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Inventing the South: Regional Tourism After the Civil War

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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in Art History

by

Connor Hamm

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Inventing the South: Regional Tourism After the Civil War

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Connor Hamm

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Professor Saloni Mathur, Chair

This dissertation argues that tourism exerted a transformative impact on the American South in the aftermath of the Civil War, functioning as a space of contestation where Southerners of different backgrounds contributed to the development of distinct iterations of the region and various ideas of Southern-ness. It explores how tourism played a pivotal role in modernizing parts of the Southern economy; shaping prevailing ideas of regional heritage, culture, and identity; spurring urbanization and creating distinct place-images for various Southern cities; effecting the forms and institutions of artistic production in the region; and exacerbating socio-economic disparities at the same time as providing opportunities for marginalized subjects to access and influence the public sphere. Focusing on the Southeastern states of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, this dissertation conducts in-depth research on four case studies from Charleston, Savannah, Jacksonville, and St. Augustine. By employing interdisciplinary methodologies from art history, the history of architecture, visual studies, and tourism studies, this research investigates a diverse array of materials – from paintings and photographs to

guidebooks, souvenirs, newspapers, travelogues, exhibitions, museums, and built and natural environments.

The dissertation of Connor Hamm is approved.

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This dissertation draws extensively from the wealth of resources provided by various archives, collections, and museums. These include, but are not limited to, Charleston's Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, the Gibbes Museum of Art, and the College of Charleston; Savannah's Telfair Museums, including the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters, and the Jepson Center for the Arts, as well as the Georgia Historical Society; the Jacksonville Public Library; St. Augustine's Lightner Museum and Fort Mose

Historic State Park; the State Library and Archives of Florida in Tallahassee; and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

Finally, I am most appreciative of my partner, Hugo, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and understanding have sustained me through the challenges of this research journey.

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Introduction

Tourists cannot get enough of the American South. *Travel + Leisure* recently ranked nine Southern cities among the "15 Best Cities" to visit in the United States, with Charleston, South Carolina, claiming the magazine's top spot for the past decade.[1] Similarly, *Conde Nast Traveler* lists eight Southern cities among the country's ten "Best Small Cities" to visit. These include "mossy, moody Savannah" in Georgia, the "Gilded Age glamor" of Palm Beach, Florida, and Wilmington, North Carolina, which abounds in "Southern charm" and "scene-setting live oaks."[2] The South is home to some of the nation's most iconic attractions, like Graceland, the French Quarter, the Grand Ole Opry, Colonial Williamsburg, Monticello, the Alamo, Disney World, Miami Beach, the Everglades, and the Great Smoky Mountains, to name only several. Many places in the region rely on tourism as a major source of revenue. In some Southern states, the industry contributes up to 10% or more to their GDP, far surpassing the national average of about 3%.[3] And, tourism in the South is projected to continue growing, in line with the increasing allure of the "Sun Belt" region.

When did the South become such a popular travel destination? While gentleman explorers had ventured throughout the region during the colonial and antebellum periods, it was

[1] The cities are Charleston, SC; New Orleans, LA; Savannah, GA; Alexandria and Williamsburg, VA: San Antonio and Austin, TX; Asheville, NC; and Nashville, TN. For more see Tim Latterner, "The Fifteen Best Cities in the United States," Travel and Leisure, July 22, 2022, accessed online at https://www.travelandleisure.com/worlds-best/best-cities-in-the-united-states-2022.

[2] CNT Editors, "The Best Cities in the US: 2023 Readers' Choice Awards," October 3, 2023, accessed online at https://www.cntraveler.com/gallery/best-cities-us.

[3] See "2022 Economic Impact of Tourism in Georgia," accessed online at https://industry.exploregeorgia.org/research/tourism-economic-impact-data; Rockport Analytics, "2021 Economic and Fiscal Impact of Tourism in Florida," accessed online at https://www.visitflorida.org/media/30679/florida-visitor-economic-impact-study.pdf.

only in the postbellum decades of the late nineteenth century that tourism began to grow into a formal enterprise. Regional tourism emerged as an industry immediately following the Civil War (1861-1865) and during Reconstruction (c. 1866-1877), continuing apace through the Jim Crow era (c. 1877-1966) and up to the present day. The initial postbellum decades witnessed the opening of an array of tourist attractions throughout the South, including plantation gardens and historic homes, luxury resorts and island getaways, outdoor recreation areas and indoor marketplaces, theme parks and entertainment complexes, large exhibitions and public museums, and countless souvenir shops, roadside stands, and local landmarks, all offering opportunities for leisure, amusement, and consumption.

In the aftermath of the war, Northern visitors were charmed by the Southern landscape and its perceived quaintness and peculiarity, while many Southerners took pride in displaying their culture and heritage. In this regard, tourism played a pivotal role reintegrating the former Confederacy into the nation and forging the identity of the "New South." The New South was a slogan invented by Southern boosters to promote the region's postwar recovery. Atlanta newspaperman Henry W. Grady (1850-1889) coined the term in 1874, urging the South to abandon its longstanding agrarian society in favor of a modern, industrial economy based on manufacturing, much like that of the North. Proponents of the New South believed industrialization would promote economic growth, foster racial reconciliation, and improve civic life. "The old South rested on slavery and agriculture," Grady declared, while the "new South presents a perfect democracy."[4] While agriculture continued to define many rural areas and manufacturing took hold in cities like Atlanta, Birmingham, and Richmond, a burgeoning travel

[4] Henry W. Grady, "The New South," speech delivered to New England Society on December 21, 1886, published in *Life and Labors of Henry W. Grady, His Speeches, Writings, Etc.* (Atlanta: J.C. Hudgins & Co., 1890), 99-116.

and leisure sector offered other places, such as Charleston, an alternative pathway to modernization.

Like many communities throughout the South, Charleston had previously thrived on slave-based agriculture only to find itself lacking a robust industrial base. Faced with this reality, public officials instead launched a tourism and preservation campaign, marketing the city as an Old South heritage destination where visitors could supposedly journey back in time and immerse themselves in antebellum history. The city's former plantations and slave markets were renovated and reopened to the public, becoming some of the most popular attractions in the state. Soon enough, new hotels, restaurants, railways, and roads were constructed to accommodate the influx of newcomers hoping to experience the "Old South." While such anachronistic tendencies may seem at odds with the ethos of the New South, cities and towns across the region embraced the growing tourism industry as means to advance their postwar economic recoveries and modernize in ways that suited their locations.

Remarkably, much of the leading scholarship on the New South has yet to seriously consider the emergence of the region's travel economy. A notable example of this oversight is found in historian C. Vann Woodward's otherwise comprehensive *The Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, arguably the seminal text on the subject. Within the book's more than five-hundred pages, Woodward devotes only a single paragraph to tourism.[5] Similarly, historian Edward L.

[5] Woodward writes of developer Henry Flagler's impact on Florida: "Flagler opened his first luxury hotel in St. Augustine in 1888. Pushing southward through 300 miles of untamed scrub and hammock with his railroad and hotel chain, the pioneer Flagler flung back the last American frontier – to establish pleasure palaces and playgrounds for the idle rich. The first locomotive pulled into West Palm Beach in 1894, and his Royal Poinciana opened its doors the same year. By 1896 the palace cars from Bar Harbor and Newport could roll unimpeded through the poverty-littered Carolinas and all the way to Miami and its Royal Palm Hotel. Flagler had invested $30,000,000 in Florida to reach Miami…At his death in 1913 his empire included 765 miles of track, hotels to accommodate 40,000 guests, and numerous land companies, newspapers, and utilities." For more see C. Vann Woodward, *The Origins of the New South, 1877-1913,*

Ayers dedicates just a handful of paragraphs to the topic in his award-winning *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. One of these paragraphs reads as follows:

> Tourism could offer a way for places that had languished for years with unpromising agriculture finally to come into their own. The trappings of modern life arrived with startling speed in the ancient mountains of western North Carolina when the area began to attract tourists in large numbers. The Blowing Rock Hotel, built in 1884, claimed all the "improvements of a thoroughly modern structure": a billiard room, shooting gallery, bowling alley, and tennis court. On a good day in summer, the town's size tripled as visitors poured in.[6]

Ayers lists a few other examples without going into much detail about their respective histories. The oversights mentioned here become even more startling when considering how tourism contributed not only to the economic diversification of the South but also played a significant role in molding Southern identity and perceptions of the region during a period of widespread upheaval.

Amidst the social, economic, and political tumult of the late nineteenth century, particularly the post-Reconstruction years, tourism wielded a profound influence in shaping how Americans perceived the South and its inhabitants, while also providing Southerners a platform to present themselves in ways they desired. Certain cities, like Charleston, romanticized antebellum history and evoked a nostalgic vision of the Southern past. Elsewhere, resort towns like St. Augustine, Florida, were marketed as "exotic" idylls promising visitors the chance to escape the humdrum of daily life. In the 1880s, the oil and railroad tycoon Henry Flagler built an opulent Orientalist resort – inspired by the Moorish influences of Iberia, based on Florida's Spanish colonial heritage – in St. Augustine, giving the town the appearance of an "Oriental

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History of the South series, eds., Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 297.

[6] For more see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60-61.

city," as one visitor from the period put it.[7] Places like Charleston and St. Augustine cultivated distinct "place-images" in order to distinguish themselves and attract paying tourists. Sociologist Rob Shields uses to the term place-image to refer to the mental picture that defines a location's identity in the popular imagination. Similarly, tourism scholar Kye-Sung Chon introduces the concept of "destination-image" to specify the place-image associated with a tourist destination in particular.[8] Place-images or destination-images are formed through an array of representations within the public domain, including architecture, design, landscaping, photography, travel writing, illustrated publications, stereograph cards, and other forms of visual and material culture.[9]

The success of regional tourism depended in large part on the broader visual and material cultures surrounding the industry. Before visiting, travelers had often seen images or read accounts of such places through the widespread dissemination of photographs, postcards, newspapers, magazines, and other popular media. For instance, officials and developers in Florida used guidebooks, advertisements, and public exhibitions to elevate the backwater state into an alluring destination in hopes of attracting "tourists, invalids, and settlers," in the words of one late nineteenth-century publication.[10] Upon arriving in person, visitors encountered spaces that had been curated into a series of commercialized attractions and commodified experiences. At the Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition, a recurring exhibition that took place annually between

[7] Lady Duffus Hardy (Mary McDowell), *Down South* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1883), 20.

[8] Kye-Sung Chon, "The Role of Destination Image in Tourism," *Revue de tourisme*, no. 2 (1990): 2–9.

[9] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).

[10] George M. Barbour, *Florida: For Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882).

1888-1891 in Jacksonville, guests were surrounded by landscaping, signs, decorations, artworks, and souvenirs that affiliated Florida with the tropical islands of the Caribbean. The exhibition was part and parcel of a larger effort to rebrand the swampy state into a *sub*tropical paradise, an invented geographical imaginary that is still apparent in today's "Sunshine State" mantra. Tourism thus intersected with the modern phenomena of mass media and consumer culture to transform cities and states across the South into spaces of tourist consumption, a process known as *touristification*.

However, behind such carefully crafted façades, the industry exacerbated the region's socio-economic disparities. Some destinations catered to wealthy elites, offering exclusive experiences and luxurious accommodations, while other sites targeted the rising middle-class and provided more affordable options. Regardless of the clientele, working-class employees toiled long hours, under grueling conditions, for minimal pay to cater to the needs of the emerging leisure class. Women frequently faced challenges while traveling alone, including safety concerns and societal norms that limited their mobility. Additionally, most tourist sites were racially segregated until the 1960s, with African Americans denied access to the same facilities and accommodations as their white counterparts. The growing travel economy also exacerbated the dispossession of Indigenous communities like the Seminole Tribe of Florida, as development projects dislocated them to make way for predominantly white newcomers. Ever since, the conjunctural forces of capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and settler colonialism have continued to shape discrepant tourist geographies throughout the region.

Yet, many of these same individuals and communities took advantage of the region's touristification. Women played significant roles at all levels of the industry – as benefactors, travel photographers, and sightseers themselves. In fact, Mary Telfair, founder of Savannah's

Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, is the first woman to have established a museum in the United States. At the same time, African Americans responded to the systemic discrimination and racial segregation of Jim Crow by creating a parallel travel economy that catered specifically to the needs of Black travelers. Indigenous communities like the Florida Seminoles adapted to and actively participated in the industry in order to resist their dispossession, bolster the tribal economy, and assert their cultural survival. In these ways, tourist destinations functioned as "contact zones," a term that scholar Mary Louise Pratt coined in 1991 to refer to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today."[11]

Tourism also came to bear on the region's art, artists, and art institutions. Artists were drawn to tourist hotspots and often worked and exhibited there. In fact, some of the South's leading art movements, such as the Charleston Renaissance and the St. Augustine Art Colony, were based in popular travel destinations. Notably, artists Edwin (1882-1931) and Elise Harleston (1891-1970), a husband and wife who opened the first Black-owned art studio in Charleston, challenged the city's Old South identity by making artworks that re-envisioned the area's plantations into spaces of Black possibility. Meanwhile, owners of tourist sites frequently hired travel photographers like William Henry Jackson (1843-1942) to capture their properties and create images that could be used to promote their businesses. Although Jackson's photographs reified the glamour associated with Gilded Age travel and leisure, his body of work also offers opportunities to critically interrogate art's role in processes of destination-making. A

[11] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

primary objective of this dissertation is to consider how tourism has exerted a deep and lasting influence on artistic and cultural expression in the region.

Many of these late nineteenth-century sites remain open to this day, with quite a few now operating as museums or heritage centers. Take, for example, Charleston's Magnolia Plantation & Gardens. The former rice plantation reopened in 1870 as a vast English country-style garden and has since evolved into a plantation museum. Today, visitors can explore the landscaped grounds and partake in a series of ticketed tours of the main house, slave quarters, and other historical structures on the property. As with many plantation museums, most of the narratives presented to guests venerate the planter family while eliding the harsh realities of slavery. This process of *museumification* raises questions about how these sites narrate their own histories and contribute to the production of Southern culture and heritage.

Tourism's importance to the South is evident in the widely held belief that there is something *different* about the region. Writer W.J. Cash shared the views of many Americans when observing that the South is "not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it."[12] Likewise, historian Allen Tate, commenting on the literary works of the Southern Renaissance, characterized the South as "Uncle Sam's Other Province."[13] Irrespective of the origins behind the myth of Southern difference, tourism has harnessed this idea by portraying the region as exceptional and enigmatic, as a place that must be seen to be believed.[14] This notion has even

[12] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941), viii.

[13] Allen Tate, "Faulkner's Sanctuary and the Southern Myth," *Virginia Quarterly Review: A National Journal of Literature and Discussion*, Issue: Summer 1968, accessed online at https://www.vqronline.org/essay/faulkner%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Csanctuary%E2%80%9D-and-southern-myth.

[14] In the influential essay "The Irony of Southern History," C. Vann Woodward flipped the question of Southern difference on its head, contending that "from a broader point of view it is not the South but America that is unique among the peoples of the world." According to Woodward, the postwar South "had learned to accommodate itself to conditions that it swore it would never accept, and it had learned

given rise to a particular subgenre of writing, what I call the Journey to the South Narrative, which is itself indebted to the experiences of travel. Writers of this subgenre venture to the region as if it were a foreign country, invariably adopting the literary mode of the traveler's tale and casting themselves as intrepid explorers who go to great lengths to inform readers about this supposedly strange land. A recent work in this vein is historian Imani Perry's *South to America: A Journey Below the Mason-Dixon Line to Understand the Soul of a Nation*. The book has won major awards and its success reveals Americans' ongoing fascination with the region.

In many ways, tourism has *invented* the South – by modernizing parts of the Southern economy; fostering ideas about the region's heritage, culture, and identity, as well as myths and misconceptions; proliferating depictions of the Southern landscape and Southerners themselves; investing many of its cities with distinct place-images and spurring urbanization; influencing forms and institutions of artistic production; and shaping the ways people engage with and understand the South. In so doing, tourism and its visual economy have helped create not just *the* New South but *many* New Souths, each with its own distinct character and appeal. While some areas capitalized on antebellum nostalgia, others epitomized modern luxury or exotic fantasies. Popular media amplified these meticulously crafted place-images throughout the country, leading some artists to affirm prevailing representations and others to challenge them. Although tourism exacerbated many socio-economic divisions, it also opened up possibilities for resistance, community-building, and the creation of alternative travel economies by and for marginalized subjects. More recently, the transformation of historic sites into museums reflects

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the taste left in the mouth by the swallowing of one's own words. It had learned to live for long decades in quite un-American poverty, and it had learned the equally un-American lesson of submission. For the South had undergone an experience that it could share with no other part of America – though it is shared by nearly all the peoples of Europe and Asia – the experience of military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction." For more see C. Vann Woodward, "The Irony of Southern History," in *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960).

the growing popularity of heritage tourism, which offers visitors various, sometimes competing interpretations of Southern history and notions of Southern-ness.

In pursuit of uncovering tourism's multifaceted role in the development of the modern South, I concentrate my efforts on the Southeastern states of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, where the industry has arguably exerted some of its most profound and lasting impacts. In particular, I delve into specific case studies from Charleston, Savannah, Jacksonville, and St. Augustine, cities that exemplify the impacts, ideas, and images associated with regional tourism. These examples allow me to scrutinize particular sites in great detail, draw connections to broader social contexts, and recover the experiences of figures and communities often overlooked in existing accounts. Working at the interdisciplinary intersections between art history, visual studies, and tourism studies, I examine materials as diverse as paintings and photographs, guidebooks and souvenirs, newspapers and travelogues, exhibitions and museums, works of architecture and design, and even plants and animals, all of which have been marshaled to create spectacles of the South for the traveling public.

This project contributes to a growing body of research on the history of tourism in the South. A noteworthy example of this scholarly effort is *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, and Culture in the Modern South*, a volume edited by historian Richard D. Starnes. The book features essays on Florida's "Redneck Riviera," Alpine villages in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the racial politics of property development on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, and the relationships between sex and tourism in New Orleans, among other cases.[15] While *Southern Journeys* has played a pivotal role in establishing a conversation around the history of regional tourism, it is worth noting that all of the sites examined in the book, save for one, came into

[15] Richard D. Starnes, ed., *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, and Culture in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003).

existence at some point in the twentieth century. I intend to show that the South's tourism industry took root decades earlier.

I also draw on the work of W. Fitzhugh Brundage, a leading historian of the American South. Brundage's monograph, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, asserts that regional tourism formed just one facet of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debates over Southern identity and heritage. As white Southerners utilized monuments, textbooks, and other means to refine an exclusive vision of Southern history that affirmed their racial privilege, Black Southerners, Brundage notes, counter-memorialized the Southern past through street and school names and celebrations like Juneteenth that commemorated emancipation.[16] The book has been integral in framing my understanding of the complex interplay between tourism, race, and heritage in the South. Nevertheless, my approach diverges from Brundage's in two key respects. First, I place particular emphasis on individual sites or case studies, rather than overarching themes. Second, I focus primarily on the visual economy of Southern tourism, examining how imagery – including popular media, built and natural environments, artistic and cultural production, public exhibitions and museum displays, etc. – has profoundly influenced matters of heritage, memory, and identity while shaping the experiences of workers and tourists from diverse backgrounds.

Historian Tiya Miles is another important scholar whose research I engage and extend. In *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War*, Miles explores the phenomenon of "ghost tours" at Southern plantations, manors, and cemeteries. On these tours, visitors are regaled with tales about the spirits of enslaved individuals who are said to "haunt" the locations where they worked in bondage during their lifetimes. Miles

[16] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press/Harvard University, 2005).

finds that this type of "dark tourism" exploits Black history for commercial gain and hides the realities of slavery behind gothic, sensationalized forms of entertainment.[17] While the book's narrow focus on ghost tours is undoubtedly its strength, I choose to cast a wider net by exploring a greater variety of tourist attractions and the narrative techniques employed there.

Notably, the rise of tourism in the nineteenth century is not unique to the South; the travel and leisure economy (re)made many areas during this time. In fact, New England is arguably the first region in the country to have undergone widespread touristification. In *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century*, historian Dona Brown finds that the Transcendentalist and Romantic movements of the early nineteenth century inspired national interest in the region's fishing villages, rocky coasts, and mountain vistas. However, the touristification of these spaces into "picturesque" settings obscured the fact that such locations were as involved in capitalist development as the region's factories and mills. As Brown writes:

> As early as the construction of the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, and the beginnings of mass production in the workshops of Rochester, New York, and Paterson, New Jersey, the business of tourism began to take shape. Sometimes it took the form of big business, with all the infrastructure and capitalization of a major corporation. At other times and in other places, tourism became a kind of "cottage" industry, more like palm leaf hat-making, for instance, than like textile manufacturing. But whatever their scale, tourist businesses have been on the cutting edge of capitalist development.[18]

I embrace Brown's work on New England as a guiding example of how to conduct a regional history of tourism that adequately attends to the unique political economy of travel and leisure.

My project is divided into four chapters, each of which tackles a specific tourist attraction as a case study. The first chapter, titled "Destination Plantation," explores the history of

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[17] Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015).

[18] Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1995), 3.

plantation tourism through Charleston's Magnolia Plantation & Gardens. As mentioned, the site reopened in 1870 as a 500-acre garden, becoming the first plantation to be converted into a tourist attraction in the postbellum Deep South. The renovated estate soon gained national recognition and attracted thousands of visitors annually. In this chapter, I argue that tourism has commodified the plantation into a spectacle of an idealized Southern past, obscuring the forms of repression – and resistance – that have characterized the institution throughout its history. Indeed, the site's seemingly idyllic reinvention concealed the harsh realities faced by Magnolia's workers, many of whom had previously been enslaved on the property. Yet, these same workers assisted two of Charleston's leading Black artists from Jazz Age – Edwin and Elise Harleston – in sneaking onto the whites-only estate, where the couple made artworks that challenged the plantation's picturesque image. Unfortunately, members of the public will not hear about this remarkable story if they visit Magnolia today, which now operates as a plantation museum. Nor will they be able to read about it or similar episodes in much of the existing scholarship on plantation museums, which fails to grapple with the actual *history* of plantation tourism.

The second chapter, "The Southern Museum," likewise considers the relationships between tourism, museums, and the legacies of slavery. Here, I turn my attention to Savannah's Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, the first public art museum in the South, and its two sister sites, the Owens-Thomas and Slave Quarters (OTHSQ) and the Jepson Center for the Arts. The three sites exemplify the historical development of the museum in the South, particularly the institution's changing relationship to slavery and its afterlives. The first museum, the Telfair Academy, was initially built as an urban manor for wealthy slaveowners and was converted into a museum in 1886. It represents the late nineteenth-century urge to romanticize the Southern past by glossing over the realities of slavery. The second location, the OTHSQ, was similarly

constructed as private residence for enslavers before being converted into an antebellum house museum in the 1950s. Today, it narrates the history of urban slavery in Savannah from the perspectives of the bonded workers who toiled at the site, representing a significant step toward more inclusive curatorial practices at Southern house museums. The third site, the Jepson Center, opened in 2001 a museum of modern and contemporary art. Its collections are particularly strong in the work of Black artists from the South, reflecting recent efforts on the part of the art world to redress the afterlives of slavery by rectifying the canon's racist exclusions. Together, the three Telfair museums encapsulate the challenges and opportunities facing museums in the South as they attempt to reckon with the Southern past while promoting the larger artistic and cultural heritage of the region.

The third chapter, "Subtropical Spectacles," recreates the Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition. Again, the recurring exhibition took place in Jacksonville between 1888-1891 as part of a larger effort to exoticize the swampy state into a paradise destination in hopes of attracting predominantly white newcomers. The exhibition's organizers sought to achieve this by affiliating the state with the tropical islands of the Caribbean, establishing a fictive relation based on the imaginative geography of the "subtropical." However, the idyllic façade presented to the public concealed the harsh realities faced by Florida's Indigenous and Black inhabitants. Amongst the exposition's attractions stood a degrading ethnological display featuring members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, while African American vendors were relegated to small, isolated areas in the back of the main hall and Black attendees were only allowed access on designated "Negro Days." Yet, these discriminatory practices were met with various forms of resistance, revealing that the exhibition was used to construct *and* contest the very idea of Florida and what it meant to be a Floridian. In this chapter, I identify such exhibitions, and tourist spaces more

generally, as contested spaces that *both* reinforce prevailing power structures *and* provide platforms for marginalized subjects to access and influence the public sphere.

The fourth chapter, "Resort City," stays in Florida to examine St. Augustine's redevelopment into an exotic luxury destination. In the late 1880s, developer Henry Flagler opened an opulent Orientalist resort in the city's historic center, part of the broader American phenomenon of the Gilded Age resort. Unfortunately, the city's transformation into a getaway for wealthy whites depended upon the erasure of the area's Black histories and the exploitation of its Black workers. Throughout this period, however, St. Augustine's Black community mobilized to assert their rights, commemorated forms of African American heritage, and eventually created an alternative travel, heritage, and leisure economy that catered specifically to their needs, even opening one of the first beachfront resorts reserved exclusively for Black guests on St. Augustine's Anastasia Island. In this chapter, I put these two "sides" of St. Augustine in conversation with one another in pursuit of complicating understandings of resort cities in the Jim Crow South.

Finally, the Epilogue considers how these various histories of regional tourism – their images and imaginaries, sites and subjects, and developments and disparities – continue to impact the South and collective impressions of the region and its culture, heritage, and identity to this day. I put these case studies in conversation with recently opened sites that represent contemporary efforts to redress the Southern past with more ecumenical and inclusive forms of tourism.

