 2004). The creation of the Moody Forest Natural Area has placed the floodplain landscape into a stark relief revealing the past cultural history in the form of literary and lived memories of the Altamaha River.

Readers should conclude from this study that the investigation of memories contributes to understanding why contemporary conservation areas are created in particular regions and they may assist in placing people back into conservation landscapes. In the Altamaha watershed lived memories influence locals to conserve landscapes. Lived memories of the Altamaha refer to the everyday lives and memorial practices of indigenous, African-American and Scots-Irish rural communities that called the watershed home. Lived memories are meant to reanimate the lives of everyday people and their landscapes in the past. In this study, indigenous toponyms, the enchanted landscapes of African slaves and the auto-ethnography of swamper practices are meant to restore living landscapes to areas now termed wilderness.

Wilderness is a product of literary memories (Figueiredo 2007). Cronon (1995) suggests that wilderness is nostalgia for a pristine nature that modernity has erased. While this is true, we can take this further by asking the question; why do some areas become wilderness why others do not? Even areas whose material landscape may have already been transformed are sometimes now called wilderness. I suggest specific areas become wilderness because they are memorialized in myth and literature: Yellowstone, Yosemite, Smoky Mountains, etc. Literary memories are the scenic images left by writers who characterize regional landscapes in their writings. Travelers and scientists have described the

Altamaha region as a pristine, tropical, and degraded wilderness. James Oglethorpe and William Bartram were boosters promoting British settlement in a pristine Altamaha watershed. Francis Kemble, Charles Lyell and James Hamilton Couper wrote of a tropical Altamaha delta that was dangerous and in need of taming. Charles Herty recognized the degraded aspects of the landscape and set out to conserve the piney woods but instead transformed the longleaf pine savanna into an industrialized woodland. During roughly the same time Roland Harper was writing about the destruction of natural landscapes by progressive projects in the New South. He targeted the timber industry, road-building, and even the development of state and national parks as detrimental to the southern natural landscape. His letters and publications are literary memories that overturn the accepted discourse that progressive reforms in the South would ‘improve’ the degradation caused by the neglect of southern culture. I conclude by suggesting that both local memory and literary scenic memories have shaped the contemporary Altamaha River watershed however, the creation of the Altamaha River Bioreserve suggests that the literary scenic memory has prevailed as the primary landscape legacy.

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CHHP → The Charles Holmes Herty Papers, Zach S. Henderson Library, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro.

Description: Herty Correspondence, notebooks, research material, notes, manual, articles, photos and historical marker data and ceremony photos.

RMHP → The Roland M. Harper Papers, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama

Description: Roland McMillan Harper papers, 1873-1967, 63 boxes

Papers of this Alabama Geological Survey botanist, including diaries, correspondence, research notes and writings, publications, field notes, plant lists, photographs, personal and family materials, reprints, cemetery records, transportation timetables, booster materials, race relations materials, scrapbooks, and clippings.

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