Chapter One
Destination Plantation: Magnolia Plantation and Gardens

In 1870 Reverend John Grimké Drayton (1816-1891) oversaw what appeared to be a miraculous conversion: the Episcopal minister transformed his rice plantation into a 500-acre garden and opened it to the public, making the property located just outside Charleston, South Carolina, one of the first plantations – if not *the* first – to be converted into a tourist attraction in the postbellum South.[19] Magnolia Plantation had become Magnolia Gardens, an extravagant English country-style garden where exuberant camellias and azaleas triumphed into floral jungles; decorative footbridges festooned artificial ponds; a maze of rose hedges fostered an aristocratic flair; and a potpourri of cypresses, live oaks, and of course, magnolias swayed in the humid, coastal breeze. The renovated estate soon gained national recognition and hosted hundreds of visitors annually. Photographs and postcards circulated images of Magnolia around the country (fig. 1.1a-b), while newspapers, magazines, and travel guides promoted the estate as "Charleston's Fairy-Land" and "Elysium."[20]

However, the site's seemingly idyllic reinvention concealed less blissful realities. The federal government's failure to adequately assist the newly free population left Magnolia's former slaves with little choice but to remain and toil under their old master. These emancipated men and women beautified the plantation through backbreaking labor, under grueling conditions, for minimal pay. They worked thereafter as gardener-guides, tending the grounds and shepherding guests on tours of the whites-only estate. By the early twentieth century, other

[19] Derek Fell, *Magnolia Plantation and Gardens* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs-Smith, 2009), 14.

[20] Frances Duncan, "Magnolia Gardens: A Visit to Charleston's Fairy-Land," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, v. 74, May-October (New York: Scribner & Co., 1907), 513.

properties followed Magnolia's example and reinvented as tourist attractions.[21] Desegregation eventually forced such sites to cease using exclusively Black workers and admitting only white guests, but plantation tourism has since shown no signs of slowing down. Drayton's descendants still own and operate Magnolia, which is now called Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, and today it seems as if one cannot throw a rock anywhere in the South without it hitting a plantation that has been remodeled into a public garden, heritage site, bed-and-breakfast, or history museum.

A rigorous body of scholarship has grappled with the phenomenon of plantation tourism. In their landmark 1991 study, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, sociologists Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small identify what they call the "white-centric" model of history on display at most plantation tourist sites. This approach, they argue, tends to downplay slavery, glorify slave-owners, and mythologize antebellum society in order to appeal to a predominantly white customer base.[22] More recent scholarship has challenged such "whitewashing" by re-narrating estates from the perspectives of the enslaved.[23] This research has been instrumental in complicating understandings of the antebellum South, plantation dynamics, and the experiences of the enslaved.

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[21] Two such sites include Middleton Place, also in Charleston, and the Lewis Plantation and Turpentine Still, located in Brooksville, Florida.

[22] Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

[23] Some important works in this vein include Fath Davis Ruffins, "Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation and Museumizing American Slavery," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, et al., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 395-434; Perry L. Carter, David Butler, and Owen Dwyer, "Defetishizing the Plantation: African Americans in the Memorialized South," *Historical Geography* 39 (2011): 128-146; Alan Rice, "Museums, Memorials and Plantation Houses in the Black Atlantic: Slavery and the Development of Dark Tourism," in *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009), 224-246; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: New Press, 2006).

As important as this research has been, it nevertheless operates under the assumption that plantation tourism emerged relatively recently. In *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation*, cultural historian Jessica Adams typifies such misdating when claiming that the "plantation became popular as a film set in the early to mid-twentieth century and, later, as a tourist destination."[24] The case of Magnolia makes clear that plantations became popular tourist attractions many decades earlier than is commonly believed. Crucially, this prevailing misconception has prevented scholars from studying the actual *history* of plantation tourism – its emergence in the immediate postbellum period, evolution during the Jim Crow era, and enduring popularity throughout contemporary times. Because Magnolia in many ways pioneered the *touristification* of the plantation, that is, its transformation into an object of tourist consumption, I treat the estate as a case study of this longer, overlooked history.

In this chapter, I argue that tourism has commodified the plantation into a spectacle of an idealized Southern past, obscuring the forms of repression – and resistance – that have characterized the institution throughout its history. When Magnolia reopened, it catered to white visitors' nostalgic fantasies of the antebellum South while re-subjecting Black workers to exploitative labor conditions. Amidst these oppressive circumstances, however, the site's emancipated and free-born employees managed to engage in strategic acts of defiance, such as assisting two of Charleston's leading Jazz Age African American artists in secretly accessing the segregated estate. These artists, a painter and a photographer, defied the site's whites-only admissions policy to create artworks that re-envisioned the plantation into a space of Black possibility. Their risky endeavor coincided with Magnolia's rise as a driving force in

[24] Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007), 10.

Charleston's burgeoning tourism industry. During this period, the city marketed itself as an Old South heritage destination where visitors could supposedly journey back in time and experience a taste of antebellum life. In more recent decades, Magnolia has also assumed the role of a plantation museum, in which capacity it has struggled to reckon with its own involvement in perpetuating anti-Black violence – physical, material, and epistemic – both before and after slavery. In the pages that follow, I counter-narrate the site's landscape design, visual culture, labor conditions, visitor experiences, artistic representations, and exhibition practices in pursuit of uncovering the overlooked history of plantation tourism.

Black Labor, White Leisure

In 1676, Rev. Drayton's ancestors, Thomas and Ann Drayton, founded Magnolia Plantation just outside Charles Town (later Charleston), the provincial capital of recently establish British Carolina.[25] Over the next century, rice plantations like Magnolia and the enslaved workers who sustained them enriched the city into one of the wealthiest per capita in the American colonies.[26] "While all is joy, festivity, and happiness in Charles-Town," noticed farmer-writer J.H.J. de Crèvecœur in 1782, "would you imagine the scenes of misery overspread in the country."[27] An unenviable environment of mud, muck, and malaria bedeviled the bonded

[25] For more see Elias Bull and Bernard Kearse, "Magnolia Plantation and Gardens," *National Register of Historic Places - Nomination and Inventory* (1972).

[26] For more on the rice economy of the Carolina Lowcountry see Duncan Clinch Heyward, *Seed from Madagascar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937); Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Chris Tuten, *Lowcountry Time and Tide: The Fall of Carolina's Rice Kingdom* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010); Hayden R. Smith, *Carolina's Golden Fields: Inland Rice Cultivation in the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1670–1860*, Cambridge Studies on the American South (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[27] J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur, "Letter IX," *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* (1782; reis., New York: Penguin Classics, 1981), 188.

workers who labored on the rice plantations of the Carolina Lowcountry. In early spring they waded shin-high in paddies to sow rice seed; then throughout the summer growing season operated dams and dykes to control mosquito-infested water levels; and in autumn scythed the harvest-ready plants before separating grain from husk using large mortar-and-pestles and fanner baskets. As one eighteenth-century visitor to the region remarked, "Carolina is in the spring a paradise, in the summer a hell, and in the autumn a hospital."[28] Following the Civil War and abolition of slavery, Magnolia's ostensibly picturesque transformation into a tourist garden concealed its continued reliance on these antebellum social relations, maintaining a racial hierarchy between the estate's entirely Black workforce and its white owners and patrons.[29]

Despite the opportunities promised by Reconstruction (c.1866-1877), the majority of the country's newly free population, including Magnolia's former slaves, faced immense challenges without enduring federal assistance.[30] The government's failure to follow through on providing freed men and women with reparations ("40 acres and a mule") frustrated their efforts to obtain economic independence. "I heard about the 40 acres of land and a mule the ex-slaves would get after the war," recalled Frances Andrews, a freed woman from South Carolina, "but I didn't pay

[28] Quoted in Quoted in "Carolina's Gold Coast: The Culture of Rice and Slavery," *Coastal Heritage Magazine*, vol. 28 no. 1 (Winter 2014), 11.

[29] In the decades before the Civil War the Drayton family was itself a house divided. The minister's sisters, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, were leading abolitionists who detested enslaved labor and the South's plantation economy. They wrote *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* in an attempt to convince white Southern women to support emancipation on the basis of scripture. For more on the fascinating life of Sarah and Angelina Grimké, see Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Women's Rights and Abolition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[30] Lonnie Bunch, "Emancipation evoked mix of emotions for freed slaves," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2012, accessed online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/emancipation-evoked-mix-of-emotions-for-freed-slaves/2012/09/07/57ad5184-f15a-11e1-892d-bc92fee603a7_story.html.

any attention to it. They never got anything."[31] Anne Broome, another freed woman from South Carolina, held on to the possibility that reparations would one day come. "Now in our old ages," she ached, "I hope they lets de old slaves like me see de shine of some of dat money I hears so much talk about."[32] The lack of compensation for emancipated Americans confined many to new forms of servitude under their old masters, a considerable percentage of whom still owned their plantations.[33] "Emancipation left the planters poor, and with no method of earning a living," observed leading sociologist and historian W.E.B. Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction*, "except by exploiting Black labor on their only remaining capital – their land."[34] While most planters effectively re-conscripted former slaves into unfree labor through sharecropping, Drayton proceeded to do so through tourism.[35]

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[31] Interview with Frances Andrews, *South Carolina Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in South Carolina from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Federal Writers' Project, 1936-38; reis. Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2006), 18.

[32] Interview with Anne Broom, *South Carolina Slave Narratives*, 106.

[33] For those freed men and women who did attempt to make lives for themselves off the plantation, the threat of mob violence incited by histrionic demagogues like South Carolina Governor "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman would have been front-of-mind. Between 1890-1900, in fact, lynching increased in the state, culminating in the high-profile 1898 lynching of Frazier Baker, the first Black postmaster of nearby Lake City, and his family. For more on this particular lynching and the larger campaign of racial terror in the South following the Civil War see "CHARGED WITH MURDER.; Seven Men Held at Charleston for Alleged Killing of Postmaster Baker," *The New York Times*, July 2, 1898; Terrence Finnegan, *A Deed so Accursed: Lynching in Mississippi and South Carolina, 1881-1940*, American South Series (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[34] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935; reis., New York: Meridian, 1965), 671.

[35] For more on sharecropping see Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, "The Ex-Slave in the Post-Bellum South: A Study of the Economic Impact of Racism in a Market Environment," *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 33, no. 1 (March 1973), 131-148; Edward Royce, *The Origins of Southern Sharecropping* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

With alternative options few and far between, Magnolia's emancipated workers undertook the backbreaking labor required to renovate the property in the manner of an English country estate. This landscape style had emerged in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England as a reaction to the French formal garden then favored by the European aristocracy. Unlike the rectilinear, symmetrical order of the *jardin à la française* (the exemplar of which is Versailles), the more "informal" and "natural" English country garden imitated an idyllic pastoral landscape. It typically consisted of rolling hills beset with groves of trees and decorative lakes or ponds, and some sort of Arcadian "set piece" like a temple, grotto, or recreated ruin. Over time, this style acquired more gardenesque elements such as carpets of floral varieties, as well as Orientalist features like ornamental pagodas.[36] The freed men and women tasked with translating this style to Magnolia beautified the plantation's systemized rows of rice paddies into expansive, grassy lawns embellished with azaleas, camellias, and other flowers; created a constellation of winsome ponds adorned with little footbridges; laid a series of meandering paths bedecked with charming pergolas and trellises; and performed sundry other tasks that prepared the property into a pleasure park for white tourists. In so doing, the workers erased from the grounds much of the visible, physical evidence of their own bondage, transforming a landscape that symbolized enslaved labor into one that exuded elevated leisure.

After Rev. Drayton's death in 1891, the estate passed to his only child, Julia Drayton Hastie (1848-1920). Under her ownership, Magnolia became a nationally known attraction that frequently appeared in mass media. Striking photographs of the site's Spanish moss-bearded

[36] For more on English gardens see Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Elizabeth S. Eustis, and John Bidwell, eds., *Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art, and Landscape Design* (New York: Morgan Library and Museum, 2010); Mark Laird, *A Natural History of English Gardening, 1650-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); and Thomas J. Mickey, *America's Romance with the English Garden* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013).

trees and flower-flanked ponds graced several pages of the 1893 publication *Art Work of Charleston*.[37] The 1900 edition of *Baedeker's Guide to the United States*, then the premier travel publication, urged sightseers: "No one in the season (March-May) should omit to visit the…Gardens of Magnolia (reached by railway or steamer), on the Ashley, the chief glory of which is the gorgeous display of the azalea bushes, which are sometimes 15-20 ft. high and present huge masses of vivid and unbroken colouring."[38] In a 1938 *Philadelphia Inquirer* advertisement for Chesterfield Cigarettes, Metropolitan Opera star and Broadway actress Grace Moore epitomized the glamour associated with Magnolia (fig. 1.2). The advertisement shows the rosy-cheeked celebrity wearing an angelic white dress while reveling about the gardens in a scene of neo-Rococo exuberance, indicating the innocence, playfulness, and sentimentality with which white America viewed the post-slavery plantation. Tourism thus intersected with the modern phenomena of popular media and consumer culture to romanticize the plantation into a picturesque destination.

A photograph taken circa 1901 by travel photographer William Henry Jackson (1843-1942) captures Magnolia's typical visitor at this time. Titled *Woman Near Flowering Shrub* (fig. 1.3), the image depicts a white woman looking directly at the camera while affecting a certain refined femininity. Her hair is exquisitely sculpted, her dress delicately laced. Her posture is as governed as her face is diaphanous. She stands a Lady. The freshly plucked azalea dangling from her hand suggests the comfortable quality of life enjoyed by women belonging to the "leisure class," a term that economist Thorstein Veblen coined in his 1899 treatise *The Theory of the*

[37] *Art Work of Charleston,* Part Six, Historic Charleston Foundation (Chicago: W.H. Parish Publishing Company, 1893), not paginated.

[38] Karl Baedeker, ed., *Baedeker's Guide to the United States* (New York: Scribner's, 1900-01), 390.

Leisure Class. Veblen contends that upper-class members of modern industrial society who are exempt from "all useful employment" partake in "conspicuous leisure" in order to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, whose physical labor sustains their "non-productive consumption of time." According to Veblen, it is incumbent upon the leisure-class woman to engage in conspicuous leisure as it is "morally impossible" for her to otherwise contribute to her family's social standing; her "vicarious leisure," this theory holds, accrues to the distinction of her husband and children.[39] That said, such a paternalistic interpretation must also admit that affluent women may have engaged in conspicuous leisure for their own satisfaction. During this period, women like Mary Telfair – a plantation heiress who founded the South's first public art museum, explored in the following chapter – often traveled with other women, creating homosocial bonds independent of any male connection or domestic obligation. This traveling sisterhood offered women companionship, mobility, and a sense of security while away from home. Represented as both objects and agents of leisure, upper-class white women likely turned to the post-slavery plantation as a space where they could both fulfill societal expectations of bourgeois femininity and find personal fulfillment on their own terms.

On Magnolia, the trappings of leisure depended upon the precarious labor of Black women, either formerly enslaved or born free. The estate's female workers assumed the role of guides, chaperoning guests like travel writer Frances Duncan on tours of the property when she visited Magnolia in 1907 on assignment for *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. The "group of voluble negro guides" the writer encountered must have left quite the impression on her, as she described in excruciating detail the attendant who accompanied her tour. Duncan

[39] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London: Macmillan, 1899), 35-67.

found “herself under the wing of an elderly negress, who, with the solicitude of a hen for a brood of incautious chickens, was ushering her little flock along the path.” At some point, the writer wandered off and got lost among Magnolia’s hundreds of acres. After a few disorienting minutes alone, Duncan heard “the sound of approaching footsteps; then the shriek of a whistle.” It was “the ancient negress, who, displeasure in every line of her face and feature, had come to look for the truant escaped from her safe convoy.”[40] Riddled with condescending, offensive language, Duncan’s account reveals the dialogic of gender, race, and power relations that animated the interactions between Magnolia’s guests and guides.

The specific woman Duncan refers to may be the attendant identified as “Aunt Phoebe” in another photograph taken by Jackson as part of his Magnolia series. The original black-and-white dry-plate negative shows the elderly employee standing broom-in-hand beside a riot of the estate’s famous azaleas (fig. 1.4). Her outfit – an aproned dress, kerchief, and bandana – evokes the stereotypical image of the mammy, a Jim Crow-era caricature that represented older Black women as nurturing, matronly figures contended with lives of servitude. It is unknown if these female workers were required to wear such evocative outfits. Nevertheless, beyond their clothing, Magnolia’s attendants were basically required to embody such subservient roles by exhibiting a certain grandmotherly devotion to visitors. Indeed, the mammy stereotype colors Duncan’s patronizing description of the “elderly negress” who dutifully cared for “her little flock,” while the guide communicated her “displeasure” with Duncan wandering off the way an adult might reprimand a child. The post-slavery plantation effectively brought the mammy caricature to life, positioning the white tourist as a figurative child in need of her maternal protection. This carefully crafted dynamic inverted the actual social hierarchies of the time and

[40] Frances Duncan, “Magnolia Gardens,” 516-519.

created the illusion of warmth and care within a setting marked by violence and oppression, enabling white visitors to indulge in fantasies of innocence while ignoring their complicity in perpetuating racist stereotypes. Historian Kimberly Wallace-Sanders notes that the enduring popularity of the mammy figure among whites points "to a long-lasting and troubled marriage of racial and gender essentialism, mythology, and southern nostalgia."[41]

Hence, workers like Aunt Phoebe were packaged as part and parcel of the overall consumer experience. Their labor consisted of tending the grounds and conducting tours while essentially serving as a form of live entertainment. The employees thus engaged in what can be called, in accordance with Veblen, conspicuous *labor*, a type of performative labor staged for the amusement of leisure-class consumers. This conspicuous labor served a dual purpose: it created something of value (the gardens) while simultaneously being consumed as the thing of value itself. Mass-produced materials further contributed to Aunt Phoebe's popular consumption. Chromolithographic postcards of Jackson's photograph circulated her image around the country while advertising the estate to prospective visitors, demonstrating the woman's re-commodification into a form of visual property (fig. 1.5). This image or performance of servitude was an integral part of the plantation experience, allowing white visitors to encounter a sanitized version of slavery while projecting their cultural assumptions onto the racialized and gendered bodies of Black women.

Whether encountered in person or on postcards, Aunt Phoebe – or at least her name – would have already been familiar to the American public. At the time, her name was regarded as the female equivalent of Uncle Tom, as evidenced by writer Essie Collins Matthews's 1915 book

[41] Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 2.

Aunt Phebe, Uncle Tom, and Others: Character Studies Among the Old Slaves of the South, Fifty Years After.[42] Featuring photographs of numerous emancipated Americans, the book classifies former slaves based on their supposed character types. It specifically identifies "Aunt Phebe" (spelled differently than the Aunt Phoebe in question) as the type of former slave who fondly recalls antebellum life. The one-dimensional caricature of the "apologist slave" allowed whites to ventriloquize their romanticized views of slavery through the voices of the emancipated. It is unknown if the woman in Jackson's photograph self-identified as Aunt Phoebe or if the photographer ascribed the character name to her.[43] Regardless, consumer culture's visual economy – encompassing forms of spectatorship, modes of display, and the reproduction and circulation of images – facilitated Magnolia's success by reducing its workers into symbolic units of consumption.

By presenting some of its employees as living embodiments of racist stereotypes, Magnolia harnessed what literary theorist Saidiya Hartman refers to as the "figurative capacities of blackness." Hartman elaborates that "the value of blackness" can be found "in its metaphorical aptitude, whether literally understood as the fungibility of the commodity or understood as the imaginative surface upon which the master and the nation came to understand themselves."[44] Although Hartman refers to the period of slavery, her formulation nevertheless

[42] For more on the "Aunt" and "Uncle" character-types after slavery see Essie Collins Matthews, *Aunt Phebe, Uncle Tom, and Others: Character Studies Among the Old Slaves of the South, Fifty Years After* (Columbus, OH: The Champlin Press, 1915).

[43] Interestingly, many African American minstrel performers adopted the "Aunt Phoebe" character. For more see Henry T. Sampson, ed., *Blacks in Blackface: A Sourcebook on Early Black Musical Shows* (Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2014), especially 176, 693, 1206, 1463, 1478.

[44] Saidiyah Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7.

points to the fact that tourism reformulated the plantation's ability to capitalize on racial difference by treating the *spectacle of (anti-)Blackness* as a marketable and profitable asset.

How did figures like Aunt Phoebe respond to such dehumanizing conditions? The paucity of surviving testimonials from Magnolia's workers makes answering this question rather difficult, as does the contrasting abundance of evidence attesting to brutality of slavery and its afterlives. Because of this disparity, Hartman warns that scholars can easily "reinforce the spectacular character of black suffering" by reiterating the "routinized violence of slavery and its aftermath." [45] Katherine McKittrick, a scholar of critical Black feminisms, similarly cautions that researchers run the risk of "analytically reprising [the] violence" of slavery and "reproducing knowledge about black subjects that renders them less than human." The task, McKittrick contends, is to find ways "to write blackness by ethically honoring but not repeating anti-black violences."[46] In an attempt to strike this balance, I now shift focus away from Magnolia's investment in the "spectacular character of black suffering" and instead seek to uncover the subjective experiences of its workers.

Although the photograph of Aunt Phoebe that has been discussed herein plainly records Jackson's perspective, it unintentionally conveys the woman's perspective, as well. The composition is arranged such that azaleas climb from the bottom foreground to tower over and behind the woman, forming a shadowed nook that frames her against the sun-dappled floral *allée* leading to a reflective pond in the background. The burst of flowers at the front-left is slightly out-of-focus, as is the small body of water at the back-right, but the receding perspective and

[45] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection,* 3.

[46] Katherine McKittrick, "Mathematics Black life," *The Black Scholar*, vol. 44, no. 2 (Summer 2014), 18; 20.

camera aperture catch the figure and her facial expression in clear focus. Aunt Phoebe appears stilted and even slightly restive, as if waiting for the photographer to finish. She eyes him as much as he must have gawked at her. Looking directly at the camera, she squints her eyes, furrows her brow, and purses her lips. Her unswerving stare meets Jackson's objectifying gaze to betray a growing exasperation. The annoyed expression on her face recalls the "displeasure" that Duncan noticed "in every line" of her guide's "face and feature." This is not the warmhearted countenance of the kindly, ever-patient mammy.

The photograph likely captures Aunt Phoebe's weariness with her role as an object of tourist consumption. One must imagine that she and her fellow employees often grew tired of the demands of white visitors and would choose select moments in which to engage in what historian Stephanie M. H. Camp calls "everyday forms of resistance." Camp has uncovered that enslaved subjects regularly engaged in small acts of defiance that "might otherwise appear to be little more than fits of temper," including dragging feet, losing tools, and feigning illness.[47] Looking at Aunt Phoebe's profile, she appears to have adapted such "hidden or indirect expressions of dissent" and "quiet ways of reclaiming a measure of control" to the voyeuristic realities of the post-slavery plantation.[48] Her discontentment signifies a break from the submissive character expected of her, revealing a sliver of personality beyond her ascribed identity as a caretaker. While tourists wanted to see the guides as nostalgic caricatures of Black subservience, attendants like Aunt Phoebe let visitors know exactly who they were dealing with.

[47] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2004), 2.

[48] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 2.

Another photograph of Jackson's, titled *The Caretakers*, suggests that Magnolia's workers forged bonds with one another through such acts of defiance. The photograph depicts six employees, four male and two female, with Aunt Phoebe situated on the right (fig. 1.6). This photograph is one of the only images in which Magnolia's male workers appear. Indeed, the gendered division of labor that positioned women like Aunt Phoebe as the public faces of Magnolia seems to have confined the estate's male employees to more "behind the scenes" roles like groundskeepers, carpenters, and handymen. Whereas Aunt Phoebe in her single photograph boldly stares back at Jackson, in *The Caretakers* no eyes meet the photographer's camera; the workers look downward and edgeways while holding their tools. Their averted faces can be interpreted multiple ways, but I read the scene as a collective refusal to engage the photographer on his terms. By diverting their eyes, turning their heads, and deliberately avoiding direct interaction with the camera, they deny Jackson the cooperation expected of them, transforming an image intended to capture their servitude into one that documents their solidarity with one another.

Such everyday forms of resistance may appear to be small consolations, but they are not without meaning. Jackson's frequent collaborations with owners of tourist attractions involved capturing images of such sites for promotional purposes. Many of his photographs were turned into postcards or published in other formats that circulated throughout the country as marketing materials. Magnolia's workforce was likely accustomed to the presence of photographers and reporters on the estate; the site's employees were surely expected to put their best faces forward for these guests. In *The Caretakers*, however, they collectively thwart these promotional intentions by refusing to fully partake in a scripted performance of subservience. The blurs created by their moving faces and bodies leave poignant traces of their subjectivities, visual

markers of their humanity that disrupt the objectifying nature of not only this particular photograph but of the larger visual economy of plantation tourism in which Magnolia participated. The photograph thus divulges the existence of personal relationships and private connections between Magnolia's workers, underscoring a major, albeit often overlooked, aspect of the plantation's post-slavery history.

When interpreted critically, the materials discussed herein betray the artificiality and fragility of Magnolia's picturesque image while shedding light on the experiences of the workers who endured such circumstances. During the interwar years, two artists forbidden from visiting the estate because of their race would further challenge Magnolia's carefully constructed identity.

Mastering the Plantation

One of the men pictured in *The Caretakers* may be Thomas Pinckney, a contract laborer who repaired Magnolia's footbridges.[49] Interestingly, Pinckney was related by marriage to artists Edwin (1882-1931) and Elise Harleston (1891-1970), a husband and wife who opened the first Black-owned portrait studio in Charleston during the height of the "Charleston Renaissance," the city's interwar artistic and cultural revival. When the portraitist couple decided to create landscapes, they turned to Magnolia and their cousin Pinckney for inspiration. The resulting artworks defy the whites-only estate and represent two of the most audacious landscapes in the American canon.

[49] 1900 Federal Census for Thomas Pinckney; Census Place: Charleston Ward 9, Charleston, South Carolina; Roll: 1520; Page: 6; Enumeration District: 0101; FHL microfilm: 1241520; accessed online at Ancestry.com; 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line].

Edwin and Elise Harleston (née Forrest) were both born into Charleston's Black middle class at the end of the nineteenth century. They each attended the Avery Normal Institute, a high school for the city's African American students. Between 1901-04, young "Teddy" Harleston enrolled at Atlanta University and majored in sociology under W.E.B. Du Bois, who became a lifelong mentor and friend. Subsequently, Harleston pursued his passion for painting by training at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Chicago. Returning to Charleston, he worked alongside his father at the family funeral home while painting on the side. Elise Forrest was by that time employed as a teacher and seamstress around Charleston. Their paths converged in 1913, leading to their engagement and subsequent marriage. In 1919 she moved to New York to study photography at the Brunel School of Photography, then to Alabama to train further at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute.[50] In 1922 they opened a portrait studio in downtown Charleston, making them the first academically-trained African American artists working in the city and distinguishing her as the first Black female photographer working professionally in South Carolina.[51]

The Harlestons ran their studio as a team. By combining photography with painting – she would photograph a sitter and he would paint a likeness from his wife's image over time – they developed a timesaving and cost-effective approach to making sensitive portraits of Black subjects. While the "New Negro" movement embraced modernist experimentation, the

[50] Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, *Viewfinders: Black Women Photographers* (New York: Dodd Mead & Co., 1986), 34-35.

[51] This was only a few years after James van der Zee and Gaynella Greenlee opened their portrait studio in Harlem and at about the same time Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keefe ran their sought-after gallery in Manhattan. For more on the life of Edwin and Elise Harleston see "Edwin Augustus Harleston and Elise Beatrice Forrest Harleston," in Aberjhani and Sandra L. West, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Facts on File, 147); Maurine Akua McDaniel, *Edwin Augustus Harleston: Portrait Painter, 1882-1931* (dissertation: Emory University, 1994).

Harlestons remained committed to academic naturalism and the visual politics of respectability.[52] The painter expressed as much in a letter to his wife, writing about their responsibility to portray African Americans "with the classic technique and the truth, not caricatures, to do the dignified portrait."[53] This collaborative, uplifting approach can be seen in the complimentary portraits *Miss Sue Bailey with an African Shawl* (1930). The seated, three-quarters-length portraits depict Bailey, then a leading member of the Young Women's Christian Association (fig. 1.7a-b), radiating confidence, grace, and poise. In such portraits of respectability, the Harlestons not only captured Bailey's accomplishments but also celebrated the broader achievements of the "talented tenth," a term that Du Bois and other Black leaders used to describe the upper echelons of the Black community.

Their double portraits are not simply duplicates, though, as each complimentary portrait possesses an artistic integrity of its own. Working from his wife's photograph, the painter has turned Bailey slightly toward the viewer, attenuated her facial characteristics, and erased any evidence of the studio setting. He also appears to have emphasized her curves; notice, for instance, the increased shapeliness of her body and fuller appearance of her dress as compared to the photograph. If in the painting Bailey comes across somewhat prim, in the photograph she appears more probing. By brush she is rendered a traditional lady, but by camera she is framed a modern woman. Whereas the painter has exaggerated certain external aspects of the sitter, the photographer has brought out the interiority of the subject. In other words, Elise Harleston's

[52] The Harlestons regularly corresponded with writer Alain Locke, who popularized the term "New Negro" and spearheaded the movement of the same name. For more see Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925).

[53] Edwin Harleston, Charleston, to Elise Harleston, New York, September 7, 1919; Harleston Family Papers, Box 1, Folder 7; Stuart A Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

photographs do not merely support her husband's painted ones; she was an artist in her own right. Acknowledging this fact is crucial for grasping her role in the couple's landscapes of Magnolia.

Although the Harlestons devoted themselves to making empathetic portraits of Black subjects, they found themselves somewhat detached from Charleston's Black community. "The Harlestons were light, and we didn't associate with people who were much darker than we were," recounted Edwina Harleston Whitlock, the couple's niece and adopted daughter. "Of course, we didn't associate with white people either. We were a kind of in-between people."[54] Existing at some remove from Charleston's mostly middle-class white community and its primarily working-class Black community, the Harlestons were surely surprised at the beginning of 1926 when Mayor Thomas Porcher Stoney offered the painter a solo exhibition at the Charleston Museum. Before Harleston could even respond to the offer, however, the white gatekeepers of the city's cultural establishment were hit by "quite a spirit of jealousy" and pressured Stoney to rescind the invitation. Charleston's first exhibition devoted to a Black artist was promptly and indefinitely "postponed."[55]

Not to be defeated, later that year the Harlestons turned their attention to another symbol of institutional segregation in the city, Magnolia. Literary scholar Susan Donaldson proposes an intriguing theory that Edwin Harleston gained access to the whites-only estate with the assistance of Pinckney, his cousin who worked there, where he made the panoramic photograph *View from*

[54] Edward Ball, *The Sweet Hell Inside: The Rise of an Elite Black Family in the Segregated South* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 190.

[55] Ibid., 277-78.

Magnolia's White Bridge (c. 1926).[56] The photograph shows Harleston painting the property *en plein air* (fig. 1.8). He dons a suit and hat while sitting in front of an easel, brushing onto the canvas the gardens that reflect off the surface of a pond, across which spans the decorative bridge that gives the photograph its title. The painter is positioned at one end of the bridge and the camera directly opposite on the other, creating a receding perspective that orients the panorama's squat composition and curved distortions.

Donaldson has conducted valuable research on the panorama, notably the discovery of Pinckney's likely involvement. Yet I believe that Elise Harleston must have participated in its creation, too. The strength of the Harlestons' creative partnership, the dangers involved in sneaking onto Magnolia, and the fact that this is a photograph – a landscape at that, a genre unfamiliar to both artists – indicate that the photographer would have joined her husband on the estate and assisted in making *View from Magnolia's White Bridge*. How would this have taken place? One possibility holds that the Harlestons and Pinckney set up by the bridge as the painter erected his easel and had his photograph taken by his wife while their cousin kept watch. This scenario buttresses the case for the photographer's involvement, as her experience with photography would have expedited the risky process. A second theory follows that they took the wide-format photograph as a simple landscape and "brushed" the painter into the panorama through an ingenious double-exposure technique. This scenario also relies on the photographer's participation, as the editing process would have required someone with advanced skills in photographic processing. Either way, Elise Harleston was most likely involved, which is why I include her in the panorama's official attribution.

[56] Susan V. Donaldson, "Charleston's Racial Politics of Historic Preservation: The Case of Edwin A. Harleston," in Hutchisson and Greene, eds., *Renaissance in Charleston: Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country, 1900–1940*, 176–197.

Co-created by both Harlestons, *View from Magnolia's White Bridge* emerges as a lesson in duplicity. The wide-format photograph includes as much of the estate as possible from a single field of vision, as if the artists sought to create a portrait of the landscape. Additionally, the presence of the painter-at-work reveals this ostensible landscape to be as much a portrait of the artist. The intermingling of these pictorial modes is enhanced by the intermixing of photography and painting, a combinatory approach the Harlestons pioneered in their studio and adapted to the field. The panorama is also duplicitous in the surreptitious sense of the word; it records the act of creative rebellion behind its making. The Harlestons boldly defied the estate's whites-only admissions policy and contravened the state's segregation laws. Unlike their more conventional portraits, the landscape genre afforded the Harlestons a liberating creative space that inspired them to experiment with their artistic sensibilities and transgress the juridical regime of the Jim Crow South.

This sense of duality echoes the formulation of "double consciousness" articulated by the painter's former mentor, Du Bois. Du Bois introduced this concept in his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903, when Harleston studied under him at Atlanta University. The painter would have therefore been familiar with what the sociologist described as

> this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…[57]

It is significant that Du Bois defined double consciousness as a *visual* model of subjectivity. The act of "looking at one's self through the eyes of others" implies a subject who must constantly

[57] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (A.C. McClurg & Co.: Chicago, 1903), 3.

negotiate an external gaze, an experience that resonates with the Harlestons' audacious trespass at Magnolia. The dual perspectives embedded in *View from Magnolia's White Bridge* – that of the photographer and painter – likewise rely on two distinct yet interconnected points of view (with Pinckney introducing a third). I do not mean to suggest that the Harlestons merely illustrated the theory of double consciousness, but I do wish to emphasize that art possesses a unique capacity to visually grapple with questions of identity in ways that theory alone cannot.

And what of the painting being made in the panorama? The photographer probably captured her husband creating a study for the painting *Magnolia Gardens* (c. 1929), a work that currently hangs in Charleston's Gibbes Museum of Art. *Magnolia Gardens* represents the estate in a lyrical Impressionist manner and is defined by thick, glittering brushwork, ebullient colors, and a languid, late-afternoon feel (fig. 1.9). The off-center, receding composition pulls viewers' eyes through the scene as the hefty daubs of paint evoke the luxuriant foliage and exuberant humidity of a Southern summer. A feeling of torpor settles across the canvas as the figures in the background come into view. Their ambiguity is striking. Are they guests or workers, white or Black, tourists like Duncan or guides like Aunt Phoebe? In contrast to their portraits, the absence of manifest Blackness in this landscape allows for multiple interpretations and loads this seemingly picturesque scene with potentially critical subtext. In one of his few landscapes, Harleston the portraitist obscures figurative recognition, and in so doing, takes the plantation's most charged aspect – the spectacle of (anti-)Blackness – and renders it illegible.

As with their portraits, then, the Harlestons' photographed and painted landscapes are inextricably bound up with one another. Yet this time the couple goes deeper and achieves a breakthrough; rather than create double landscapes, like double portraits, they stage one form of artmaking through the other: the photographer records the painter in the act, while the painting

necessarily references the panorama (the painter may have even used the photograph to complete the painting, as he did his portraits). If *Magnolia Gardens* is indeed the painting shown in the panorama, as is most likely, then the intertextuality between the two works indicates that the couple experimented with the landscape genre in order to appropriate the plantation into a space of Black possibility.

In early 1930, Edwin Harleston sent a letter to Magnolia's then-owner, C. Norwood Hastie, requesting special admission to the estate, likely with the intent of finishing the painting *Magnolia Gardens*. That he went through official channels suggests the couple felt dissatisfied with initially having to sneak onto the site. Hastie quickly responded, "I am sorry that I am unable to grant your request, as our season is so far advanced. I am quite sure that you want to do as you say, and am genuinely regretful that it is impossible to accede to your request."[58] It is unknown if the Harlestons ever returned to Magnolia. Unfortunately, they may have never got the chance. A few months after receiving Hastie's reply, Harleston suddenly passed away from a rapid-onset case of pneumonia. Despite his untimely death, he and his wife had already produced plantation pictures that troubled the boundaries between portraiture and landscape, photography and painting, and the picturesque and the piercing. By combining pictorial modes and artistic mediums while transgressing the "color line," the Harlestons threw the gauntlet at the South's segregation regime while mastering the landscape tradition with a daring, self-reflexive posture.

Ultimately, their landscapes convey the duplicity of the plantation itself. Magnolia *is* picturesque, but it is also grotesque, defined both by the beauty of the landscape and the

[58] Letter from C. Norwood Hastie to Edwin Harleston, dated Feb. 28, 1930, Edwin A. and Elise F. Harleston Papers, Box 2, folder 14, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

exploitation underwriting it. "The plantation means different things to different people. No image of the subject can be viewed as a simple or serene landscape," claim the authors of *Landscapes of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art*. "The plantation in art can be seen in all its forms: there are beautiful hills and fields, but there are also brutality and violence, inseparable."[59]

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If the Harlestons endeavored to challenge the plantation's picturesque identity, many of the white artists of the Charleston Renaissance celebrated it. These artists, including painters William Posey Silva (1859-1948), Alfred Hutty (1877-1954), and Alice R.H. Smith (1876-1958), regularly visited Magnolia and Middleton Place, a nearby estate that had recently reopened as a tourist attraction. Unlike the Harlestons, they were welcomed onto the properties and depicted them in a sentimental manner that aligned with the idealized images presented to tourists.
For Silva, Hutty, and Smith, the plantation stood as a timeless institution, defined by enduring beauty and romance. Silva's triptych *Garden of Dreams* (c. 1920) portrays Magnolia with pronounced brushwork, hazy atmospherics, and expressive coloring, suggesting an overall landscape ambience more than its mimetic capture (fig. 1.10). The compositions of the triptych are anchored by the dark hues of still waters and the vertical orientation of elder oaks. Floral bursts of red, pink, and green enliven the tripartite scene with a springtime playfulness. In *Morning Light in the Garden of Dreams* (1921), Silva again painted Magnolia but with more controlled brushstrokes and a greater fidelity to mimesis. Hutty, a close friend of Silva's, was similarly enamored, admitting that "although I loved the old town greatly, the magnificence of

[59] Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius, eds. *Landscapes of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press/Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 2008), 13.

Middleton and Magnolia Gardens completely enthralled me."[60] His painting *Magnolia Gardens* (1920) shares the brushwork facture and manifest stillness of Silva's canvases, albeit with a more mawkish color palette (fig. 1.11). Smith, or Miss Alice, as she was called, collaborated with both Silva and Hutty. She was known throughout Charleston for her watercolors, for example, *View of Butterfly Lakes and the Rice Mill at Middleton Place* (1929). The painting's misty coloring and dewy composition exemplify the sentimentalism with which many of the white artists of the Charleston Renaissance approached the city's plantations (fig. 1.12).[61]

They even went as far as presenting the plantation in a distinctly nostalgic manner, as evident in Smith's watercolor illustrations for the 1936 collection *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties* (that is, the 1850s). The opening watercolor, *Sunday Morning at the Great House* (fig. 1.13), shows a planter family warmly greeting their enslaved workers in front of the plantation manor. All figures are dressed impeccably in their Sunday best while engaging in polite conversation. The charming scene imagines a gentle, benign vision of the antebellum plantation, one characterized neither by enslaved labor nor racial superiority but instead by planter benevolence and multiracial comity. Upon publication, *The New York Times* praised Smith's illustrations for capturing the "magic" of the Charleston Lowcountry "with rare beauty and fidelity."[62] As Smith reflected in her memoir *Reminiscences*

[60] Jean Bosworth, "Artist Alfred Hutty Paints 301st Charleston Scene," *Charleston Evening Post*, December 1, 1949, quoted in "Alfred Herbert Hutty," Arnold et al., *The Life and Art of Alfred Hutty* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 13.

[61] Martha Severens, *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith: An Artist, a Time, a Place* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1993).

[62] C. McD. Puckette, "Life on Carolina's Rice Plantations," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1937, 96, accessed online at https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1937/01/03/506517482.html?pageNumber=96.

> I have painted this country. I have loved this country; painted it the better because I have loved it, and loved it the more because of those dear days when slowly jogging down the quiet roads one had to be intimate with the grass on the ground and the trees overhead; because each blade of grass, and each branch of the tree was so definitely a companion, and yourself not a hasty, careless passerby.[63]

This romanticized depiction of Charleston's plantation "country" aligns with the vision that Magnolia sought to promote to the public, indicating just how closely the city's white artists identified with the institution of the plantation itself.

It may seem predictable that white and Black artists working in Jim Crow Charleston would represent plantations in conflicting ways. The pervasive system of racial segregation created stark divisions and hierarchies between white and Black communities; most germane of course is Magnolia's whites-only admissions policy that explicitly forbid Black visitors. However, it would be overly simplistic to assume that an artist's race determined his or her portrayal of plantations. To suggest such a notion is to subscribe to racial determinism, implying that Silva, Hutty, and Smith could only present a positive take while the Harlestons would inevitably offer a more complex interpretation. And yet, it simply cannot be denied that race, and more particularly racism, undoubtedly influenced the dynamics of the Charleston Renaissance. While it is important to avoid essentializing artists based on their race, acknowledging the impacts of racism and racial privilege on their lived experiences and artistic choices is just as crucial for adequately historicizing the Charleston Renaissance in the context of Jim Crow.

In the face of such differences, the artists of the Charleston Renaissance demonstrated a shared engagement with the legacies of Impressionism. Harleston, Silva, and Hutty utilized both the *en plein air* and *alla prima* (wet on wet) techniques, employing loose, impasto brushwork,

[63] Alice R. H. Smith, *Reminiscences*, quoted in Martha Severens, *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith: An Artist, a Time, a Place* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1993), 123.

vivid coloring, and attention to the play of light. In *View from Magnolia's White Bridge,* Elise Harleston captured her husband in a manner reminiscent of Monet at Giverny, while Smith translated the Impressionist's focus on the transient effects of sunlight to the soluble medium of watercolor. The artists also collectively embraced the lyricism that defined American Impressionism. And, they introduced a compositional innovation drawn from French Impressionism to the landscape subgenre of the plantation picture. Instead of adhering to the antebellum tradition of creating bird's-eye views or whole-estate perspectives of the plantation, the artists of the Charleston Renaissance developed a *touristic perspective*: they portrayed the plantation from the position of the tourist, cropping their paintings in an intimate, "eyes on the ground" way that embodied the circumstances of the spectating consumer. This touristic way of seeing recalls the asymmetrical compositions, cropped framings, and plunging angles introduced by French Impressionists, perspectives often regarded as indicative of the perceptual experiences of the modern urban dweller, or flâneur (might the tourist just be the traveling flâneur?).

Surprising, then, that art historians deny the extent of Southern artists' engagement with Impressionism. In his 1973 tome *American Impressionism,* art historian William Gerdts baldly asserts that "Southern artists seldom experimented with Impressionism," declaring that "almost no important masters" of Impressionism emerged in the South. This narrow viewpoint has reinforced the prevailing belief that American Impressionism was a predominantly Northern phenomenon, limited to artists working in major cities like New York or Boston and prominent art colonies in Old Lyme, Connecticut, or New Hope, Pennsylvania.[64] However, the plantation pictures of the Charleston Renaissance serve as compelling evidence that Southern artists not

[64] William Gerdts, *American Impressionism* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 240.

only experimented with Impressionism but also felt comfortable enough with the manner to adapt its pictorial language to their local surroundings.

The question then becomes, *pace* T.J. Clark's canonical interrogation of Impressionism, did these artists merely re-present the spectacle of the plantation or open it up for critical scrutiny? In his influential opus *The Painting of Modern Life*, Clark employs methodologies from the social history of art to challenge us to "unlearn our present ease with Impressionism." He argues that artists like Manet "and his followers" did not simply capture fleeting "impressions" of modern life but, more significantly, devised a visual language attuned to the evolving class conditions of modernizing Paris.[65] In a similar vein, the Impressionist-inspired landscapes of the Charleston Renaissance encode the socio-economic realities of interwar Charleston. All of the artists discussed herein helped devise the pictorial innovation of the "touristic perspective," which dovetails with the plantation's transformation from a landscape of production into one of consumption. But if Silva, Hutty, and Smith romanticized the plantation into a timeless institution and depicted it in line with its whitewashed, touristic identity, the Harlestons self-reflexively explored its Jim Crow-era realities and therefore subverted its prevailing representation. In both instances, the plantation's relationship to history – its *modernity*, which was brought about through tourism – is treated as an artistic concern.

Moonlight and Magnolias

During the height of the Charleston Renaissance in the 1920s-40s, plantations like Magnolia and Middleton increasingly came to define the city's reputation in the national imagination. "Charleston has become for thousands the visible affirmation of the most

[65] T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: The Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 4.

glamorous of all folk legends in America – the legend of the plantation civilization of the Old South," celebrated local journalist Herbert Sass. "A single afternoon at one of the great plantations which were an essential part of it," he waxed, "prove that there was at least one region where the Old South really was in many ways the handsome Old South of the legend."[66] It should be noted that the myth of the Old South was practically invented in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, and plantation tourist sites played a major role in idealizing the antebellum era in this way. As writer and journalist W.J. Cash observed in the *The Mind of the South*:

> It was in this period that the legend of the Old South finally emerged and fully took on the form in which we know it today. With the antebellum world removed to the realm of retrospect, the shackles of reality, as so often happens in such cases, fell away from it altogether. Perpetually suspended in the great haze of memory, it hung, as it were, poised, somewhere between earth and sky, colossal, shining, and incomparably lovely – a Cloud-Cuckoo-Land.[67]

In this section, I delve into the specific role played by Magnolia and plantation tourism more generally in constructing this "moonlight and magnolias" South of yore, which has continued to shape perceptions of the Southern past to this day.

During the interwar years, Charleston's plantations put the backwater city on the cultural map. Magnolia's owner in the 1930s, Sarah Calhoun Hastie (1892-1981), hosted lavish parties on the estate like something out of *The Great Gatsby*. Peacocks roamed the grounds while a string quartet serenaded esteemed guests such as industrialist Henry Ford, writer Somerset Maugham, and playwright Edna St. Vincent Millay, just some of the luminaries rumored to have

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[66] Sass wrote the text that accompanied Smith's illustrations in *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*. For his comments on Charleston see Herbert Ravenel Sass, "Charleston," *Saturday Evening Post* (Feb. 8, 1947): 72.

[67] W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941), 127.

attended Hastie's soirees.[68] The venerable guest list added to Magnolia's mystique and endowed the larger Charleston area with a spellbinding allure.

Recognizing the potential for economic development, Charleston's leaders launched an historic preservation and tourism promotion campaign to capitalize on the city's growing appeal. While "New South" boosters in Atlanta, Birmingham, and Richmond attempted to transform their cities into manufacturing centers and sites of modern industry, the Charleston Chamber of Commerce embraced the legend of the Old South and branded the city as a uniquely Southern destination, helping to "anchor this mythic South in a real place," historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage notes.[69] By marketing Charleston as a time capsule to the Old South, this campaign appealed to Americans seeking an escape from the stresses of modern life. "The grandeur of other days lingers still in the wide streets with their chaste architectural relics," claimed a brochure from the period, while local newspaperman Jonathan Daniels observed that "quaintness is an industry in Charleston."[70] A 1932 article in *Country Life* magazine titled "The Renaissance of the Plantation" captured Charleston's growing reputation as a picturesque getaway: "There is no part of America more remote from the pressure of salesmanship and its philosophy of hurry and shove; there is no place where the sound of a stock ticker would seem so ill-suited to the surroundings."[71] The article promoted Charleston to America's growing middle-class,

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[68] Information provided by docent during Main House Tour at Magnolia (tour, Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Charleston, SC, April 12, 2020).

[69] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 184.

[70] *The Fort Sumter – Newest and Finest* (New York: Amsterdam Agency, [1925]), 4-5, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina; Jonathan Daniels, *A Southerner Discovers the South* (New York: MacMillan, 1938), 328.

[71] Quoted in Stephanie Yuhl, *Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 177.

Northerners in particular, casting the Southern city as a genteel refuge in contrast to the hustle-and-bustle of major urban centers. The city's distinct brand as a historic, genteel escape attracted Americans at a time of widespread socio-economic upheaval, offering the public the opportunity to experience the South of yesteryear in a city that appeared frozen in time. "There tourists experienced an enchanting, innocent, and seemingly timeless past while simultaneously escaping the perceived tedium, emptiness, and artificiality of modern life," Brundage writes.[72]

Despite Charleston's old timey image, the city's transformation into a Southern heritage destination was not a rejection of modernization but a different manifestation of it. While many cities across the North and South attempted to modernize through manufacturing, Charleston's meager industrial base and distance from major rail lines made industrialization practically impossible. Instead, the city's leaders recognized the economic potential of commodifying Southern-ness itself into a product. Through the preservation and tourism campaign, they harnessed the power of consumer culture and tapped into Americans' desire to experience a romanticized version of the region. Relatedly, the city embarked on an ambitious public works initiative to construct the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the planned influx of tourists. New roads were laid, bridges were built, and the hospitality industry experienced rapid expansion with the establishment of hotels and restaurants. Such projects provided a wide array of tourists with modern amenities, blending the supposed charms of the Old South with the conveniences of the twentieth century.

The events in Charleston dovetailed with the larger trend in American popular culture of glamorizing the antebellum South. Films such as D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and

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[72] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 184.

Victor Fleming's adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel *Gone with the Wind* (1939) entertained audiences with their epic portrayals of plantation society. This occurred against the backdrop of the revanchist movement known as the "Lost Cause."[73] The Lost Cause advocated the myth of Confederate righteousness and is most well-known for spearheading the construction of Confederate monuments across the South in the early twentieth century. One such monument is Hermon Atkins MacNeil's *Confederate Defenders of Charleston* (1932). Recalling Classical statuary, the bronze and granite monument features a nude "defender" holding a sword in one hand and a wreathed-adorned shield in the other while protecting the symbolic personification of the city (fig. 1.14). The United Daughters of the Confederacy had commissioned the monument to commemorate the inaugural hostility of the Civil War, the Battle of Fort Sumter in Charleston, from the side of the Confederacy.[74]

The glamorization of the Old South in popular culture and throughout the public sphere validated the underlying ideology of the Lost Cause. The construction of Confederate monuments, the rise of antebellum-themed cinema and literature, and the growth of Old South tourism contributed to a narrative that portrayed the plantation South as an honorable and noble society, overlooking or downplaying the darker aspects of slavery and racist violence that underpinned it. The idealization of Dixie appealed to many white Americans, but for white Southerners in particular it provided a means to reclaim a perceived lost glory. This deliberate distortion of history encouraged white Southerners to embrace the antebellum era and Confederacy as their rightful heritage. Despite its down-home affectations, the legend of the Old

[73] For more see Robert J. Cook, *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States Since 1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

[74] John R. Young, *A Walk in the Parks: The Definitive Guidebook to Monuments in Charleston's Downtown Parks* (Charleston, SC: Evening Post Publishing Company, 2010), 36.

South reflected a deeply rooted desire to preserve and perpetuate a racially stratified order defined by white dominance.

Around mid-century, Charleston stood out as a place where the tendencies associated with the Lost Cause and the Old South converged on a single location. Many members of the public succumbed to its allure, but there were others who saw through the city's façade. Among them was French writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, who visited Charleston on her 1947 tour of America. While in the city, she likely explored Magnolia or Middleton. Indeed, during her stay she wrote a letter to Jean-Paul Sartre describing an unnamed plantation-garden, recalling: "Yesterday we saw Charleston, a very pretty old English town, and some marvelous and romantic gardens full of flowers, lakes, little bridges and great trees veiled in grey – gardens dating from 1700 in the middle of big plantations, the ultimate luxury of that delicious, horrible civilization."[75] In the book published after her tour, *America Day by Day*, de Beauvoir remarked that these "aristocratic Edens are now commercial ventures," where "black women, dressed in bright cotton dresses and large sunbonnets, are sweeping away the dead leaves of the autumnal spring." She ruminated that

> the disheveled triumph of Spanish moss hangs from the large, still trees. A strange parasite, whose splendor and abjection symbolize the contradictions of a sumptuous and sordid land…Creating those private Edens which are as extravagant as the Alhambra required the vast wealth of the planters and the hell of slavery; the delicate petals of the azaleas and camellias are stained with blood.[76]

[75] Simone de Beauvoir, "These Aristocratic Paradises," in *Sojourns in Charleston, South Carolina, 1865-1947: From the Ruins of War to the Rise of Tourism*, ed., Jennie Holton Fant (Columbia: USC Press, 2019), 340.

[76] Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, trans. Carol Cosman (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 249-250.

With evocative prose, de Beauvoir cut through the carefully curated images of romance, quaintness, and nostalgia. She recognized that the Old South continued to shape the New South, but not in the idyllic way promoted by the boosters of tourism. Instead, she observed what she called the "contradictions" of Southern society, where beauty and opulence were inextricable from the horrors and injustices of racism. It is this twofold dynamic that I believe the Harlestons worked towards in their landscapes of Magnolia, and one with which the estate has struggled to fully reckon since it began operating as a museum.

Magnolia as a Museum

In the post-WWII era, the transformations reshaping American society directly impacted Magnolia. Following desegregation and the Civil Rights movement, the site abandoned its practice of only employing Black workers and restricting admissions to white guests. Since then, it has also operated as a plantation museum, preserving the estate's historical structures and offering visitors a selection of ticketed tours. Despite its best efforts to update its offerings, Magnolia still relies upon narratives that predominantly focus on the Drayton-Hastie family, avoiding critical examination of the estate's involvement in perpetuating racism. That said, Magnolia does sponsor the "Lowcountry Africana Project," which provides genealogical records to descendants of enslaved individuals from the region. These conflicting tendencies highlight the challenges facing plantations as they strive to present more comprehensive narratives and offer socially responsible initiatives that align with the changing expectations of the public.

As guests begin the Main House tour, one of the first sensations they encounter is the distinct aroma of time that permeates the manor. The musty, stuffy scent of period carpeting and old paneling serves as a backdrop for the stale narratives presented to visitors. Indeed, the

docent-led tour mostly affirms the wealth of the Drayton-Hastie family. The tour describes in great detail the various renovations and expansions the family conducted on the house throughout the years, and also showcases the objects of finery they acquired over generations, such as a rare colonial-era "Mouzon" map, ornithological works on paper by Audubon, and exquisite furniture including hand-carved canopy beds and antique chests from Europe. Conspicuously absent from the tour's narrative is any mention of exactly how the family amassed the fortune that funded such material splendor. The history of slavery is left unexplored. Recently, some Southern house museums, like the Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters in Savannah, which will be discussed in the following chapter, have adopted a more inclusive form of curating that explores the property from the perspectives of both slave-owners and their enslaved workers. Magnolia could adopt such an approach for the Main House tour, focusing on the lives of the enslaved individuals who toiled there and contextualizing the family's furniture, finery, and fortune within the context of the South's slave-based economy.

Magnolia's curatorial one-sidedness is further apparent in the differing treatment of Silva's *Garden of Dreams* and the Harlestons' *View from Magnolia's White Bridge*, which are currently exhibited in the main house. Whereas Silva's triptych is spotlighted on the tour and enjoys pride of place on the official website, the Harlestons' panorama is relegated to a small side room and is not presented to the public (while on the tour myself, I snuck into the room in order to take a closer look at their photograph). Ironically, it appears as if the Harlestons' photograph has been curated so as to narrate the gripping story behind its creation. The panorama is positioned above a desk, on top of which sits a photograph of C. Norwood Hastie, the owner-operator during the 1920s-30s who denied the Harlestons special admittance to the estate. The arrangement suggests someone at Magnolia knew the backstory and cast of characters and

intended for audiences to know it, as well. Unfortunately, guests are not taken into the room nor are they given the chance to learn about the panorama, perhaps because doing so would require acknowledging that Magnolia maintained a discriminatory admissions policy. Astoundingly, printed reproductions of the panorama are available for purchase in the Gift Shop, the proceeds of which go directly to the Drayton-Hastie family. After all this time, the estate's owners still profit from the work of Black folks.

It need not be this way. Imagine if docents instructed visitors about Magnolia's Jim Crow history and guided them through a discussion of the Harlestons' panorama in relation to Silva's triptych. The juxtaposition between the photograph and painting would replace the museum's monologic tendencies with a more dialogic approach, calling to mind Lonnie Bunch's idea for a "new integration" in museum practices. As the Founding Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture claims, "too frequently, African American culture is segregated from the "other" history that museums explore." He proposes an alternative. "What is missing is a new synthesis, a "new integration," that encourages visitors to see that exploring issues of race generally, and African American history specifically, is essential to their understanding of American history."[77] Magnolia's owners could even go beyond exhibitionary forms of integration by compensating the Harlestons' descendants with the proceeds generated from sale of reproduced versions of *View from Magnolia's White Bridge*.

Regrettably, the sole opportunity provided to guests to learn about Magnolia's Black history is during the "award-winning" Slavery to Freedom tour (the exact award this tour is said to have won is never made clear). To participate, visitors ride a golf cart shuttle about half a mile away from the main house to an open-air pavilion situated across from a field that contains four

[77] Lonnie Bunch, "In Black & White: Interpreting African American Culture in Contemporary Museums," *History News* Vol. 50, No. 4 (Autumn 1995): 5-9; 9.

preserved slave cabins (fig. 1.15). Seated on benches, attendees look out at the cabins as a tour guide delivers a 20-minute account of the antebellum rice harvesting process. During this segment, prop versions of tools used by enslaved workers are passed around for guests to handle. Although the guide briefly discusses slavery, the narrative seems scripted to avoid addressing the harsh realities of bondage. Following this presentation, guests are given the remaining 10 minutes or so of the tour to explore the cabins themselves. Many visitors eagerly seized the chance to photograph the humble structures, taking selfies here and group portraits there. A few grabbed ahold of the walls and knocked on their wooden surfaces, as if sizing up the cabins. This superficial level of engagement limits the ability of visitors to meaningfully explore the lives, struggles, and resilience of the enslaved individuals who labored on Magnolia.

It also ignores the unequal relationships between slaves and their owners. Guests learn about the Drayton-Hastie family on the Main House tour and the enslaved on the Slavery to Freedom tour, with no meaningful connections or cross-references drawn between them. To observe this "separate but equal" approach is to notice Magnolia's similarities with most plantation museums in its treatment of enslaved histories, which are typically separated from plantation history "proper." In *Representations of Slavery*, scholars Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small identify four primary representational strategies by which plantations tend to narrate slavery: symbolic annihilation (ignoring slavery or barely touching on it); trivialization and deflection (emphasizing planter benevolence and slave fidelity); segregation and marginalization (compartmentalizing enslaved histories in secondary tours); and relative incorporation (integrating white/Black histories).[78] The first three apply to Magnolia. By separating enslaved histories from the broader plantation history, Magnolia and other plantation

[78] Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*.

museums prevent the public from understanding the profound impact chattel slavery had on the planter society of the antebellum South and on the nation as a whole.

Returning to the cabins, each of the four structures is supposed to correspond to a significant period in African American history: the first denoting slavery; the *third* symbolizing Reconstruction; the *second* representing Jim Crow; and the fourth signifying the Civil Rights era. It is never explained why the second and third cabins are out of order. Regardless, the slavery cabin is the only one curated with period-appropriate objects, although it lacks historical specificity. This cabin contains an old wooden bed, a few wicker baskets, a small side table, and an iron fireplace poker, an arrangement that is presumably intended to evoke the general impression of an antebellum slave cabin rather than accurately reconstruct one (fig. 1.16a-b). On the other hand, the other cabins are basically empty, save for the Reconstruction cabin, which contains speakers that play a record of African American spirituals. From my own experience touring various plantations, the lack of historical verisimilitude in the slave cabins is commonplace. This approach effectively shields visitors from confronting the overcrowded, squalid, and dangerous conditions in which slaves were forcibly confined. It presents a simplified and sanitized experience that skirts the discomforting truths of chattel slavery.

Furthermore, the cabins' incomplete exhibition design confines much of Magnolia's Black history to narratives of enslavement. There is little discussion of the lives of the estate's emancipated workers, although visitors are informed of the astounding fact that the site's caretakers lived in the former slave cabins as late as 1990, after which the structures were preserved for display. It would enrich tourists' experiences if curators delved more deeply into the stories of enslaved, emancipated, and free born workers by creating personalized displays around figures like Aunt Phoebe. Even better, transparently addressing how such archival gaps

stem from the obliterative legacies of slavery would allow the plantation to take some measure of accountability for its role in perpetuating epistemic violence.

The arc of Black history the cabins represent – Slavery to Freedom – deserves reconsideration, as well. The four "episodes" of Black history culminate with what is ostensibly meant to be the uplifting period of the Civil Rights movement, as if the long-lasting effects of slavery and racism had been resolved by then. This framing conveniently overlooks the more than half a century that has occurred since, a period marked by the War on Drugs and Black Power movement, police brutality and Black Lives Matter, and a whole host of other developments that complicate celebratory mantras about the inevitability of justice. Yes, any thoroughgoing narration of slavery must address what Hartman calls its "afterlives." The theorist explains:

> Narrating counter-histories of slavery has always been inseparable from writing a history of the present, by which I mean the incomplete project of freedom, and precarious life of the ex-slave, a condition defined by the vulnerability to premature death and to gratuitous acts of violence…a history of the present strives to illuminate the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by this past…[79]

Hartman's model requires drawing connections between "there and then" and "here and now" in order to explore the ways in which the legacies of slavery persist and shape popular understandings of freedom and the lived experiences of Black individuals today. Given that plantation tourist sites have played pivotal roles in the histories of slavery and its afterlives, they stand as important, if problematic, archives for this complex and ongoing project.

Nevertheless, some credit is due where deserved. Magnolia sponsors the "Lowcountry Africana Project," which collects plantation records that "document the family and cultural heritage of African Americans in the historic rice-growing areas of South Carolina, Georgia, and

[79] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* Vol. 12, No. 2 (2008): 4.

extreme northeastern Florida." The project offers genealogical services or "ancestor searches" to those descended from the region's enslaved, free of charge.[80] To observe the paucity of Magnolia's exhibition approaches in relation to initiatives like the Lowcountry Africana Project is to recognize that plantations possess a largely untapped potential to *both* critically re-narrate Black histories of and beyond enslavement *and* address the institution's historical and ongoing involvement in perpetuating anti-Black violence. On Magnolia, such issues could be partially addressed through exhibits devoted to figures like Aunt Phoebe and the Harlestons. *This* Magnolia, transformed once again, would be a destination all its own.

[80] Lowcountry Africana Project, "About" page, accessed online at https://lowcountryafricana.com/about/.

Figures

Fig. 1.1a-b
Postcards of Magnolia
c. 1900-1920
C.T. American Art
Hand-colored postcards
College of Charleston Libraries

Fig. 1.2
Advertisement featuring Magnolia
Philadelphia Inquirer (May 22, 1938)

Fig. 1.3
William Henry Jackson
Woman Near Flowering Shrub
c. 1901
Call number: LC-D4-32495
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 1.4
William Henry Jackson
Aunt Phoebe
c. 1901
Call number: LC-D4-13439
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 1.5
Detroit Publishing Company
Aunt Phoebe postcard
c. early 1900s
Stuart A Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University

Fig. 1.6
William Henry Jackson
The Caretakers
c. 1901
Call number: LC-D4-13438
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 1.7a
Elise Harleston
Miss Sue Bailey with an African Shawl
c. 1930
Collection of Mae Gentry

Fig. 1.7b
Edwin Harleston
Miss Sue Bailey with an African Shawl
c. 1930
The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC

Fig. 1.8
Edwin and Elise Harleston
View from Magnolia's White Bridge
c. 1926
Magnolia Plantation and Gardens

Fig. 1.9
Edwin Harleston
Magnolia Gardens
c. 1926-29
Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston

Fig. 1.10
William Posey Silva
Garden of Dreams
c. 1920
Magnolia Plantation and Gardens

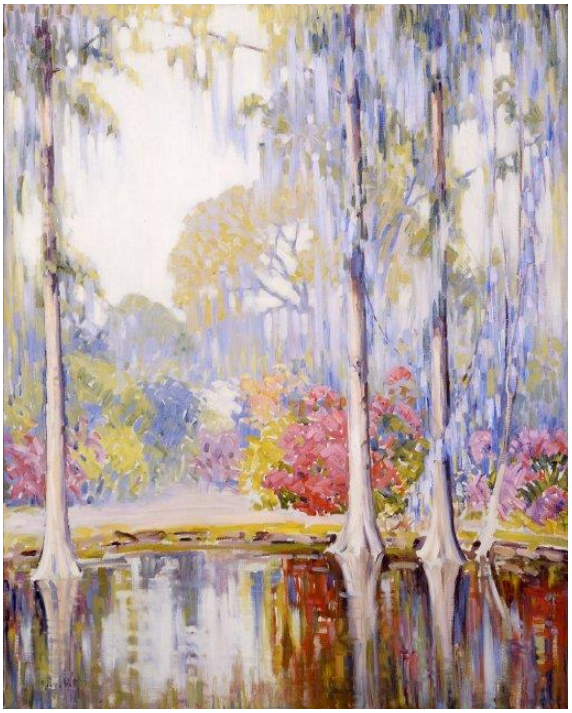

Fig. 1.11
Alfred Hutty
Magnolia Gardens
c. 1920
Gibbes Museum of Art

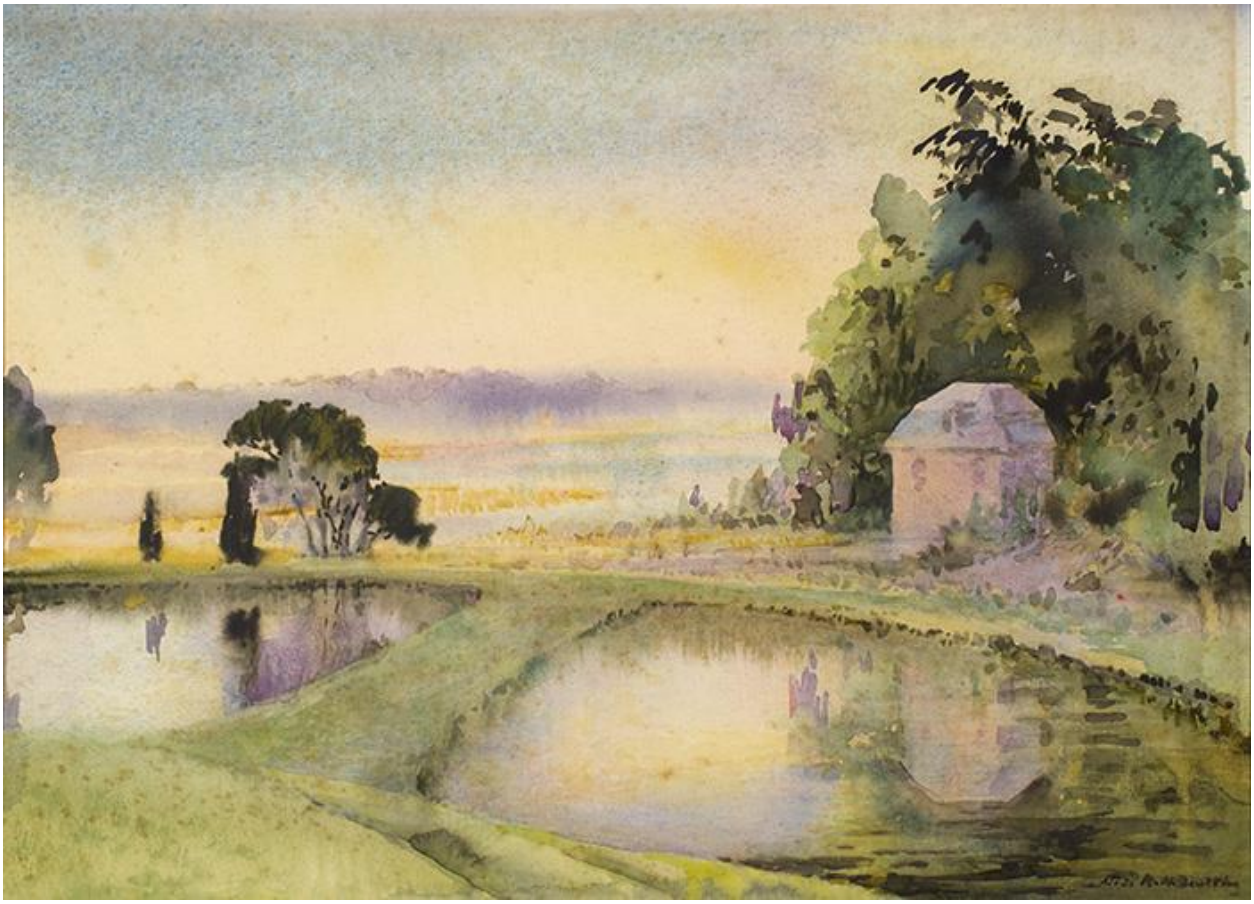

Fig. 1.12
Alice R.H. Smith
View of Butterfly Lakes and Mill at Middleton Place
c. 1926
Collection of Charles Duell

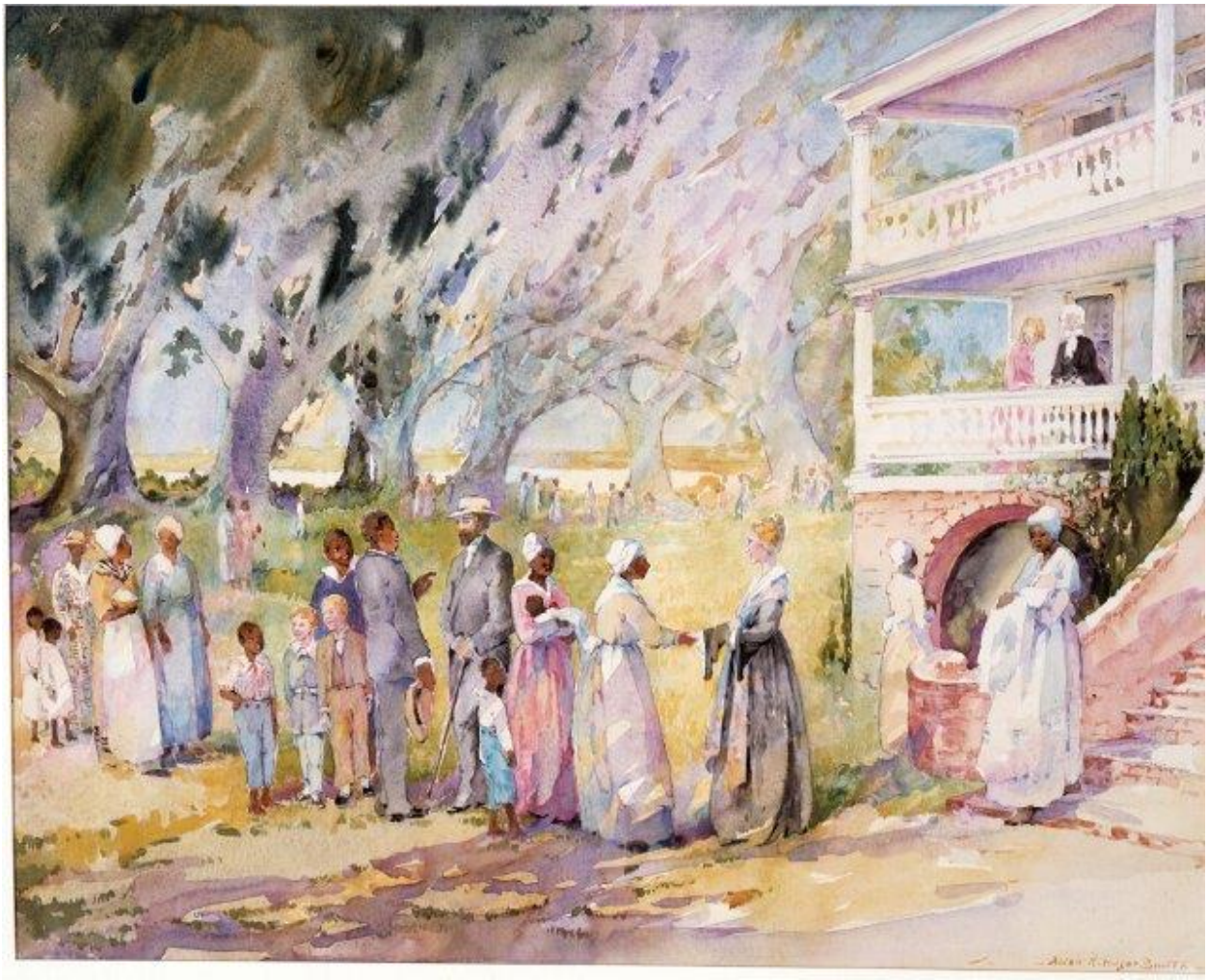

Fig. 1.13
Alice R.H. Smith
Sunday Morning at the Great House
From *A Carolina Rice Plantation in the Fifties*
1936
Gibbes Museum of Art

Fig. 1.14
Hermon A. MacNeil
Photograph of *Confederate Defenders of Charleston*
1931
Hermon A. MacNeil Virtual Gallery & Museum

Fig. 1.15
Photographs of former slave cabins at Magnolia
Author' own

Fig. 1.16a-b
Interior of slave cabin at Magnolia
Author's own

Chapter Two
The Southern Museum: The Telfair Museums

When the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences opened in 1886 in Savannah, Georgia, it made history as one of the earliest public art museums founded in the American South and the first museum established by a woman in the United States.[81] This exceptional institution owes its existence to Mary Telfair (1791-1875), one of the wealthiest figures, and former slaveowners, in the state.[82] Upon her death, she bequeathed her family's Neoclassical Regency-style mansion to the Georgia Historical Society, under the direction that the organization transform the property and its collection of art, books, and furniture into an encyclopedic museum. "The opening of the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences marks an era in Savannah," declared writer Adelaide Wilson following the site's unveiling. "This institution, properly managed, developed, and utilized, will make of Savannah the art centre of the South."[83] Although this exact prediction never materialized, the Telfair has exerted a profound influence on the role of the museum in the South.

Over the years, the Telfair has expanded to include three museums in Savannah, each of which offers a distinct perspective on Southern art, culture, and history: the original mansion-turned-museum (the Academy), the Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters (OTHSQ), and

[81] The Telfair's status as the first museum founded by a woman in the United States is often overshadowed by the more well-known Museum for the Arts of Decoration (opened in 1897 by sisters Eleanor Garnier Hewitt and Sarah Cooper Hewitt and now known as the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (opened in 1903 by Isabella Stewart Gardner).

[82] For more on women slave-owners in the antebellum South see Stephanie Jones-Roger, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

[83] Adelaide Wilson, *Historic and Picturesque Savannah* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1889), 218.

the Jepson Center for the Arts (the Jepson Center). The Academy, initially financed and constructed by slave labor in the antebellum era, transformed into a museum housing a collection of prehistoric artifacts, classical statuary, and history paintings. This evolution obscured the Telfair family's legacy as slaveowners, aligning with broader efforts from the period to romanticize Southern history and society. Similar to the Academy, the OTHSQ was originally built as an urban mansion for affluent planters. The Telfair board acquired the nearby property in the 1950s and reopened it as an antebellum house museum. In the 1990s, the site underwent extensive remodeling to highlight the lives of the enslaved workers who toiled there, representing a significant step towards more inclusive curatorial practices at Southern house museums. Shortly thereafter in 2001, the Jepson Center opened a few blocks away as a museum of modern and contemporary art. Designed by acclaimed architect Moshe Safdie, it is the only Telfair museum not directly linked with slavery and further stands apart from its nineteenth-century counterparts with its sleek surfaces and glass exteriors. Importantly, the museum's curators seek to position recent Southern art, especially that made by Black artists, within the globalizing context of the contemporary art world.

The Telfair complex thus exemplifies the historical development of the museum in the South, particularly the institution's changing relationship to slavery and its afterlives. Whereas the Academy embodies the inclination to *rehabilitate* the Southern past by obscuring evidence of slavery and glorifying Southern society, the OTHSQ reflects a commitment to *recount* the South's history of slavery, especially urban slavery, through narrating the lives of the enslaved, while the Jepson Center epitomizes how modern and contemporary museums in the region have sought to *redress* the afterlives of slavery through collections, exhibitions, and programs that highlight the work of Black artists from the South. Treating the Telfair museums as a case study,

I argue that the three sites encapsulate some of the leading approaches that museums in the South have taken as they attempt to reconcile the troubling legacies of slavery with the larger artistic and cultural heritage of the region.

Despite their importance to the South's museum landscape, surprisingly little research has been conducted on the Telfair museums. One available study is the monograph *Telfair Museum of Art: Collection Highlights*, edited by Hollis Koons McCullough, the Academy's previous Curator of Fine Arts and Exhibitions. Although the catalog is well-researched, it was created as a promotional text to celebrate the opening of the Jepson Center, and therefore served as much of a marketing purpose as a scholarly one.[84] Another relevant book, *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, edited by historians Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, examines the history of urban slavery in Savannah through the enslaved individuals who worked at the Telfair and Owens-Thomas family mansions.[85] As robustly argued as the book is, it mostly covers the two sites before their conversion into museums, thereby offering little in the way of museological scrutiny. Research that does examine museums in the South tends to focus on plantation museums, a topic the previous chapter explored in great detail. However, the Telfair complex makes clear that the specter of slavery has influenced museums of all types throughout the South.

[84] Hollis Coons McCullough, ed., *Telfair Museum of Art: Collection Highlights* (Savannah: Telfair Museum of Art, 2005).

[85] Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014).

The Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences

The Telfair Academy's history serves as a microcosm of the profound transformations that swept the South through the rise, fall, and long aftermath of the region's slave-based society. In this section, I critically historicize the Academy, following its origins as a private residence for wealthy slaveowners in the antebellum era, to its reopening as a museum in the aftermath of Reconstruction, to its response to movements for civil rights and racial equality in the twentieth century. Throughout its existence as a museum, the Academy has followed the post-Enlightenment model of the encyclopedic museum, exhibiting a heterogenous array of objects from around the world while sidestepping the Telfair family's slave-owning past. As with many universal survey museums that struggle to account for their involvement in histories of colonialism, the Academy has thus far failed to grapple with its historical relationship to slavery. In essence, the institution has not only witnessed but actively participated in rehabilitating the Southern past.

The stately edifice that would become the Telfair Academy first housed the Telfair family itself. During the colonial and antebellum eras, the Telfairs were one of the most powerful slave-owning dynasties in Georgia. Mary Telfair's father, Edward Telfair (1735-1807), was a Scottish-born planter who presided over a vast empire of plantations and employed hundreds of slaves. His considerable influence extended beyond cotton fields and rice paddies, as he served in the Continental Congress and was even elected Governor of Georgia.[86] Following the patriarch's death, the family's network of plantations passed into the hands of the oldest surviving son, Alexander Telfair, Mary Telfair's brother. Recognizing the need for a home that

[86] Telfair Family Papers, "The Telfair Family of Georgia," Georgia Historical Society (GHS), Savannah, No. 349, Box 145, Folder 2624.

would appropriately reflect the family's immense wealth and prestige, he made the decision to erect a mansion in the heart of Savannah.

In 1819, Alexander built the manor that would eventually house the Academy in Savannah's St. James Square. Designed by British architectural prodigy William Jay (1792-1837), the Neoclassical Regency-style mansion boasted a portico adorned with unfluted Corinthian columns; an octagonal reception room embellished with *trompe l'oeil* oak paneling; a drawing room rounded at both ends (a Jay hallmark); a second floor consisting of a collection of bedrooms with soaring ceilings; a rear area containing a carriage house, slave quarters, and a *parterre* garden; and a wine cellar holding over seven hundred bottles of Madeira, port, and old sherry.[87] The grand dining room was adorned with fine china, sterling silverware, and damask tablecloths, while artisanal furniture, Oriental carpets, fine paintings, and rare books graced the manor's many rooms. As a young woman, Mary loved to sit on the portico "inhaling the sweet South and watching the soft dews of twilight steal over shrub and flower," as she once wrote to a friend.[88] After Alexander passed away in 1832, Mary (henceforth "Telfair") inherited the entire family estate, instantly becoming one of the wealthiest women in the entire South.

After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, Telfair and her two surviving siblings, her sisters Sarah and Margaret, continued to enjoy the financial benefits provided by the family's plantation fortune. Through investments in railroads and real estate, the three sisters were able to maintain their residence while making months-long sojourns to Europe together. During their journeys across the Atlantic, they visited Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, explored Germanic

[87] Charles Johnson Jr., *Mary Telfair: The Life and Legacy of a Nineteenth-Century Woman* (Frederic C. Beil: Savannah, 2002), 54.

[88] Mary Telfair to Mary Few, no date [spring 1844], William Few Collection (WFC), Georgia Department of History and Archives (GDHA), Atlanta, Accession No. 55-101, Item 109.

castles and Gallic ruins, took in the splendor of Lake Geneva, viewed paintings by Rubens, Rembrandt, and Holbein, and marveled at works of antiquity at Rome's Capitoline Museum and those of the Renaissance at Florence's Uffizi Gallery. [89] During one stay in Italy, Telfair commissioned a pocket-sized portrait by miniaturist Enrichetta Narducci (1806-1892). While the portrait may be diminutive in size, it testifies to Telfair's growing role as a patron of the arts (fig. 2.1).

By 1875, the passing of her sisters left the elderly Telfair as the sole surviving member of her family.[90] As her health began to wane and with no immediate heirs to inherit the Telfair estate, she drafted her last will and testament, instructing executors to divide her properties and possessions among charitable trusts and convert the family mansion into a public museum. "I hereby give, devise and bequeath to the Georgia Historical Society and its successors," section fourteen of her will begins, "all by Books, Papers, Documents, Pictures, Statuary, and Works of

[89] For more see Mary Telfair's Travel Journal (1855), two volumes, unpaginated, Telfair Family Papers, GHS, No. 265-266, Box 7, Folder 65.

[90] Telfair never married and was "not a general admirer of the ruder sex," as she once wrote to her dear friend Mary Few. See Mary Telfair to Mary Few: November 25, no year, WFC, GDHA, Accession No. 55-101, Item 136.

Telfair and Few were extremely close and enjoyed their "single blessedness," as Telfair called it, by sending hundreds of passionate letters to one another. "Whenever I stroll alone I wish that you was my companion," Telfair once professed in a letter to Few. "I believe that we *understand* each other my dear Mary, and I hope that you will say of me as Cowper did of England, '*with all thy faults I love thee still.*'" See Mary Telfair to Mary Few, January 26, 1840, in *Mary Telfair to Mary Few: Selected Letters, 1802-1844*, ed. Betty Wood (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 197-98.

It has been suggested that Telfair and Few were lovers, but we should be careful of projecting contemporary understandings onto nineteenth-century dynamics. Historians have pointed out that during this period it was not uncommon for single, upper-class women to prioritize same-sex friendships. For more on colonial and antebellum female homo-sociality see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* I, no. 1 (1975): 1-29; Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband: Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

Art, or having relation to Art or Science, and all the furniture of every description in the dwelling house and on the premises…in special trust, to keep and preserve as a Public Edifice, for a Library and Academy of Arts and Sciences." The building would be reopened as the "Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences" and the title would be carved into the façade with "the word 'Telfair' being in larger letters and occupying a separate line above the other words."[91] Following Telfair's death, distant relatives challenged the will and litigated the dispute all the way to the United States Supreme Court.[92] Finally, in 1883, several years after Telfair's passing, the Court ruled in her favor in *Jones vs. Habersham*, finding that "all the devises and bequests contained in Miss Telfair's will are valid as against her heirs at law and next of kin."[93]

Before the Academy could proceed, however, another issue arose. An official report found that because the managers of the Georgia Historical Society were "without artistic knowledge or experience," it would "scarcely be possible to exaggerate the feeling of helplessness and uncertainty that was in the hearts and minds of every member…first called to assume the responsibility of the Telfair trust."[94] Transforming a mansion into a museum was a daunting undertaking, no doubt, and one can only imagine the perturbation that the institution's namesake would have felt had she been privy to this assessment from beyond the grave. Recognizing their own limitations, the trustees sought assistance from an unlikely source,

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[91] Last Will and Testament of Mary Telfair, printed in Johnson Jr., *Mary Telfair*, 393.

[92] Brief of Testimony, filed June 23, 1877, in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Chatham County, Georgia, 1-16, Georgia Historical Society and Archives in Atlanta. Accession No. 9621, Box 122, Loc. 110-04.

[93] *Jones v. Habersham*, 107 U.S. 174 (1883).

[94] "Report on the Committee of the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences to the Georgia Historical Society," January 2, 1893, 4, archives of the Georgia Historical Society.

enlisting the aid of former Confederate Brigadier-General Moxley Sorrel to assemble an advisory council to get the museum up and running.

In shaping their approach, the board members drew inspiration from an eclectic array of sources. They likely thought of Elias Ashmole's cabinet of curiosities and its transformation into Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, which Telfair herself had visited, when they agreed to "report on the formation of Cabinets and Museums."[95] The council surely took further inspiration from Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum, founded in 1787 and later known as Peale's American Museum, one of the first natural history museums to embrace the Linnaean system of taxonomy.[96] The Telfair board echoed this system of scientific classification when they requested that the Academy consist of "Scientific Departments, to be first provided for, whether of Botany, Geology, including Mineralogy and Fossils, Conchology, Ethnology, or so much thereof that includes the Collection of Skulls, and Archaeology."[97]

To compile the Academy's collection of artworks, the board elected German-born artist and art historian Carl Ludwig Brandt (1831-1905) the museum's inaugural director in 1883. He had spent winters in Savannah and even painted a portrait of Telfair's sister Margaret, a personal connection that clearly curried favor with the council.[98] Over the next few years, Brandt visited the great academies, expositions, and museums of Europe in search of works of art to form the

[95] Alexander Rudolph Lawton, "Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences (Georgia Historical Society Trustee)," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* I, no. 2 (March 1917): 13-24, 14.

[96] Charles Willson Peale, "To the Citizens of the United States of America," in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Second Edition, eds. Bettina Messias Carbonell (Blackwell: 2012), 123-124.

[97] Lawton, "Telfair Academy," 20.

[98] Brandt's tenure as inaugural director of the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences is covered with extensive detail in Johnson Jr., "Mary Telfair's Legacy" in McCullough (ed.), *Telfair Museum of Art*, 2-24.

Academy's permanent art collection. He collected plaster replicas of famous examples of classical statuary, such as the *Laocoön* group and the *Toro Farnese,* and commissioned casts of the frieze and east pediment of the Parthenon. All in all, he acquired seventy-nine castings for the Academy. Such antiquarianism echoes the words of eminent German art historian J. J. Winckelmann, who believed that the "only way for us to become great, or if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients."[99] Brandt did not stop at imitating the ancients. Wanting to make the Academy great, the director purchased about a thousand high-quality painted and photographed reproductions of European master paintings from the Italian Renaissance and Dutch Golden Age. He was particularly fond of large-scale Romantic history paintings. At the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, for instance, he bought Julian Story's epic painting *The Black Prince at Crécy* (1888), which portrays the aftermath of a major battle from the Hundred Years War and contrasts the heroic figure of the Black Prince (the Prince of Wales) with the lifeless body of King John of Bohemia (fig. 2.2).

Brandt acquired so many pieces of art that the mansion had to be considerably remodeled. The board selected German-born architect Detlef Lienau (1818-1887) to renovate the property accordingly. The École des Beaux-Arts-educated architect designed a rotunda, sculpture gallery, and rear addition in keeping with Jay's original Neoclassical Regency style (fig. 2.3). The magnificent rotunda took up much of what had been the first floor and included a skylight that flooded the room with natural light. In contrast, the windows in what had been the second-floor bedrooms were sealed off to allow for more exhibition space. The sculpture gallery was built at street-level and its floor was reinforced to carry the weight of the large plaster casts. The

[99] J.J. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*/*Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Henry Fusseli (London: A. Milar/the Strand, 1767), 3.

rear addition replaced the mansion's back garden and former slave quarters, effectively expanding the museum's floorspace while erasing the physical traces of the site's history of enslavement.[100] Lienau's renovations extended to the exterior of the building, as well. He removed the existing magnolia trees from the main entrance and replaced them with five life-sized sculptures by Viennese artist Victor Tilgner. Each sculpture represented a figure whom Brandt appreciated as a "master" of art: Phidias, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Raphael (fig. 2.4). The extensive renovations, curated works within, and exterior sculpture pantheon announced that highbrow academic historicism would define the Academy's mission.

The museum officially opened on May 3, 1886. Those lucky enough to have been invited to the grand unveiling would have stepped out of their carriages, walked by the sculpture pantheon and up the grand staircase into the entrance hall. There they surely marveled at the dozens of painted and photographed copies of great European paintings that were hung salon style and continued into wood-paneled side rooms (fig. 2.5). A reporter writing for the 1886 edition of *Magazine of Art* noted that this part of the exhibition "has an effect of being picture-gallery, boudoir, salon and presence chamber all in one. The spirits of the departed Telfairs," he imagined, "seem to mingle lovingly with the shades of great painters."[101]

Visitors would then descend the interior staircase into the new ground-floor sculpture gallery, where they were doubtlessly struck by the writhing majesty of the castings of the *Laocoön* group and the *Toro Farnese* (Fig. 2.6). Guests continued by re-ascending the stairs into the sky-lit rotunda gallery, where "Brandt's classic Munich tendencies," as the reporter called

[100] More information on the renovation can be found in Johnson Jr., "Mary Telfair's Legacy," in McCullough, ed., *Telfair Museum of Art,* 16-17.

[101] The reporter is quoted in Johnson Jr., "Mary Telfair's Legacy," in McCullough, ed., *Telfair Museum of Art,* 16.

them, manifested in a selection of Romantic history paintings and a large, frieze-like work by Claudius von Schraudolph, director of the Stuttgart Academy of Art, that personified the four primary forms of art on each the gallery's walls: Apelles for painting on the west wall; Iktinus for architecture on the north; Praxiteles for sculpture on the east; and Dürer for printmaking on the south. The reporter observed of the rotunda that the "large picture gallery over the sculpture hall is a fine example of classic decoration."[102]

Attendees finally made their way upstairs, where they found the converted bedrooms filled with archeological objects, castings of the Parthenon, and photographs of Greco-Roman ruins. "Mr. Brandt's tact," the reporter celebrated,

> is shown amazingly well in his success in making the upper rooms of the old Telfair house over into a series of delightful little galleries. He has placed the Parthenon frieze where the garret once was, and in the adjoining apartments he has arranged a collection of archaeological and prehistoric art-objects…Especially fine are the photographs of ancient ruins and edifices. Thus the history of art is fully covered from the earliest times down to the present day.[103]

High praise, indeed, but for precisely that reason all the more deserving of scrutiny. Despite the reporter's commendation, both he and Brandt seemed to overlook much of the art of their day, namely, Impressionism and the modernist movements it inspired. This oversight meant that the South's preeminent art museum was entrenched in the traditional principles of European academicism, endowing the museum with a rather conservative, staid sensibility at a time of great artistic experimentation and even greater social upheaval.

Intentional or not, Brandt's academic historicism dovetailed with the revanchism of the post-Reconstruction South. At the Academy's opening gala, a veritable who's who of the

[102] McCullough, ed., *Telfair Museum of Art*, 17.

[103] Ibid., 18.

Confederacy attended, including Jefferson Davis, former President of the Confederacy, and his daughter Varina Davis, the purported "Daughter of the Confederacy."[104] The involvement of former Confederates – from Sorrel to the Davises – was part and parcel of the larger effort at the time to rehabilitate the legacy of the Confederacy, known as the Lost Cause, which I introduced in the previous chapter. Historian Rollin G. Osterweis summarizes:

> The Legend of the Lost Cause began as mostly a literary expression of the despair of a bitter, defeated people over a lost identity. It was a landscape dotted with figures drawn mainly out of the past: the chivalric planter; the magnolia-scented Southern belle; the good, gray Confederate veteran, once a knight of the field and saddle; and obliging old Uncle Remus. All these, while quickly enveloped in a golden haze, became very real to the people of the South, who found the symbols useful in the reconstituting of their shattered civilization. They perpetuated the ideals of the Old South and brought a sense of comfort to the New.[105]

Indeed, the Telfair's antiquarianism was of a piece with the Neoclassicism of late nineteenth-century Confederate monuments, such as Savannah's own Civil War Memorial. As architectural historian Dell Upton writes, the building of Confederates monuments during this period was part of a larger "Victorian memorial landscape" that "sought to reassert an older story of white American individualism" in the context of rapid socio-economic transformation.[106] Both the Southern museum and the Southern monument drew upon imperial iconographic traditions that not only validated but also celebrated white Southerners' claims to greatness. In fact, the Academy's aesthetic language of Western imperium – the Neoclassical Regency-style building, Greco-Roman plaster casts, Italian Renaissance and Dutch Golden Age copies, and Romantic

[104] Wilson, *Historic and Picturesque Savannah*, 218.

[105] Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900* (New York: Archon Books, 1973), ix.

[106] Dell Upton, "Monuments and Crimes," *Journal 18: A Journal of Eighteenth-Century Art and Architecture* (June 2020), https://www.journal18.org/5022.

history paintings – established a visual genealogy between the Old World and "New South" that reaffirmed the former's universalist pretensions and satiated the latter's cultural ambitions. In other words, the Academy contributed to the Lost Cause transmutation of the former Confederacy into the rightful heir of white, Western civilization.

In the middle of Brandt's tenure as director, sociologist and activist W.E.B. Du Bois unveiled an altogether different picture of the South in the *Exhibit of American Negroes* at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle (fig. 2.7). Co-organized with Thomas J. Calloway and Booker T. Washington, the exhibit consisted of over sixty hand-drawn data illustrations comprising the sociological study *The Georgia Negro*, two hundred books by African American authors, and more than three hundred photographs that captured the state of Black life in the US in the decades after the Civil War.[107] One diagram from *The Georgia Negro* highlighted the stark disparities in property ownership between whites and Blacks across different cities in the state, including Savannah (fig. 2.8). The combination of visual graphs and empirical data, a relatively new methodology pioneered by Du Bois, reflected the Atlanta University professor's mission to advance the sociological study of African Americans. According to Du Bois, the *Exhibit of American Negroes* was intended to be "an honest straightforward exhibit of a small nation of people, picturing their life and development without apology or gloss, and above all made by themselves."[108]

[107] Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert, eds., *W.E.B. Du Bois's Data Portraits: Visualizing Black Americ*a: *The Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Hudson, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2018).

[108] Francis, Hall, et al, eds., *Black Lives 1900: WEB Du Bois at the Paris Exposition* (London: Redstone, 2019).

The two Souths on display on each side of the Atlantic – which I will refer to as the White South at the Academy and the Black South in Paris – were opposite sides of the same coin. If Brandt's Telfair effectively legitimized the post-Reconstruction South's image as the mantle of white, Western civilization, then Du Bois's *Exhibit of American Negroes* brought to light the lived realities of the Black folks who made the civilization possible in the first place.[109]

These disparate visions call attention to the segregated admissions policy at the Academy, raising doubts about its status as one of the first "public" art museums in the South. For its first seventy years, in fact, the museum prohibited Black visitors from attending and maintained what Du Bois and others have called the "color line." In 1965, the same year the Voting Rights Act was passed, the museum began to admit "outstanding Negro leaders." The Academy finally opened its doors to the general public in the 1977, mirroring the widespread resistance to desegregation that characterized Southern states at the time. Nearly a century after the mansion funded by slave wealth was turned into a museum, the Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences had at long last opened to Black guests.

The Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters

Before expanding its membership to include Black visitors, the Telfair embarked on a significant expansion of its own in 1951 with the acquisition of the Owens-Thomas House. Located in Oglethorpe Square, a few blocks from the Academy, the historic home was originally

[109] For more on the transatlantic histories of Blackness and whiteness see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1993) and Tiffany Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). Cribbing Gilroy, scholars have even postulated the idea of the "White Atlantic." For more see Seymour Drescher, "The White Atlantic? The Choice for African Slave Labor in the Plantation Americas," in *Slavery in the Development of the Americas*, eds. David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kenneth L. Sokoloff (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and London, 2004) pp. 31-69.

known as the Richardson House after the family who first resided there. They were led by patriarch Richard Richardson, a Bermuda-born planter, slave trader, and President of the Savannah Branch Bank of the United States. Like the Telfair manor, this Regency-style villa was also designed by Jay in 1819. The stately two-story structure was adorned with pastel-colored stucco and the front portico contained ionic colonnades and a semi-circular iron stairway that greeted visitors from the street. Quoins cocooned the first story and the basement was festooned with horizontal rusticated bands and a balustrade that concealed the lower level from street-view. Simple arches adorned the second-story windows and a parapet wall along the top of the building aggrandized its four sides (fig. 2.9). The interior of the house sparkled with Jay's knack for *trompe l'oeil* finishes, gilded details, rounded rooms, and other innovative flourishes.[110]

As typical as the manor is of Regency architecture, key features distinguish it as an American and, more precisely, a Southern interpretation of this style. Notably, the house boasts a unique cast-iron balcony, painted white with forest green accents, which was shipped from England in one of the first large-scale applications of the material in American architecture. Additionally, the main house was built using a combination of conventional materials such as brick, alongside locally sourced materials like tabby and coquina. Tabby consists of lime, oyster shells, water, and sand, and coquina is a natural limestone formed from shells and coral. Tabby and coquina are indigenous to the coastal Southeast and are stronger than traditional brick-and-mortar construction. The manor also contained one of the country's earliest major plumbing systems, including bathing chambers, flush water closets, and an array of tubs and sinks, all connected by an intricate system of pipeworks that ran throughout the building. The plumbing saved the house's enslaved workers from having to directly haul water and handle sewage,

[110] Tania June Sammons, *The Owens-Thomas House* (Savannah: Telfair Books, 2009), 7-31.

thereby decreasing their presence in the primary rooms of residence. A network of innovative, disguised hallways and concealed doors further kept bonded workers out of sight. The plumbing and corridors therefore hid from view the slaves who maintained the manor, treating them as another component of the infrastructure.[111] When not working in the depths of the mansion, these individuals resided in the back quarters, the earliest two-story slave quarters constructed in America.[112]

When the mansion was finished in 1819, Richardson moved in with his family and nine of their slaves. They lived here for a few years until Richardson's fortunes took a downturn. He soon lost his job at the bank, which added insult to injury by foreclosing on the home. For several years thereafter one Mary Maxwell leased the property from the city and ran an elegant lodging house here, even hosting the Marquis de Lafayette, the French-born hero of the American Revolution, who visited Savannah in 1825 and spoke to the city's residents from the manor's portico. In 1830 George Welshman Owens, then the mayor of Savannah, acquired the property for the cut-rate price of $10,000. Owens was a wealthy planter, lawyer, and politician who counted several plantations and at least several dozen slaves as his property. He moved in

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[111] That the manor was designed to keep the enslaved invisible belies politician John C. Calhoun's belief – shared by many in the antebellum South – that slavery was a "positive good" benefitting both master and slave. For more see John C. Calhoun, *Speeches of John C. Calhoun* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843); for more on antebellum pro-slavery attitudes see Paul Finkelman, *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South -- A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003).

[112] For more on the architecture of the Owens-Thomas house see Carolyn Pitts, "Owens-Thomas House," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, United States Department of Interior, National Park Service (1976). For more on tabby construction in Savannah see Lauren B. Sickels-Taves and Michael S. Sheehan, *The Lost Art of Tabby Redefined: Preserving Oglethorpe's Architectural Legacy* (Southfield, MI: Architectural Conservation Press, 1999).

with his wife, six children, and nine slaves, including nursemaids Emma and Kate, cook Diane, butler Peter, and an enslaved child Fanny.[113]

Much the same as the Telfair mansion, the Owens-Thomas house relied on slavery. Consequently, it is essential to examine to particularities of urban slavery during the antebellum era. As one Louisiana planter described it, slavery "does not thrive with master or slave when transplanted to cities," or as Frederick Douglass wrote, "Slavery dislikes a dense population."[114] In one of the first studies of urban slavery in the South, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860*, historian Richard Wade pinpointed urban slaves' greater mobility and autonomy relative to their counterparts on plantations, finding they existed in a "twilight" stage between plantation enslavement and outright emancipation.[115] Yet city-dwelling slaves were still enslaved. As scholar Claudia Dale Goldin has challenged, urban slavery created forms of control conducive to municipal settings that shaped the built environment and social fabric of Southern cities.[116] Harris and Berry, the editors of *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, explain in "Slave Life in Savannah: Geographies of Autonomy and Control,"

> maintenance of the institution [of slavery] did not always entail whips, chains, and restricting slaves to plantations. Indeed, slaveholders constantly negotiated the laws and practices of slavery in order to ensure the continuation of a system that was fundamental to the Southern way of life, even as enslaved people worked to make the system as livable as possible for themselves…Urban life might necessitate means of controlling enslaved property different from those available on plantations. But the system of slavery was secure, embedded in legal, social, and political frameworks that upheld slaveholder authority over any privileges given to enslaved people.[117]

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[113] Sammons, *The Owens-Thomas House*, 9-24.

[114] Quoted in Richard Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (1964), 3-4; 4.

[115] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*.

[116] Claudia Dale Goldin, *Urban Slavery in the American south, 1820-1860: A Qualitative History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

[117] Harris and Berry, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, 94.

If city-dwelling slaves experienced greater autonomy and freedom of movement, they were also burdened with navigating municipal forms of subjugation and surveillance; instead of overseers, there existed in antebellum cities armed-police, militia groups, Night Watch brigades, and random strangers who could wantonly victimize Black residents. In this way, the relative mobility of urban slaves could put them in harm's way, as the density of public spaces increased the likelihood of anti-Black violence.

Urban slaves were also managed by the built environment. As historians Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, editors of *Slavery in the City: Architecture and Landscapes of Urban Slavery*, maintain, "City councils throughout North America argued about the construction of architectural features – for example, walls, gates, and bell towers meant to control the movement of and instill fear in enslaved peoples who found themselves in public spaces."[118] The architecture of townhomes or villas where the enslaved played a significant role in this spatial control. In addition to the plumbing system and concealed hallways mentioned above, the substandard and sometimes squalid conditions of the backhouses or slave quarters not only endangered the enslaved but also reaffirmed the "conceptualization of the total lot as a single unit under the control of the white owner."[119]

Importantly, oppressive conditions often give rise to acts of resistance, regardless of setting. Just as enslaved individuals on plantations crafted hidden trails or imbued spirituals with covert messages, city-dwelling slaves like Juddy, George, Coomba, and Lavinia at the Telfair

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[118] Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, eds., *Slavery in the City: Architecture and Landscapes of Urban Slavery in North America* (2017), 2.

[119] Ibid., 7.

mansion, and Emma, Kate, Diane, Peter, and Fanny at the Owens-Thomas manor surely harnessed the physical architecture and urban landscape to seek moments of respite and refuge from the harsh realities of their enslavement, however fleeting those moments may have been.

In 1951, the then-owner of the mansion, Margaret "Meta" Thomas (1871-1951), Owens's granddaughter, bequeathed her the property to the Telfair Academy. In 1956, following several years of renovations, the building reopened as an antebellum house museum, making it one of the first house museums in the Deep South accessible to the public. House museums, as a distinct museum type, are characterized by how they narrate or recreate the histories of the sites they inhabit. As museum historian Monica Risnicoff de Gorgas contends, the objective of house museums "is not history or life *per se*, but the portrayal of history or life; not the past *per se*, but its representation."[120] During its initial four decades or so, the Owens-Thomas House portrayed the antebellum era from the perspectives of the slave-owning families who had lived there, much like the main house at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens. The museum showcased the Owens-Thomas family's collection of English Georgian and American Federal style furniture, *chinoiserie* export porcelain, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art.[121] The emphasis on the material splendor accrued by the planter class is not surprising, as house museums or estate museums have conventionally served as platforms for showcasing the wealth and power of the elite families of the past. In so doing, house museums have tended to obscure the entire set of social relations that generated such prosperity. However, the previous discussion of the Owens-Thomas House's slave infrastructure and architecture calls attention to the fact that many house

[120] Monica Risnicoff de Gorgas, "Reality as Illusion, the Historic Houses that Become Museums," in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts* (Third Edition), ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 325.

[121] Sammons, *The Owens-Thomas House*, 16-31.

museums originally depended upon forgotten workers who were just as important to such sites' histories as their wealthy owners.

It was not until the 1990s that the Owens-Thomas House underwent significant transformation, leading to a more comprehensive and balanced curatorial approach. During this period, a team of renovators made a remarkable discovery when they uncovered well-preserved slave quarters in the carriage house. This discovery marked the beginning of a more inclusive historical narrative at the house museum, and the site was subsequently rebranded as the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters (OTHSQ). Ever since, the museum has narrated and displayed the history of urban slavery in Savannah through the experiences of the house's enslaved workers, becoming one of the first Southern house museums to directly confront the region's history of slavery.[122]

One of the primary ways the museum has achieved this is by recreating the areas of the house that were inhabited by enslaved workers. The main house basement and back slave quarters have been preserved and refurbished into a semblance of their antebellum selves; they are essentially period rooms. In the basement, visitors can reflect on the kitchen and its original cast-iron stove imported from England; the laundry room with its in-tact stone sinks; and the spacious bathing room, which now contains a reinforced glass floor that allows tourists to walk on top while viewing the network of pipes below. In the two-story slave quarters, guests can observe an array of architectural and material artifacts that offer insight in the experience of urban slavery. The first-floor ceiling, for instance, is covered in the largest surviving example of "haint" blue paint in the country (fig. 2.10). This light blue hue, with its origins in West African

[122] For more on public spaces in the US devoted to the history of slavery see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, eds., *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: New Press, 2006).

cultures and Gullah Geechee folk traditions, was believed to provide spiritual protection against "haints" or ghosts. During the nineteenth century, the color was created by mixing indigo, lime, and buttermilk. To this day, porch ceilings throughout the South are often painted haint blue. The slave quarters come further to life on the second floor, which is curated through a collection of slave-made objects from the Acacia Collection of African Americana (fig. 2.11). These artifacts encompass a range of items such as furniture, textiles, cooking utensils, and pottery, including a large earthenware vessel made by "Dave the Potter," the only known enslaved artisan in the South to have signed his work. The preserved basement and recreated slave quarters are designed to evoke the presence of the enslaved subjects who once occupied these spaces, providing contemporary visitors with a poignant glimpse into their daily lives and experiences.

The museum also offers a range of exhibitions and guided tours that narrate the lives of the actual enslaved workers who were an integral part of the house's history, including cook Diane, nursemaid Emma, and butler Peter. Wall texts explain that Diane was not merely a cook but an accomplished chef, one who regularly prepared elaborate meals for gatherings of up to two dozen dinner guests, including a notable occasion when she cooked for President James K. Polk during his visit to Savannah. Visitors can also discover the story of Emma, the dedicated nanny who often slept on the main house's wooden floors to be readily available to the family's children, and learn that Peter, the butler, managed the house with the rigor of a *majordomo*. The museum attempts to temper these "devoted slave" narratives, which derive from the records of the Owens-Thomas family, with information about the harsh conditions of urban enslavement more generally. These identified slaves therefore act as surrogates for the larger class of urban slaves to which they belonged. This curatorial approach goes some way to addressing the "non-

history" of the enslaved by counter-narrating the antebellum South from the perspectives of its most disadvantaged subjects.

The OTHSQ also embraces innovative forms of visitor engagement to bring the experiences of the enslaved more fully to life for visitors. For example, within the slave quarters is a "touch table" that encourages guests to handle and interact with objects, artifacts, and fragments that were created and used by enslaved individuals themselves. This tactile engagement with the physical evidence of urban slavery, coupled with visual displays dedicated to specific enslaved individuals, aims to humanize the enslaved to the extent possible. Crucially, the OTHSQ is transparent about the limitations of its project. A "name wall" lists the identities of enslaved individuals for whom little to no information is available, including figures like Prince Billy, Dinah, Jean Francois, Quash, Hagar, Scipio, Big Jim, and Cressy, among many others. By acknowledging these gaps in the historical record, the museum underscores its commitment to telling a more comprehensive and inclusive story about the Southern past.

Recently, the OTHSQ has extended this curatorial approach throughout the entirety of the property. As the house museum states, the site "allows visitors to explore the complicated relationships between the most and least powerful people in the city of Savannah in the early 19th century."[123] During tours of the main house, tour guides now discuss the Richardson and Owens-Thomas families in relation to the bonded laborers who maintained their households. Most rooms are narrated from the perspectives of both the white slave-owners and their Black enslaved workers. In contrast to the "separate but equal" tours at some other historical sites, such as Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, where guests learn about the planter family during the Main House Tour and their enslaved workers during the Slavery to Freedom Tour, the OTHSQ has

[123] Wall text, slave quarters, Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters, Savannah, Georgia.

been working to integrate both white and Black histories throughout the property. This approach has influenced other house museums in Southern cities. The Aiken-Rhett House in Charleston, for example, emphasizes the experiences of the enslaved over and above the lives of their slave-owners. The tour at this South Carolina house museum commences in the basement and slave quarters and proceeds to narrate the entire property and its history from the perspective of the enslaved. What makes such curatorial revisionism so significant is the understanding that Southern house museums are repositories of the histories of urban slavery.

The reconceptualization of Southern house museum as archives of slavery aligns with the principles of the "new museology," which emerged in the 1980-90s. The new museology challenged existing museum approaches and advocated for more socially responsive, institutionally critical, and culturally diverse approaches to curating.[124] The OTHSQ serves as a noteworthy example of this paradigm shift. By shifting focus away from the "white-centric," one-sided narratives of slave-owners and emphasizing the stories of the enslaved, the house museum complicates prevailing understandings of slavery, highlighting that it was not limited to plantations but was also a significant aspect of urban life. Moreover, such reframing offers a way for Southern house museums to maintain relevance with contemporary audiences eager to engage with more complicated narratives about the nation's past. The site's evolution from a grand mansion constructed and maintained by enslaved workers into a house museum dedicated to urban slavery represents a pivotal development in the history of museums as a whole and holds particular significance for the Telfair, as it set the stage for the institution's next venture, the Jepson Center for the Arts.

[124] Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).

The Jepson Center for the Arts

Around the same time the OTHSQ was undergoing renovations in the 1990s, the Telfair devised plans to expand yet again and build a museum of modern and contemporary art. In 1998 the Telfair board held a design competition for the new Jepson Center for the Arts, named after lead donors Robert and Alice Jepson. The competition involved fourteen internationally recognized architecture firms, of which five were invited to submit proposals for final consideration. The board unanimously selected the plan entered by Moshe Safdie and Associates. The Israeli-born architect had a track record of designing art museums and galleries in North America, including Canada's National Gallery of Art in Ottawa, the Jean-Noel Desmarais Pavilion at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, to name a few.

Upon Safdie's selection, however, Savannah's Historic District Board of Review was skeptical of the architect's design. The preservation agency worried the structure would negatively affect the aesthetic integrity of Savannah's historic center, as the proposed design was strikingly different from the colonial and antebellum aura of the Old Town. As Safdie countered, "Surely a meaningful contemporary cultural icon must seek to go beyond the literal emulation of the old." Uncharmed by the architect's riposte, the Board of Review held up construction for two years before narrowing its concern to a few specific components of Safdie's design, especially the sheer glass facade. The exposed glass, the agency suggested, endangered public safety in the hurricane prone city. Working in concert with the Board of Review, Safdie designed an

architectural frame to segment and secure the glass. The redesign was approved in 2001, clearing the way for construction to finally begin.[125]

When the Jepson Center opened in 2006, it looked as if the twenty-first century had fallen out of the sky onto the nineteenth. Located steps from the original academy and a few blocks from the OTHSQ, the sleek, glassy building contrasts with the Regency style of the other sites and represents the Telfair's ambitions to become a forward-thinking Southern museum. Passersby strolling along the brick road around the Telfair Academy may experience whiplash upon first seeing the Jepson Center. The entrance is a towering wall of glass and limestone supports spanning almost the entire height and width of the building; the sheer surface reflects the square's venerable buildings as it reveals the gleaming expanse inside (Fig. 2.12a). Once across the threshold, the monumental stone staircase that runs from one end of the building to the other siphons visitors upward to the galleries. The steps are widest at the base and gradually narrow as they ascend to the second-floor. The museum's more than 7,500 square feet of gallery space are tucked on either side of the winnowing staircase, creating an architectural illusion that conceals the dimensions of the galleries (fig. 2.12b). This effect is fully unleashed when visitors step into the galleries of varying sizes and shapes that hold permanent and temporary exhibitions. The entire museum is designed such that natural light dances across and dapples the smooth interiors throughout the day, subsuming visitors within a bleached field (fig. 2.12c). Whereas the Telfair's other buildings are antebellum time-capsules, the Jepson Center is a post-white cube

[125] Accounts taken from "From the Ground Up: Clearing the Way for the Jepson Center," published July 10, 2018, Telfair Museums of Art, https://www.telfair.org/article/from-the-ground-up-creation-of-the-jepson-center/.

vacuum. As the museum states, the "Jepson Center links the history preserved by the Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters and Telfair Academy to the future of art and architecture."[126]

Let us consider this "future," first of architecture. That the museum was designed by a "starchitect" and is promoted as a "cultural icon" and "architectural landmark" chimes with what Rosalind Krauss has called "the cultural logic of the late capitalist museum." If the contemporary museum is turbocharged by a "generalized universal industrialization," then it "does not stretch the imagination too much," she claims, "to realize that this industrialized museum will have much more in common with other industrialized areas of leisure – Disneyland say – than it will with the older, preindustrial museum."[127] This assessment captures something of what the Savannah Historic District Board of Review were generally concerned about, that the contemporary museum would dominate everything around it, especially the older, we might say preindustrial, buildings of the Telfair's other two sites. The consumerist logic of late-capitalism, Krauss's argument goes, sublimates the new, corporatized museum into a spectacle all its own, hence the touristic rhetoric of "icon" and "landmark." And the rarefied name of the architect further promotes the museum as a worthwhile destination and puts the host city on the map, as it were. This line of reasoning holds that one of the benefits of traveling to Savannah is the opportunity to experience "a Safdie," one of only three museums in the country designed by the architect (the others being the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art and the Peabody Essex Museum). But travelers to Savannah may also experience "a Jay," or better yet two buildings designed by the nineteenth-century architect, the Telfair Academy and the OTHSQ. Indeed, it simply must be said that these developments have a history preceding the Jepson Center, or to put it differently, a

[126] "From the Ground Up."

[127] Rosalind Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October*, Vol. 54 (Autumn, 1990): pp. 3-17, 17.

history leading up to it. To recall Adelaide Wilson's declaration that the opening of the Telfair Academy in 1886 "marks an era in Savannah" and will make the city "the art centre of the South," is to recognize just how long the museum as an institution has been bound up with the political economy of commodity culture.

The two changes undertaken by the Telfair around the turn of the twenty-first century – the renovation of the OTHSQ and the building of the Jepson Center – do, however, point to recent trends in museums. "What *is* new," Saloni Mathur explains in "Museums and Globalization," "is not the fact that museums are behaving increasingly like corporations, regardless of their profitability, but that they are, in the case of the Guggenheim, behaving like *multinational* ones."[128] Made in reference to the Guggenheim's planned expansions throughout much of the world under former director Thomas Krens, Mathur's claim allows us to think about the global aspirations of museums like the Guggenheim and the regional aspirations of museums like the Telfair as *equally indicative* of museums during globalization.

First, the corporate multinationalism of the Guggenheim and the curatorial multiculturalism at the OTHSQ can be seen as different solutions to the same problem: how can museums in the contemporary "West" address modernity's cultural inequities? Whereas this question is typically thought to require a "global" or "non-Western" response, the site-specific re-curating of the OTHSQ from the position of the enslaved offers a way for museums in Western contexts to redress modernity's hierarchies of difference by starting right at home and engaging in more institutionally-reflexive forms of curating. That said, the OTHSQ could embrace a more worldly purview by acknowledging the ways in which slavery and in particular

[128] Saloni Mathur, "Museums and Globalization," 510-516, in *Museum Studies*, ed., Bettina Messias Carbonell, 512.

the transatlantic slave trade connected this Southern mansion with sites in the Global South, for instance, through comparative exhibits on urban slavery in Savannah, San Juan, and São Paulo.

Second, the embrace of starchitect-designed facilities further shows the multiple scales through which museums respond to globalization. If the Guggenheim's hiring of Frank Gehry and Jean Nouvel to design its outposts in Bilbao and Abu Dhabi, respectively, accords on its surface with the Jepson Center's selection of its own renowned architect in Moshe Safdie, then deeper reflection makes clear that while the former has turned "outward" and franchised itself as a global brand of mega-museums, the latter, by contrast, has turned "inward" in order to solidify the Telfair's standing as one of the leading art museums of the South. The various localities in question treat these starchitect-designed facilities as civic infrastructures "in order to attract both tourists and investment as well as consolidate local identity for residents," as art historian David Joselit notes of museums in the twenty-first century.[129] Taken together, the re-curating of the OTHSQ and the design of the Jepson Center have helped make the Telfair contemporary.

Which brings us to the Jepson Center's role in the "future" of art. If, as Joselit claims, one of the conditions of art's globalization is the reanimation of those idiomatic cultural traditions sidelined by modernist universalism into contemporary aesthetic resources, then the Jepson Center's appeal rests precisely in its ability to frame works of art by regional artists as authentic expressions of Southern heritage in the marketplace of global culture. "Art's globalization," Joselit argues,

> has the potential to redress Western modernism's cultural dispossession of the global South. Both imperialism and slavery -- two primary means of capital accumulation in the nineteenth century -- claimed the inferiority of non-Western cultures as justification for appropriating their land, labor, and the personal freedom of their peoples…Global

[129] David Joselit, *Heritage and Debt: Art in Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: October Books/MIT Press, 2020), 163.

> contemporary art has confronted this history of dispossession in its counterapporpriation of cultural heritage as a *contemporary* resource.[130]

Given the US South's history of slavery, and therefore its peculiar position in the binary separating the Global North from the Global South, it seems worthwhile to include the region – with some qualification, but also with some applicability – in this understanding of contemporary art.

As the only Telfair museum not built with enslaved labor, the Jepson Center possesses no institutional history of slavery to self-critically explore. It has, however, addressed the "afterlives" of slavery by collecting and exhibiting the art of Black artists from the South alongside that by more globally famous artists. In addition to pieces by Takashi Murakami, Sam Gilliam, Vija Clemens, Gabriel Orozco, Andy Warhol, Kara Walker, Luis González Palma, Claes Oldenburg, Nick Cave, Francesco Clemente, Yasumasa Morimura, and Mickalene Thomas, for example, the museum also holds those by William O. Golding, Nellie Mae Rowe, Thornton Dial, Sarah Mary Taylor, Rudolph Valentino Bostic, and Vernon Edwards. The ways in which the Jepson Center synchronizes Black folk artists from the region as contemporaneous with these more well-known artists can also be seen in a recent rehanging of the museum's Kirk Varnedoe Collection. The collection consists of postwar American art and is named after the Savannah-born art historian who went on to become Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, in which position he co-curated the much ridiculed 1984 show *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinities Between the Tribal and the Modern*. The collection of contemporary American art was recently re-hung to include works by Jimmy Lee Suduth, Ulysses Davies, and Willie Tarver alongside those existing works by canonical figures like Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Ed Ruscha, Kiki Smith, and Jeff Koons (fig.

[130] Ibid., xvi.

2.13-15). The insertion of Black Southern self-taught artists into the Varnedoe Collection seems an intentional and critical engagement with its namesake's involvement with *Primitivism*. If Euro-American modernisms appropriated folk art and non-Western art as "primitive," "exotic," or "derivative" and therefore relegated them to the temporality of the premodern, then the Jepson Center's rehanging of the Varnedoe Collection attempts to rectify this dispossession by counter-appropriating the work of Black Southern self-taught artists as contemporary forms of regional heritage, representing the culmination of the Telfair's efforts to more fully grapple with the legacies of slavery.

Figures

Fig. 2.1
Enrichetta Narducci
Portrait of Mary Telfair (1842)
Gouache on ivory; 3 ⅛ x 2 ¾ inches
Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Savannah, Georgia

Fig. 2.2
Julian Story
The Black Prince at Crécy (1888)
Oil on canvas; 128 x 197 inches
Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Savannah, Georgia

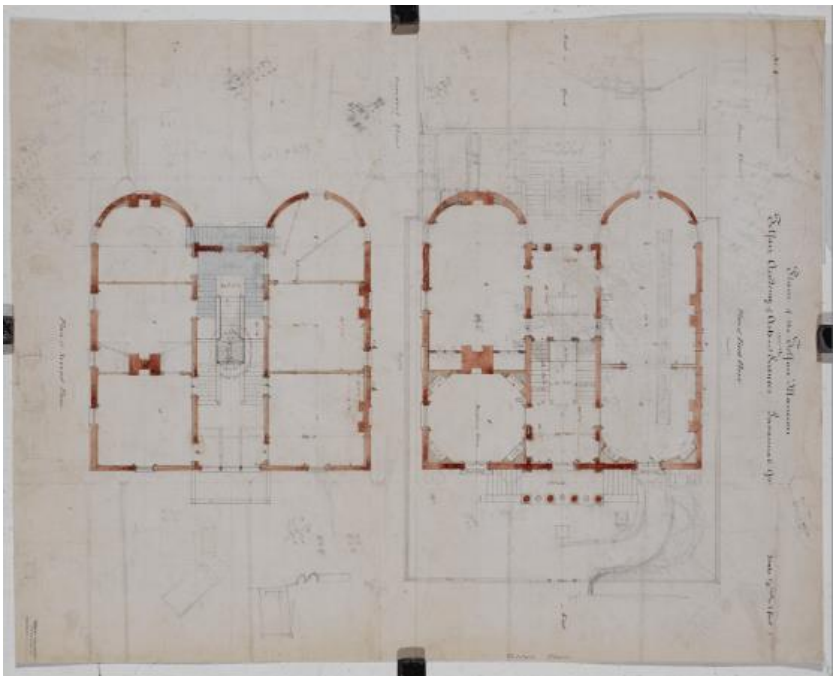
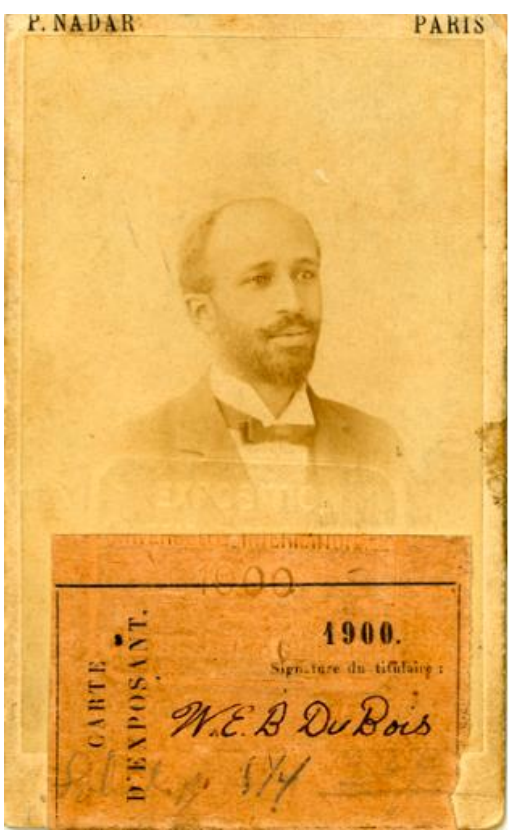


Fig. 2.3
Detlef Lienau
Plans for first and second floor of Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences (1885)
Avery Architectural Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, New York

Fig. 2.4
Remodeled Telfair with sculpture pantheon
"Telfair Academy," in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (January, 1888)
V and J Duncan Collection, Savannah, Georgia

Fig. 2.5
Picture gallery/entrance hall (1886)
Unknown photographer
Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Savannah, Georgia

Fig. 2.6
Sculpture gallery (c. 1900)
Unknown photographer
Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences, Savannah, Georgia



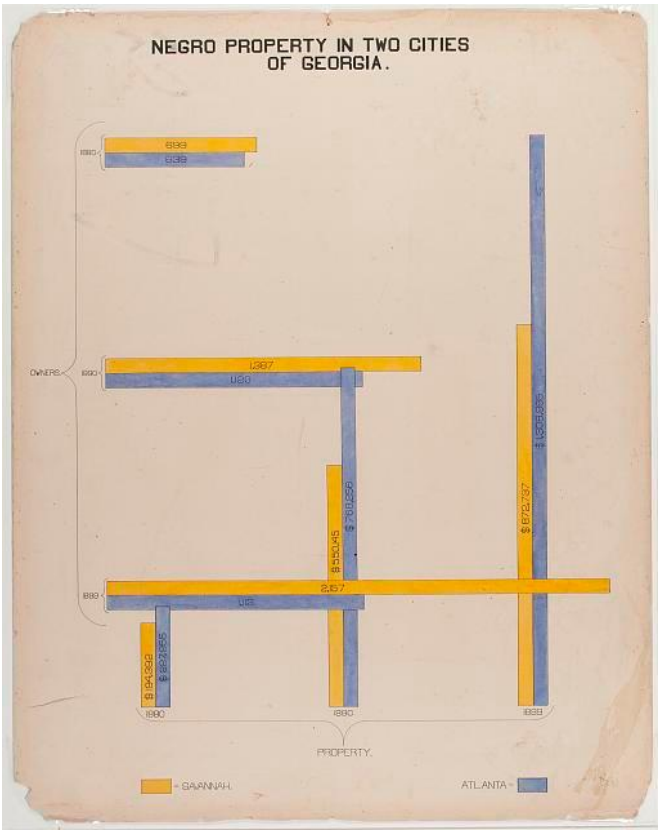


Fig. 2.7
Paul Nadar
Identification card for W.E.B. Du Bois, 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle
Photograph on paper; approx. 4 ½ x 2 ½ inches
Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries

Fig. 2.8
"Negro Properties in Two Cities in Georgia"
The Georgia Negro: A Study (1900)
Ink and watercolor drawing; 28 x 22 inches
Shown in the *Exhibit of American Negroes* at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC

Fig. 2.9
Owens-Thomas House
Unknown photographer (c. late-1880s)
Photograph on paper
Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters, Savannah, GA

Fig. 2.10 and 2.11
Interior of slave quarters
Owens-Thomas House and Slave Quarters, Savannah, Georgia

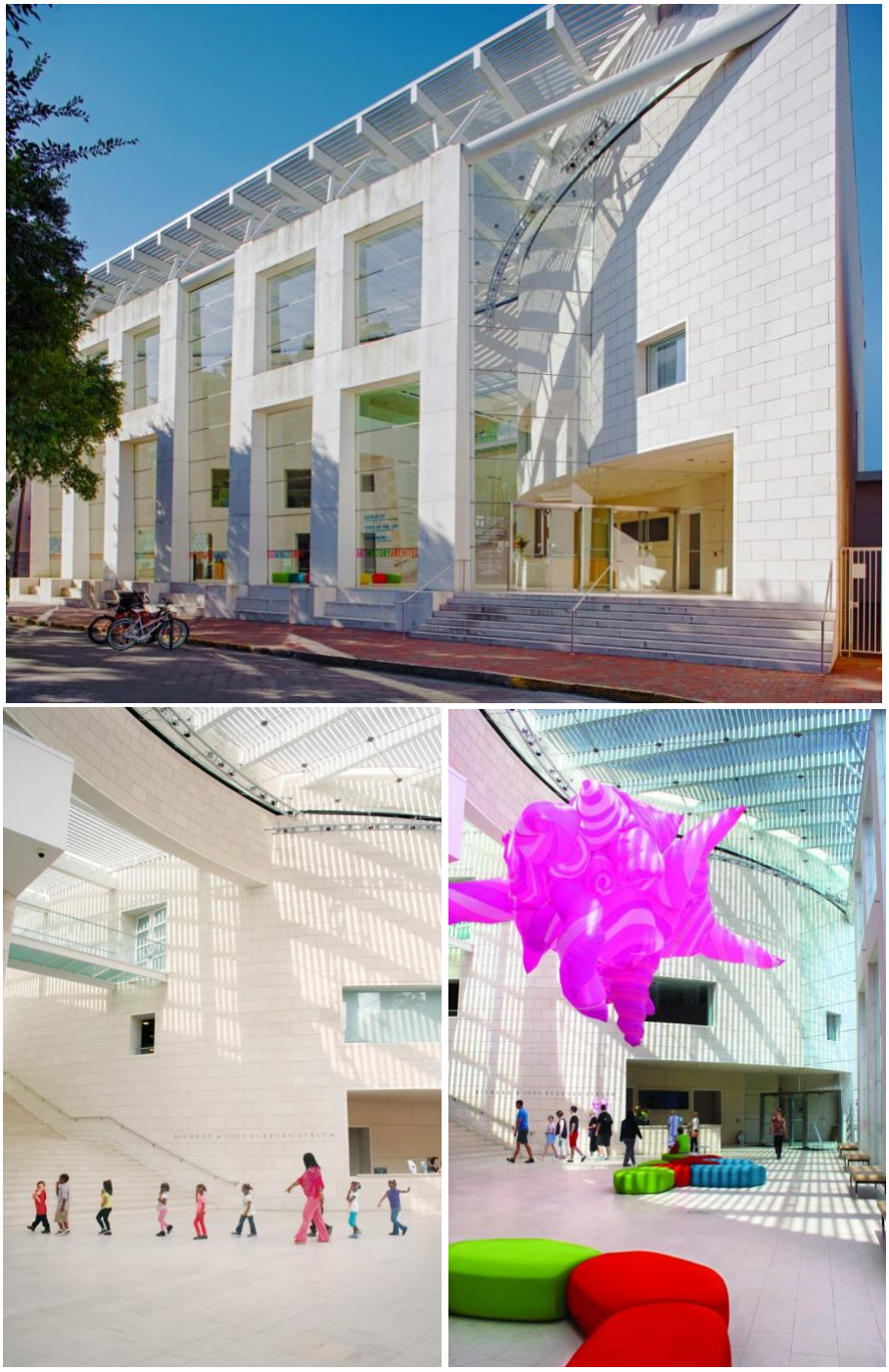


Fig. 2.12a-c
Exterior and interior photographs of the Jepson Center for the Arts
Designed by Moshe Safdie and Associates
Savannah, Georgia

Fig. 2.13
Jimmy Lee Suduth
Cityscape on Black (1995)
Acrylic paint, mud, and glitter on wood panel; 48 x 48 inches
Jepson Center for the Arts, Savannah, Georgia

Fig. 2.14
Willie Tarver
Cap Lee #3 (1990)
Painted cement; 15 x 16 x 7 ½ inches
Jepson Center for the Arts, Savannah, Georgia

Fig. 2.15
Ulysses Davis
Christ Took the Sting out of Death (1990)
Acrylic painted carved wood; 13 ½ x 3 ¼ x 3 ¼ inches
Jepson Center for the Arts, Savannah, Georgia

Chapter Three
Subtropical Spectacles: The Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition

When the Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition opened in Jacksonville on January 12, 1888, the frontpage of the city's *Times-Union* newspaper hailed the event as "the most attractive display ever seen on the continent."[131] In addition to glowing press from the hometown paper, the exhibition boasted a cathedral-like main hall at the center of a lush, landscaped campus; exhibits containing plants and animals native to Florida and the West Indies; souvenir stalls purveying seashells, alligator teeth, parrot feathers, and other locally-themed curios; an extensive art gallery displaying hundreds of paintings by European and American artists; an ethnological exhibit featuring several members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida; and a segregated "Colored Department" where Black farmers and vendors sold crops, food items, and homemade goods. Notable figures such as President Grover Cleveland and abolitionist Frederick Douglass attended, as did "thousands of visitors, who were given an opportunity to see first hand many of the products and possibilities of Florida."[132]

Public officials organized the recurring exhibition annually from 1888-1891 as part of a broader initiative to compete with California as the country's leading destination by promoting Florida's potential for tourism, settlement, and development.[133] As railroads first reached

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[131] "For Florida, The Sub-Tropical Exposition at Hand," *The Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville, Florida, Thursday, January 12, 1888, Microphage No. 3.891, Floridiana Collection, Jacksonville Public Library, Jacksonville, Florida.

[132] James C. Craig, "Florida-California Rivalry for Tourist Trade Led City to Sponsor Huge Exposition" *The Florida Times-Union*, January 16, 1949, Floridiana Collection, Jacksonville Public Library.

[133] For more on California specifically see Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Southern California and the Florida peninsula in the 1870s-80s, illustrated guidebooks advertised their salubrious climates and coastal environments to "tourists, invalids, and settlers," while mass-produced postcards and stereograph cards circulated images of orange groves, palm trees, and white-sand beaches throughout the nation.[134] Boosters sparred in the press to convince Americans living in the North and Midwest to choose one state over the other. As historian Henry Knight has found, "Southern California was too arid, a writer in the *Florida Dispatch* claimed, a desert "parched for want of water." Florida, meanwhile, had too much of the stuff, editorials in California replied: a wetland fit for reptiles but potentially deadly to new residents who would wilt in its torrid summers."[135] Hoping to counter their Pacific rival and "dish California," officials in Jacksonville and the state capital of Tallahassee collaborated to organize the Sub-Tropical Exposition and highlight Florida's connections – real and imagined – with the tropical islands of the Caribbean.[136]

In so doing, the exhibition played a pivotal role in establishing Florida's "imaginative geography" as a *sub*tropical or *semi*tropical paradise, with the prefixes simultaneously affiliating the state with and distinguishing it from the tropics. Well before the exposition, the literary,

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[134] Some examples include Ledyard Bill, *A Winter in Florida: Or, Observations on the Soil, Climate, and Products of Our Semi-Tropical State* (New York: Wood and Holbrook, 1869); George M. Barbour, *Florida: For Tourists, Invalids, and Settlers* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882); Benjamin Truman, *Semi-Tropical California: Its Climate, Healthfulness, Productiveness, and Scenery* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1874).

[135] Henry Knight, "When California and Florida Attracted Settlers with Promises of a Perfect Climate, *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed online on September 13, 2023 at https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-california-and-florida-attracted-settlers-with-promises-of-a-perfect-climate-180982889/; for a deeper exploration of the topic see Henry Knight, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2013).

[136] James M. Craig, "Florida-California Rivalry."

artistic, and scientific discourses of "tropicality" rooted in European colonialism molded the equatorial lands of the Americas, Africa, South Asia, and Oceania into the West's environmental and cultural Other. The tropics became the subject of colonial fantasies and fears, existing in the Western mind as a Garden of Eden, on the one hand, and a Hell on Earth, on the other, inhabited by locals whom Europeans fetishized as both prelapsarian and barbaric, and abounding in "exotic" flora and fauna but also in "cataclysmic" monsoons, diseases, and pests.[137] Examining travel narratives and scientific literature from colonial India, historian David Arnold argues that the tropics "need to be understood as a conceptual, and not just physical, space." The tropics "were invented quite as much as they were encountered," he contends.[138] Focusing on the visual economy of late nineteenth-century tourism in the Caribbean, art historian Krista Thompson employs the term "tropicalization" to refer to the process by which islands like Jamaica and the Bahamas were exoticized into picturesque travel destinations.[139]

Comparably, the Sub-Tropical Exposition ushered in a process of *subtropicalization* with the goal of elevating Florida's standing from a swampy backwater into a peninsula of paradise. Through promotional materials, landscaping and architecture, plant and animal exhibits, art displays and souvenir stands, among other features, the event helped concoct the visual, material, and environmental cultures of *subtropicality* that are in many ways still associated with the state to this day. The exhibition was instrumental in remapping this southern frontier state within an

[137] Pierre Gourou, *The Tropical World: Its Social and Economic Conditions and Its Future Status* (Harlow, UK: Longman's, 1947).

[138] David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1865* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 141-142; 5.

[139] Krista Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

imagined Goldilocks zone – the subtropics – that supposedly combined the unique benefits of tropical and temperate climates while avoiding their respective shortcomings. Poised in that liminal space between the tropical West Indies and more familiar US mainland, subtropical Florida offered the best of both worlds, the exhibition proposed.

But for whom, exactly? Despite its utopian façade, the event mediated the speculative landscapes of Florida's tourism and real estate industries through the spectatorial conditions of the large-scale, public exhibition format, thereby emerging from and contributing to a system of social control that scholar Tony Bennett calls the "exhibitionary complex." Bennett asserts that the rise of exhibitions, museums, and attractions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries established a new type of disciplinary regime that reinforced structures of domination and exploitation by "simultaneously ordering objects for public inspection and ordering the public that inspected." Taking inspiration from Foucault's work on institutions and ideology, Bennett posits that these "new forms of spectacle produced a more complex and nuanced set of relations through which power was exercised and relayed to – and, in part, through and by – the populace."[140] The Sub-Tropical Exposition primed the public to perceive Florida as an exotic destination, contributing to the construction of a social reality that perpetuated hierarchies of economic and cultural dominance.

Indeed, the event's harsh treatment of Indigenous and Black participants calls attention to the subtropics as an Anglo-American invention. Amongst the exposition's amusements stood an ethnological exhibit of Florida Seminoles, a "genuine Seminole Indian camp," as it was billed. Its primitivizing conditions of spectatorship and display signaled that the state had been secured

[140] For more see Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations*, No. 4 (Spring, 1988: 73-102), 74-76.

for further (white) occupation while flaunting the very people dispossessed by the state's breakneck development in order to promote yet more growth, thereby romanticizing the settler colonial violence underpinning Florida's modernization. Additionally, African American vendors were relegated to small, isolated areas in the back of the main hall, while Black attendees were only allowed access on designated "Negro Days." This came on the heels of Florida's post-Reconstruction Democratic state government stripping Jacksonville of home rule, overthrowing its biracial Republican city council, and installing an entirely white replacement board of Democrats to govern the city.[141] The exhibition therefore extended the reactionary politics of racial discrimination and disenfranchisement into the domain of popular culture, essentially normalizing white supremacy as an inescapable fact of life in the state. In other words, the event's stage-managing of geographical, cultural, and racial differences coalesced to frame Florida as "the tropic of cracker," in the stark words of *Miami Herald* reporter and chronicler of the state Al Burt.[142]

Yet, the event also occasioned in participants various forms of resilience and resistance, revealing the exhibition's role in constructing *and* contesting the very idea of Florida and what it meant to be a Floridian at this time. Whereas public officials organized the exhibition to exoticize Florida into a subtropical destination and attract predominantly white newcomers to the state, members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida seized the opportunity to reassert their place on the peninsula in the face of dispossession, while Black participants leveraged the segregated

[141] Edward N. Akin, "When a Minority Becomes the Majority: Blacks in Jacksonville Politics, 1887-1907," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (October 1974), 123-145.

[142] Al Burt, *The Tropic of Cracker* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2009); also see Al Burt, *Al Burt's Florida: Snowbirds, Sand Castles, and Self-Rising Crackers* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1997).

exhibition in the fight for economic freedom and civil rights. Consequently, I propose that the event *both* enacted a restrictive racialized geography *and* offered a platform for Florida's Indigenous and Black inhabitants to access and influence the public sphere. Rather than solely operate as part of an oppressive exhibitionary complex, then, large-scale exhibitions are more comprehensively understood as spaces of confrontation, where power is shaped and subverted, reaffirmed and resisted. This resonates with scholar Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "contact zones," which she describes as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today."[143]

Despite laying much of the groundwork for Florida's modern identity as the "Sunshine State," the Sub-Tropical Exposition has thus far eluded the attention of scholars. Local newspapers periodically commemorate the exhibition as a significant episode in Jacksonville's history, but this study represents the first attempt, as best I know, to critically examine the event. Leveraging a variety of source material, from exhibition ephemera, period accounts, and public testimony, my primary objective is to scrutinize the exhibition in relation to the construction of the subtropics, the racialization of place, and the development of social antagonisms in late nineteenth-century Florida.

The Gateway to the Caribbean

President Grover Cleveland attended the Sub-Tropical Exposition and drew significant media attention to the event, as depicted in an illustration for *Harper's* (fig. 3.1). During his visit,

[143] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

he delivered an address extolling the virtues of Florida.[144] "The citizen of the United States in search of health or of pleasure or of comfort needs not to leave American soil nor the products of American institutions and American laws," he declared. "I believe there are those things in our own land which will be of interest and instruction oftentimes to those who are interested in looking on the sights of foreign countries."[145] Venturing to Florida offered both exotic and patriotic experiences, according to the President, an idyllic portrayal echoed in an advertising verse printed in newspapers in the weeks before the exhibition:

> Come see our green groves hung with clinging gold, more
> beautiful than a poet's dream.
> Come see our broad rivers, gleaming in the sunlight like a sheen
> of rippling silver, and view our timber forests bending lazily
> in the scented breeze.[146]

Additional marketing materials explicitly affiliated the state with the islands of the Caribbean. The exposition catalog trumpeted the event as the "grandest display ever made of the products and resources of Florida and the West Indies," while another publication produced for the occasion described Jacksonville as "the gateway to Florida, the Bahamas and the Island of Cuba."[147] By promoting Florida's cultural, economic, and geographical connections with the

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[144] "On the Way to Florida; The President and His Wife Start for Jacksonville," *The New York Times,* New York, New York, February 22, 1888.

[145] "The President in Florida," *Harper's Weekly*, March 3, 1888, Vol. XXII, No. 1428, Richard Mette Collection, University of North Florida, Thomas G. Carpenter Library Special Collections and Archives. UNF Digital Commons, https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/mette_text/153/.

[146] Quoted in Deane R. Briggs, "Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition," *Florida Postal History Journal,* Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 2001): 1-2.

[147] Front cover, *Art Catalogue of Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition* (Jacksonville, FL: DaCosta Printing and Publishing House, 1888), Floridiana Collection, Jacksonville Public Library, Call number 708.1 F636a; Elihu Burritt, "Jacksonville: What it Is," in *Florida: Experiences in a Stricken City* (Jacksonville, FL: Riverside Art Publishing, 1888), 4, Library of Congress, General Collections, Call number F319. J1B9.

Caribbean, the exhibition sought to elevate the state's identity from a wild peninsula to a subtropical haven, from a frontier on the fringes of the contiguous states to a paradise perfectly poised between the tropical and temperate Americas.[148] As a geographical configuration, the state's newfound status as a subtropical "gateway" calls attention to the conjunctures and disjunctures between Florida and the Caribbean, formed through the shared yet locally distinct histories of European conquest, Indigenous dispossession, African slavery, plantation economics, tourism development, and US expansion, among others.

Guests first crossed this gateway upon entering the exposition grounds. A period illustration shows that palms of all shapes and sizes dotted the campus, including what appear to be fan-like Cat palms and pinnate-fronded Triangle palms, towering Florida Royal palms and Saw palmettos, and hardy coconut and banana trees (fig. 3.2). Nearby, water lilies and footbridges festooned an artificial lake, while a tiered fountain of stone and coral, illuminated by electricity, bubbled in the central plaza. The landscaping, meticulously designed to evoke the ambiance of an oasis, signaled that Florida would offer newcomers precious refuge from the clamor of modern life. Yet these same elements betray the historicity and artificiality of this vision of paradise. For example, a handful of palm species, including the Royal palm and Saw palmetto, are native to Florida, but other species, especially coconut and banana trees, were likely introduced during the period of Spanish colonial rule, originally taken from places like the Philippines and circulated throughout the Kingdom's vast empire as part of the larger "Columbian Exchange."[149] In the late nineteenth century and on through the twentieth, native

[148] On the American tropics see *Surveying the American Tropics: A Literary Geography From New York to Rio*, eds., Maria Cristina Fumagalli, Peter Hulme, Owen Robinson, and Lesley Wylie (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

[149] For more on the Royal palm see John K. Small, "The Royal Palm – Roystonea Regia," *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden*, Vol. 20 (1928), pp. 1-9; for more on the Spanish involvement in introducing

and non-native palms of many varieties were widely planted throughout Florida to decorate new property developments, resort complexes, and public leisure spaces.[150] Florida's subtropical landscapes, captured in miniature on the exposition grounds, were not entirely "natural" but were, in fact, *naturalized* by the historical events of modernity.

Visitors could admire the luscious landscaping while riding a horse-drawn trolley around the campus to the entrance of the main hall. Jacksonville-based architect E.A. McClure designed the main hall in a style informed by Catholic architecture (fig. 3.3). Built according to the Latin cross plan and measuring roughly three hundred twenty-five feet long and one hundred twenty-five feet wide, the wood and steel building contained a stained-glass rose window above the entrance, bell tower-like structures on each corner, clerestory windows along the central nave, and a soaring cupola at the crossing. The main hall's cathedral-like design would have likely summoned in visitors' minds Florida's shared Catholic colonial heritage with much of the Caribbean. Such associations were strengthened by decorative flourishes located inside: the building's wooden columns were carved to resemble palm trunks while Spanish moss and palm fronds disguised unsightly metal supports (fig. 3.4). The incorporation of trademark elements of cathedral architecture for the main hall reflects two, interrelated realities of the period. First, the cross-plan layout provided a spacious concourse that could hold dozens of stalls and attractions while facilitating the smooth flow of sizable crowds, reflecting the popularity of public

palm species see D. Rivera, D. Johnson, J. Delgadillo, et al, "Historical evidence of the Spanish introduction of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera* L., Arecaceae) into the Americas," *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution: An International Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (April 2013), pp. 1433-1452; for more on the Columbian Exchange see Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1972).

[150] Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*, especially Chapter 4, "Desert and Swamp: The Conquest of Tropical Nature in the Progressive Era," 117-153, and Chapter 5, ""New Edens for the Saxon Home-Seeker": Los Angeles, Miami, and Semi-Tropical Urban Life," 155-188.

exhibitions during this time. Second, Americans' increasing devotion to the trappings of consumer culture elevated sites like public exhibitions, department stores, and theater houses to the status of modern-day cathedrals, insofar as such spaces hosted the pilgrimages and rituals of late nineteenth-century commerce and leisure.

Continuing, the plant exhibits inside the main hall drew attention to Florida's environmental ties with the Caribbean while contributing to the enduring economic connections between the two areas. The official program claimed that the "agricultural and horticultural display" contained species "of a character never before displayed in this country," which consisted of "all products of the vegetable kingdom grown in Florida; also many choice selections from other tropical countries, especially the Bahamas and West Indies." The agricultural exhibits included crops like orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, pineapple, banana, coconut, and guava. Complementing these, the floral displays held varieties like camelia japonica, yellow jasmine, agave, yucca, cactus, lily, and rose. Promoted as "exotic" species unique to the (sub)tropics, many of these plant varieties had for centuries been cultivated into commodities on plantations throughout the Americas.

Historically, much of the US South, including Florida, had been linked with the Caribbean and Central and South America through the sources of labor, networks of exchange, and patterns of consumption that defined the political economy of the "plantation Americas."[151] Although slavery would be abolished in these locations throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the plantation continued to shape the material relations and labor conditions

[151] Charles Wagley, "Plantation America: A Culture Sphere," in *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium*, ed. Vera Rubin, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), pp. 3-13.

of agriculture throughout the hemisphere.[152] As a form and technology of capitalist production, the plantation fostered a dynamic of visibility/invisibility between economic outputs and inputs that continued to structure post-plantation agriculture: commodities such as sugar, tobacco, cotton, and citrus – the "outputs" – were widely exported and prominently advertised and sold in markets and stores, while the harsh and exploitative conditions imposed upon the farmworkers who cultivated and harvested such crops – the "inputs" – were largely hidden from public view and confined to the physical space of the agricultural estate. A photograph of a fruit stand at the exhibition vividly illustrates this legacy (fig. 3.5). The stall features hundreds of citrus varieties, including orange, lemon, and pineapple, delicately stacked into the shape of a towering pyramid – a monument to Florida's citrus industry and a testament to the hidden labor and conspicuous consumption that sustained it. In the last section of this chapter, I delve more deeply into the farmworkers who participated in the exhibition, but for now it suffices to acknowledge that behind the exhibition's appearance of consumerist excess were the largely overlooked contributions of agricultural workers, primarily of color, from across Florida and the Caribbean.

The animal exhibits likewise naturalized what was actually a carefully constructed image of (sub)tropical abundance. The "Zoological Collection" presented "such natives of Florida" as the panther, alligator, heron, crane, flamingo, and pelican, while the aquarium displayed "a great variety of fish native to the waters of Florida and the West Indies," including "rare and far-famed" species like the manatee, tarpon, channel bass, sea trout, something called a "Jew Fish," and "also Marine growth, such as Corals, Sponge, Sea Fans, etc."[153] By incorporating such "rare

[152] Zita Nunes and Gwen Bergner, "The Plantation, the Postplantation, and the Afterlives of Slavery," *American Literature*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (September 2019); Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[153] Program for Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition, Florida Heritage Collection, Main Library at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville, SUS01 FCL01.

and far-famed" animals from throughout the Caribbean Basin and emphasizing the presence of "native" species, the exhibition served to introduce the public to Florida's ecology while casting its non-human inhabitants into symbols of exotic difference. The presence of aquatic animals in particular underlined the peninsula of Florida's unique location at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico, further highlighting its newly crafted position as the subtropical threshold between the tropical and temperate Americas.

Attendees could also view and purchase select paintings in the exhibition's Art Gallery, curated by art director H. Jay Smith. Located in an annex designed similarly to the main hall, the building housing the gallery measured about ninety feet long and sixty feet wide. It possessed "one of the finest collections (over 400 choice paintings) ever exhibited in this country," the program claimed.[154] The exhibiting artists originated from New York, Paris, London, Amsterdam, and elsewhere, and included among others Albert Bierstadt, A.J. Conant, Louis Deschamps, James Fairman, Theodore Rousseau, Jules Dupre, and Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez.[155] The artist with the most paintings on display was American painter C. P. Ream (1838-1917), who specialized in still-life paintings of fruit and was known as "King of the Fruit Painters."[156] Although the exact canvases of his that were exhibited have since been lost, works such as *Still Life with Ewer and Fruit* typify his output at this time and would not have been out of place given the exposition's emphasis on fruit products (fig. 3.6).

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[154] Art Catalogue, Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition.

[155] Program for Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition.

[156] Leo J. Harris, *Before the Museums Came: A Social History of the Fine Arts in the Twin Cities* (London: Versita, 2013), 38-39.

Other features of the exhibition continued to paint a picture of Florida as a realm of exotic curiosities and indulgences. Throughout the grounds, vendors marketed an array of locally-themed souvenirs, offering everything from seashells, alligator teeth, sea creatures, parrot feathers, and woven palmetto craftwork, all displayed for eager patrons to peruse and procure. Additionally, the exposition held a Bahama exhibit, purportedly curated by a "Native Bahamian," as well as a "Cuba Tobacco Department," where, according to the catalog, "Native Cubans are at work preparing tobacco and rolling cigars."[157] Much like the rhetoric surrounding the plant and animal displays, the presence of supposedly native West Indians served to normalize both Florida's subtropical appeal and its connections with the Caribbean. Taken together, the displays, souvenirs, and forms of entertainment at the exposition indicate that officials sought to capitalize on America's burgeoning consumer culture by marketing Florida itself as an exceptional product and framing the state as the very embodiment of the exotic.

Central to this effort was the Caribbean's reputation as a tropical utopia, which provided a ready-made set of associations that could be selectively applied to Florida. "It is the fortune, and the misfortune, of the Caribbean," observes writer and historian Polly Pattullo,

> to conjure up the idea of 'heaven on earth' or 'a little bit of paradise' in the collective European imagination…the region, whatever the brutality of its history, kept its reputation as a Garden of Eden before the Fall. The idea of a tropical island was a further seductive image: small, a 'jewel' in the necklace chain, far from centuries of industry and pollution, a simple place, straight out of Robinson Crusoe.[158]

However, the "seductive image" that characterized the Caribbean as remote and blissful masked the archipelago's involvement in trans-Atlantic modernity. Literary theorist Elizabeth

[157] Program for Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition.

[158] Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 142.

DeLoughrey finds that the myth of isolated tropical islands "belies their centrality to world trade and their consistent visitation by colonials, missionaries, shipwreck, anthropology, and tourism."[159] Historian Mimi Sheller likewise notes that "Western European and North American publics have unceasingly consumed the natural environment, commodities, human bodies, and cultures of the Caribbean over the past five hundred years."[160] By projecting Euro-American fantasies of the tropical West Indies onto Florida, the exposition flattened the diverse cultures and histories of the Antillean archipelago into a single entity called "the Caribbean" and contributed to a genealogy of North Atlantic extraction over area that began with Columbus's accidental discovery of New World "Indians." The exhibition therefore maintained the unequal relations of colonization, conquest, and consumption that have given the Caribbean its peculiar status of being "in but not of the West," as historian C.L.R. James once put it.[161]

With these ideas in mind, the exhibition helped usher in a process of *subtropicalization* that portrayed Florida as a place simultaneously connected to and distinct from the Caribbean – a land "in but not of" the tropics. At the heart of Florida's appeal, the exhibition proposed, lay its unrivaled position as the *sub*tropical intermediary between the tropical West Indies and the more temperate US mainland. The term "subtropical," along with its close relative "semitropical," had only recently surfaced in the nation's lexicon, a product of boosters, developers, and travel writers from Florida and California who sought to promote their states to the American public.

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[159] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 9.

[160] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8.

[161] Cited in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (New York: SAGE Publications, 1996), 246.

They crafted this pseudo-scientific terminology as a means of positively defining their respective states within the national imagination, employing it as a powerful marketing tool to entice Americans to venture there.[162] In Florida's case, the "sub" and "semi" prefixes served the dual purpose of both affiliating the state with and distinguishing it from the tropical Caribbean, situating the state within an imagined Goldilocks zone where the climate and environment apparently offered the best of the tropics with none of the downsides. The exhibition suggested that subtropical Florida was perfectly suited for the country's settlers and tourists, reinforcing the subtropics as a construct shaped by Anglo-American perspectives.

Indeed, Western conceptions of nature, especially those concerning the tropics, have been influenced by colonialist understandings of climate, disease, and race. Throughout the colonial era, European powers regarded their relatively temperate homelands as well suited to agriculture, health, and civilization itself. In contrast, scientific studies and literary accounts often depicted tropical areas as exotic but perilous, associated with oppressive heat, untamed wilderness, and infections diseases. The perceived health dangers attributed to the tropics contributed to the stigmatization of these regions and reinforced stereotypes linking them with danger and backwardness. Many of these stereotypes were driven by scientific racism and notions of racial superiority, correlating geographical regions with racial groups. The racialization of tropical landscapes and inhabitants as unfamiliar, languid, and savage, and thus inferior, ultimately reinforced the civilizing justifications behind colonial conquest.[163] Despite subtropical Florida being presented as a transitional space connecting the temperate and tropical Americas, the

[162] Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*.

[163] David Arnold, ""Illusory Riches": Representations of the Tropical World, 1840-1950," *Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 2000): pp. 6-18.

invention of the subtropics inadvertently maintained the boundary between the North Atlantic and the Caribbean and reaffirmed the binary that elevated the former at the expense of the latter.

Nevertheless, the exhibition must have been deemed a success, as other locales throughout the state and wider region would soon utilize public exhibitions to promote their own connections with the Caribbean. In 1889, the neighboring city of Ocala hosted the Florida International and Semi-Tropical Exposition, mirroring the theme of its predecessor in Jacksonville. With similar landscaping, architecture, design, and attractions, the Ocala exhibition's overall visual and material cultures likewise solidified Florida's subtropical or semitropical identity. The copycat exhibition also indicates that cities across Florida were eager to tap into the state's emerging reputation as a land of paradise and position themselves prominently within its burgeoning destination economy. The Sub-Tropical Exposition's influence even extended beyond Florida. In 1895, the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta was organized with the specific aim of promoting the South's post-Civil War recovery by fostering international trade with countries in the Caribbean and Latin America. Subsequently, in 1901, Charleston held the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition, a multi-county fair and regional trade exhibition similarly orchestrated to foster economic and cultural connections between the Southern states and the islands of the Caribbean, reflecting the broader regional impact of the Sub-Tropical Exposition's ideas. That many of these themed exhibitions were concentrated in the South indicates the region's longstanding economic and cultural connections with the Caribbean as well as the shared desire among many Southerners to facilitate the region's postwar recovery and redefine its reputation in the national imagination.

These Caribbean-themed events occurred alongside exhibitions that promoted the country's historical, geographical, cultural, and economic ties with parts of the American hemisphere beyond the contiguous states. Notable among these was the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, which commemorated the 400th anniversary of Columbus's landfall in the New World; the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, held to foster commercial exchange and cultural dialogue across North, Central, and South America; and the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, organized to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal that connected the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The proliferation of such exhibitions coincided with the nation's increasing economic, military, and political involvement throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America, the Pacific, and the broader American hemisphere. As the United States extended its influence, these themed exhibitions symbolized key events marking its expansion, underscoring the intersections between cultural display and imperialist pursuits.[164] The Sub-Tropical Exposition, in this context, played an important role in the broader endeavor to Anglo-Americanize the hemisphere.

However, these geopolitical ambitions carried far-reaching implications on the domestic front, as well. The Sub-Tropical Exposition helped herald an era of rapid property development and population growth in Florida, transformations that bore a profound impact on the peninsula's Indigenous inhabitants, who themselves participated in the event.

[164] For one work that considers this topic in great detail see Sarah J. Moore, *Empire on Display: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

Indigenizing the Subtropics

The cover image of the exhibition's illustrated brochure depicts a bounty of citrus fruit hovering over three stereotypically-rendered Native Americans – adorned in loin cloths and feathered headdress – as a family of pink flamingos glides above palm trees in the distance (fig. 3.7). The fantastical image not only emphasized the exhibition's exotic theme but also alluded to its Seminole ethnological display, which recreated a typical Seminole village from the Everglades. Inhabited by several Seminole community members throughout the event's duration, the "genuine Seminole Indian camp," as the exhibit was billed, centered on several *chickee*, or open-sided thatch dwellings the Seminole used for domestic architecture. While no visual records of the camp exist today, descriptions from the exhibition program, local newspapers, and period accounts shed light on its primitivizing conditions of spectatorship and display. It is noteworthy, however, that members of the Seminole community were reported to have willingly participated in the exhibition and decided to build the recreated camp themselves, challenging simplistic but well-meaning narratives about Indigenous exploitation and raising the complicated issue of Native self-mimicry.

In these ways, the ethnological display represents two distinct approaches to *indigenization*, which is, generally speaking, the act of making something more native or local. First, the recreated camp exhibited Seminoles as some sort of state icon, recasting them from a potential threat into marketable novelty in order to better attract would-be newcomers. By framing Seminoles as willing participants in Florida's rapid growth, the exhibit normalized the settler colonial violence behind the state's modernization. Second, the Seminole approach to indigenization involved increasing efforts on the part of tribal members to negotiate the state's growing travel economy on their own terms. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the

remaining bands of Florida Seminoles began to invite outsiders to view community gatherings, sell handmade crafts, animal pelts, and other goods to tourists and settlers, and partake in public events like the Sub-Tropical Exposition, all with the presumed aim of bolstering the tribal economy, resisting further dispossession, and asserting their cultural survival.[165] Consequently, I interpret the ethnological display not only as a manifestation of settler colonial exploitation, but, importantly, as an instance of Indigenous resourcefulness and resilience.

The exhibit marketed Seminoles as a strange if non-threating people whose very presence attested to Florida's supposed uniqueness. Accordingly, the official program advertised the display as a "rare treat," stating that it contained "a band of Seminole Bucks, Squaws, and Papooses [men, women, and children] in their native costume – turban, hunting shirt, leggings, and moccasins – living in the same palmetto thatch huts as in their native home, the Everglades of Florida, and cooking their own meals in Indian style." The program praised Seminoles as "peaceful and industrious" and claimed they preferred to "live to themselves, far removed from, and shunning all intimacy with the white man."[166] By portraying the Seminole as a friendly, non-violent people secluded in the distant reaches of southern Florida, the exhibition sought to assuage the fears of potential tourists, settlers, and developers and signal that the state had been secured for further (white) occupation. In so doing, the exhibition drew upon the "noble savage" archetype, popularized in anthropological and artistic representations from the Jacksonian era (1828-1854), such as in the depictions of Osceola (1804-1838), a Seminole warrior-chief, in

[165] On the history of tourism and the Seminole see Patsy West, *The Enduring Seminole: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Patsy West, *The Enduring Seminole: From Alligator Wrestling to Casino Gambling* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008); Jessica Cattelino, *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[166] Program for Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition.

James Hall and Thomas McKenney's three-volume *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1836-1844) (fig. 3.8) and in George Catlin's "Indian Gallery" (fig. 3.9). Idealized thusly, the exhibition effectively personified Seminoles into symbols of the state itself: exotic and rugged, yes, but also majestic, harmless, and crucially, under control.[167]

The rhetorical appeals to authenticity – the "genuine" camp, their "native costume," "native home," and meals prepared in "Indian style" – reinforced a primitivist grammar that obscured the genocidal violence perpetrated against the Seminoles, especially the brutality of the Seminole Wars and Indian Removal. The Seminole Wars were a series of armed conflicts between Florida's remaining Indigenous inhabitants and the US government over land and territory, as well as efforts by federal officials to relocate the Seminole people to reservations in the West. The first Seminole War began in 1817 as a result of US incursions into Spanish La Florida and lasted until 1818. It resulted in the Adams–Onís Treaty, in which Spain ceded Florida to the United States. Seminole resistance to Indian Removal flared into the second Seminole War, which began in 1835 and lasted until 1842. During this period, most Seminoles were forcibly removed to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. The third and final Seminole War began in 1855 and lasted until 1858, and was marked by skirmishes between the US Army and the few hundred Seminoles who remained in Florida.[168] Increasing white settlement and federal aggression displaced these remaining bands of Seminole deep into the Everglades, vast marshlands covering over one million acres of south Florida that settlers had

[167] Henry Knight, ""Savages of Southern Sunshine": Racial Realignment of the Seminoles in the Selling of Jim Crow Florida," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (February 2014), 251-273.

[168] Kirk Munroe, *Through Swamp and Glade: A Tale of the Seminole Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison: 1902); Joe Knetsch, *Florida's Seminole Wars:1817-1858* (Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 2003); Thom Hatch, *Osceola and the Great Seminole War: A Struggle for Justice* (New York: St. Martin's Press: 2012).

deemed uninhabitable. In these harsh conditions, members of the reconstituted Seminole Tribe of Florida have managed to live semi-autonomous lives and resist efforts to assimilate them into white American culture to this day.

The ethnological display thus marked a significant turning point in the very nature of settler colonialism in Florida. Settler colonialism "is a structure, not an event," historian Patrick Wolfe aptly asserts, one that can interlock with other systems of oppression and evolve over time as settlers continually seek to displace and replace the native population to expropriate land and resources as their own.[169] No longer deemed a threat, Seminoles were instead co-opted into marketable attractions and integrated in Florida's appeal as a destination, signifying the complete normalization of genocide through the auspices of consumer culture. Native studies scholar Haunani-Kay Trask (Native Hawaiian/kānaka maoli) notes that settler colonial societies often rely upon a form of "cultural prostitution" that forces colonized peoples to "witness (and, for many, to participate in) our own collective humiliation as tourist artifacts for the First World."[170]

In portraying Seminoles as "tourist artifacts," the exhibition contributed to what art historian Elizabeth Hutchinson refers to as the "Indian craze." The Indian craze emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century as growing numbers of white Americans grew increasingly fascinated with Native Americans. Consumers collected Native American art and clothing; department stores stocked tribal baskets, blankets, and bowls; museums acquired and displayed

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[169] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409, 388.

[170] Trask writes, "Burdened with commodification of our culture and exploitation of our people, Hawaiians exist in an occupied country whose hostage people are forced to witness (and, for many, to participate in) our own collective humiliation as tourist artifacts for the First World." For more see H.K. Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 17.

Native artifacts and remains; and circuses, public exhibitions, and world's fairs exhibited Indigenous subjects in "human zoos."[171] The Indian craze re-enacted the colonizer/colonized hierarchy through the material relations of consumer culture, positioning settlers as actively consuming subjects and Native Americans as the objects of their desire. However, photographer and scholar Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie (Dine, Seminole, Mvskoke) offers a competing take on the Indian craze, arguing that the mania for Native Americana divulges a settler "schizophrenia." This condition manifests in conflicting impulses, characterized by, on the one hand, a yearning for the preservation of Indigenous cultures, as evidenced by the obsession with objects of Native heritage, and yet on the other, a celebration of "progress" that often dispossesses those same peoples.[172] Such cognitive dissonance animated not only the ethnological display but the Indian craze more generally, permitting settlers to ignore or downplay their own involvement in conquest through their habits of consumption.

And what of the Seminoles involved in the exhibition? The absence of extant photographs of the camp or direct testimonials from Seminoles themselves poses immense difficulties in recovering their perspectives. But by reading settler accounts and ethnographic reports against the grain and foregrounding Seminole folktales and lifeways, what emerges is the likelihood that they participated in the exhibition in order to bolster the tribal economy, fortify their community in the face of dispossession, and reassert their place on the peninsula of Florida.

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[171] Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 3.

[172] Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, "When is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words," in Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, eds., *Photography's Other Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 42.

When interpreted critically, the ethnological display reveals various Seminole strategies to adapting to, or indigenizing, Florida' emerging travel economy.

While visitors apparently suffered from settler delusions, it appears the Seminoles debated internally about participating in the exhibition. "A few years ago an effort was made by the authorities of the Sub-Tropical Exposition at Jacksonville, Florida, to secure a few of the Seminole braves for exhibition," recalled writer and self-proclaimed Seminole advocate Minnie Moore-Willson in her 1896 book *The Seminole of Florida*. "After many proffered bribes, the young warriors with the adventurous spirit of youth consented to go to the 'big city.' A council was held and the chiefs said '*halwuk* (it is bad); if you go you never come back.'"[173] This open discussion and the council's frank advice suggests that the Seminoles who ultimately participated in the exhibition made the decision to do so willingly. Although Moore-Willson's account merits a healthy degree of skepticism, it its plausible that some community members would have expressed interest in participating in the exposition.

In fact, by the 1880s, and possibly even earlier, the Seminole Tribe of Florida had already established regular contact with the state's tourists and settlers. For instance, tribal leaders began to invite non-natives like Moore-Willson to view ceremonial gatherings, while other community members offered their services as guides to sportsmen seeking to hunt game in the Everglades.[174] One notable individual involved in these efforts is Billie Bowlegs III (1862-1965), also known as Cofehapkee, the grandson of Osceola and a Seminole of African American descent (fig. 3.10).

[173] Minnie Moore-Willson, *The Seminole of Florida*, 61.

[174] Moore-Willson describes such experiences in "The Hunting Dance," writing that, "With an invitation from the old chieftain, Tallahassee, who is patriarch of the tribe, to attend the Hunting Dance or Harvest Feast, the temptation was too great to resist." Moore-Willson, *The Seminole of Florida*, 161.

Nearly a decade before the exhibition, Bowlegs had started a trading business that frequently took him to cities like Jacksonville. There, he peddled a range of items, including animal pelts, alligator skins, Seminole dolls, and other distinctive products, primarily catering to white consumers.[175] While it is commonly believed that Seminoles revived folk traditions in the early twentieth century in pursuit of tourism dollars stemming from the influx of motorists traveling along the state's new highway system, the involvement of Bowlegs in the late nineteenth-century rare goods trade serves as a reminder that Seminoles strategically capitalized on Florida's destination economy decades earlier.

The Seminoles who participated in the exhibition were part of a broader movement among Native Americans to utilize large-scale exhibitions to strategically market their Indigeneity for public consumption. By the late nineteenth century, Native Americans increasingly agreed to take part in public exhibitions such as the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. As previously mentioned, the exhibition was held to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World, and the event contained numerous ethnological displays of Indigenous subjects, such as the "Alaskan Indian Village." However, historian David Beck has found that the Aleut, Tlingit, and Yupik peoples who took part in the Columbian Exposition proactively negotiated for better wages, organized competing attractions away from the fairgrounds in order to increase their earnings, and even successfully pursued a lawsuit for unfair labor practices.[176]

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[175] For more on Bowlegs see Ronald Foreman, *First Citizens and Other Florida Folks: Essays on Florida Folklife* (Tallahassee: Florida Department of State, 1984); Mikaëla Adams, *Who Belongs?: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), particularly Chapter 5, "Nation Building and Self-Determination: The Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida," 169-206.

[176] David R.M. Beck, *Unfair Labor?: American Indians and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

This body of evidence strongly suggests that Seminoles strategically utilized their involvement in the Sub-Tropical Exposition as a way of negotiating Florida's growing travel economy in pursuit of economic self-sufficiency. In *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, editors Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer examine the "role played by Indians themselves" in the exploitation of Native American identity. They find that the "rubric of cultural imperialism is made more complex when we consider such critical issues as economic need in combination with the need for cultural integrity and self-determination."[177] While it may be impossible to uncover the exact motivations of those who took part in the exhibition, the outcome of their involvement is evident: by leveraging their physical presence and cultural heritage, these individuals effectively commodified Indigeneity into a consumable experience, one that they themselves would market and sell in an act of self-determination. The precise amount of compensation received by these community members remains uncertain, but Moore-Willson's recollection that "the young warriors…consented to go" after being offered "bribes" strongly suggests that that they were remunerated for their involvement in the exhibition.

While the primitivist display portrayed the Seminole as a people untouched by the passage of time, a closer examination of the exhibit offers insights into how they adapted to modern life under settler colonialism. Notably, the Seminoles who participated in the exhibition were reported to have built the camp themselves, recreating a typical village from the Everglades. Such encampments often consisted of several *chickee*, or open-sided thatch

[177] Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), xii.

dwellings constructed with a log frame and raised floor. Seminoles invented the *chickee* style of domestic architecture in the mid-nineteenth century after federal aggression and white settlement had displaced them deep into southern Florida. The open sides allowed for ventilation and air flow, while the raised floors protected against floods and wildlife.[178] Similarly, the "native costume" mentioned in the brochure only became commonplace among Seminoles during the same period. Driven by the need to protect themselves from the relentless sun and mosquito-infested environment of the Everglades, women began donning floor-length skirts and long-sleeve blouses with striped or patchwork patterns that carried cultural significance. Meanwhile, men took to wearing leggings and smock-like shirts that tapered at the wrists, and regularly accessorized with vests, sashes, kerchiefs, or turbans that expressed social standing. These garments were primarily crafted from calico or gingham cloth, light-weight fabrics ideally suited to the hot, muggy climate of southern Florida. By the late nineteenth century, such textiles were mass-produced and readily available for purchase through a growing market economy.[179] Despite the exhibition's primitivizing conditions of marketing and display, these architectural and sartorial innovations constitute forms of Seminole cultural modernism.

Their participation in the event can also be interpreted as a conscious act of self-presentation. Recall that the cover illustration of the exhibition brochure featured exaggerated caricatures of Native Americans wearing loin cloths and feathered headdresses, a portrayal that did not represent Seminole dress. In contrast, the individuals involved in the exhibition built the

[178] Carrie Dilley, *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides: The Architecture of Chickees and their Changing Role in Seminole Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015); Gregory A. Weselkov, *Native American Log Cabins in the Southeast* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2019).

[179] Hilda J. Davis, "The history of Seminole clothing and its multi-colored design," *American Anthropologist*, vol. 57, no. 5 (October 1955): 974-980; Dorothy Downs, *Art of the Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995).

camp independently in an Indigenous style and wore their everyday garments, allowing them to counter stereotypical portrayals and exercise some measure of control over their public image. In so doing, they used the event to assert their cultural identity on their own terms.

Whereas visitors likely viewed the ethnological display as a faithful re-enactment of authentic Seminole lifeways, it is conceivable that the Seminoles engaged in such self-conscious mimicry with a high degree of irony, what Chippewa scholar and writer Gerald Vizenor refers to as "vital irony" for the way it subtly subverts primitivist and ethnographic expectations.[180] Such an approach brings to mind the archetype of the trickster rabbit, a recurring figure in tribal folklore renowned for his ability to deceive unsuspecting individuals for personal gain. The short tale "Rabbit Lies and Runs Away with Fire" deserves to be recounted in full for its illustrative potential:

> Rabbit found fire by swimming way across the water. He had a spot on his neck just like a burn. When he crossed the water he found people who had fire. They danced around the fire. So Rabbit got in the dance and got a cloth which he put on his head. In the cloth he put some fine tar. He then danced closer and closer to the fire. Finally he danced so close that the pitch caught on fire. He had the pine tar on his head in order to catch fire. Rabbit ran to the water and all ran after him. He ran right to the water but the rest stopped. Rabbit swam across and kept his head up. He carried the fire on the back of his neck.[181]

Although a non-Native anthropologist documented this folktale, the prevalence of the trickster rabbit character throughout the folklore of southeastern tribes points to its credibility. With the trickster archetype as a frame of reference, the Seminoles' potentially ironic performance of Indigeneity would have turned settler-tourists into unwitting participants in an insider's jest

[180] Gerald Vizenor, "Native American Irony: Survivance and the Subversion of Ethnography," in *Race and Cultural Practice in Popular Culture*, eds., Domino Renee Perez and Rachel González-Martin (Ithaca: Rutgers University Press: 2019), 76-89.

[181] Robert F. Greenlee, "Folktales of the Florida Seminole," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 58, No. 228 (April to June 1945): 143.

understood only by the Seminoles themselves. Such a subversive action would have reversed the roles between observer and observed, momentarily suspending the spectatorial conditions of coloniality.

Furthermore, the physical presence of Seminoles on the site actively defied narratives of their cultural erasure. In *Visualizing Genocide: Indigenous Interventions in Art, Archives, and Museums*, editors Yves Chavez and Nancy Marie Mithlo describe such interventions as "reclaiming space through presence-making."[182] By building and inhabiting the recreated camp within an exhibition located in one of Florida's major urban centers, Seminoles asserted their continued existence and cultural survival, what Vizenor calls "survivance." He states that "survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion."[183] Rather than enact their own exploitation and displacement, the Seminoles who participated in the exhibition re-claimed and re-occupied colonized space, even if only temporarily, and boldly declared their ability to resist conquest.

"None of Your Pushing Me Off to One Side"

As Seminoles harnessed the Sub-Tropical Exposition to reassert their presence in Florida, Black participants used the event as an unlikely platform for challenging the constraints of Jim Crow. Vendors and farmers traveled from throughout the state to sell their goods at the segregated exhibition, while activists seized the occasion to campaign for integration and civil

[182] Yves Chavez and Nancy Marie Mithlo, eds., *Visualizing Genocide: Indigenous Interventions in Art, Archives, and Museums* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2022), see "Part 1: Reclaiming Space Through Presence Making," 18-89.

[183] Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: Unversity of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1.

rights. Their actions encapsulate the wide array of strategies that defined the fight for equality in the late nineteenth century, highlighting not only the internal divisions within the Black community at that time but also the significant role that large-scale exhibitions played in shaping race relations in the post-Reconstruction South. By examining exhibition materials, public speeches, and period accounts, I contend that Black participants exploited the event in pursuit of realizing economic freedom and overturning racial segregation.

While the exhibition organizers granted white vendors prominent spaces within the main hall, they consigned African American vendors to smaller, isolated areas. No photographs or illustrations of the segregated sections survive, but the official catalog provides some insight into these Floridians and the products they offered. In the so-called "Special Exhibits - Colored Department," dozens of Black women sold crafts, home goods, and food items. Mrs. Laura Grand offered six yards of "Fancy Crochet," while Miss Eliza Lee put up three yards of "Fancy Lace." Miss Hannah Coffee sold Peach Preserves, Mrs. Hattie S. Thomas advertised two gallons of "Elder Wine," and Aunt Annie Ashley planned to part with what must have been a cherished possession, a 76-year-old quilt.[184] It is significant that the majority of these vendors were women. During this era, job opportunities for Southern Black women were more limited than those for practically any other cohort; most were confined to the domestic sphere, whether as homemakers in their own households or as domestic workers in the homes of white employers. As historian Tera W. Hunter notes

> Black women were excluded from small manufacturing plants that hired white women, such as those that made candy, clothing, textiles, paper boxes, bookbinding, and straw goods. They were confined primarily to domestic labor in private homes as cooks, maids, and child-nurses. A few black women found related jobs in local hotels – a step above the same work performed in private households. Large numbers worked in their own homes in a relatively autonomous craft as laundresses, which had the advantage of

[184] Catalog, page 17-18

> accommodating family and community obligations. More desirable, yet less accessible, were skilled jobs outside domestic service as seamstresses or dressmakers…Only a few black women were able to escape common labor and enter the professions as teachers.[185]

Mostly confined to the domestic sphere, the women at the exhibition leveraged the appeal of home-spun and handmade products in an attempt to surmount the racial and gendered barriers that limited their access to public spaces and hindered their free and fair participation in the marketplace.

By creating, transporting, and promoting their goods themselves, they embodied the model of self-sufficiency promoted by figures such as Booker T. Washington. Washington, then the president of the Tuskegee Institute, was one of the leading proponents of an entrepreneurial approach to Black uplift during this period. Several years after the Sub-Tropical Exposition, he delivered a speech outlining his philosophy at another public exhibition, the previously mentioned 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. In the address, which would come to be known as the "Atlanta Compromise," Washington tacitly accepted segregation. "In all things that are purely social," he declared on stage in Georgia, "we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." [186] Rather than agitate to overturn Jim Crow, Washington believed that African Americans could best achieve equality by founding their own institutions and focusing on self-improvement, community building, and economic independence. His vision garnered support among Black

[185] Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 26.

[186] For more on Washington see Booker T. Washington, *The Story of My Life and Work* (Atlanta: J.L. Nichols & Company, 1901); Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Michael Scott Bieze, Marybeth Gasman, eds., *Booker T. Washington Rediscovered* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Kenneth Hamilton, *Booker T. Washington in American Memory* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017);

ministers, educators, and businessmen, as well as many white philanthropists in the North and South. However, his approach eventually faced significant criticism from other prominent figures, notably W.E.B. Du Bois, who would come to disparage Washington's stance as overly accommodating to white interests and ultimately counterproductive to the goal of equality.[187]

The prevalence of female vendors also serves as a poignant reminder of the broader movement of Black women's activism and community building in the South during this period. In many ways, African American women led the charge in advocating for social change, economic empowerment, and especially educational advancement. Two notable figures who embodied this spirt were educator and missionary Lucy Craft Laney (1854-1933) and educator, humanitarian, and womanist Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), who formed a "Southern Network" to lead efforts toward racial uplift through education. In 1883, Laney founded one of the first schools for African American girls in the post-Reconstruction South, the Haines Institute for Industrial and Normal Education in Augusta, Georgia. Bethune taught there for several years before establishing her own private girls' school in Daytona, which would eventually develop into Bethune-Cookman University. The curricula at these schools emphasized home economics skills such as sewing, dressmaking, millinery, cooking, and craftwork, vocational training that combined the Washingtonian model of self-sufficiency with an awareness of the gendered labor dynamics prevalent during the period. By equipping African American students, particularly

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[187] Indeed, it was Du Bois who coined the term "Atlanta Compromise" to describe Washington's address. Among other criticisms, Du Bois believed that the Atlanta Compromise was partially to blame for the Atlanta Massacre of 1906, in which violent attacks by armed white mobs resulted in the deaths of as many as 100 African Americans. For the full critique see W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 8th edition (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1909), Chapter III, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," 41-59.

women, with practical skills, they were instrumental in the formation of a Black middle class after Reconstruction.[188]

In addition to vendors, numerous Black farmers sold their crops at the exhibition. One notable farmer among them was Dennis Dorsey, whose booth at the "Nassau County Colored Exhibit" featured a variety of agricultural products, including "Irish and Sweet Potatoes" and a "Fine Display of Lettuce and Strawberries."[189] Given the economic realities of Florida at the time, it is virtually certain that Dorsey was a sharecropper, as were most of the other farmers in this section of the exhibition. Often, a sharecropper's expenses outran the meager income he received from the harvest. To get by, sharecroppers were often forced to rely on "crop liens," basically mortgages taken out on future crops harvests. These had to be paid back with interest, which frequently trapped tenant farmers in a perpetual cycle of debt. On top of this, environmental issues, like droughts, floods, and pests, could make sharecropping more precarious still.[190] In *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois identified sharecroppers as a part of the "Black proletariat." He wrote that following the demise of Reconstruction, the political economy of the Southern states had moved "back toward slavery" as a result of a concerted effort on the part of landowners

> to reduce black labor as nearly as possible to a condition of unlimited exploitation and build a new class of capitalists on this foundation. The wage of the Negro worker, despite the war amendments, was to be reduced to the level of bare subsistence by taxation, peonage, caste, and every method of discrimination.[191]

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[188] Audrey Thomas McCluskey, *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educations and Activists in the Jim Crow South* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

[189] Catalog, 18.

[190] Bruce E. Baker and Brian Kelly, *After Slavery: Race, Labor, and Citizenship in the Reconstruction South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).

[191] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 670.

Despite – or perhaps because of – these exploitative working conditions and the violence of the Ku Klux Klan, Black farmworkers in the Jim Crow South were on the frontlines of the organized labor movement.

By the late 1880s, a significant number of Florida's Black tenant farmers had joined the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union, often shortened to the Colored Farmers' Alliance (CFA). The CFA had originated several years prior in Texas as an alternative to the whites-only Southern Farmers Alliance. Drawing as much on Washingtonian uplift as on a more Du Boisean populism, the CFA educated agricultural workers about the latest farming techniques and established exchanges "through which members bought goods at reduced prices and obtained loans to pay off mortgages."[192] Importantly, it also sought to inspire workers of both races to develop a class consciousness for united action. As one Florida CFA chapter leader put it, "the laboring colored man's interest and the laboring white man's interest are one and the same."[193] At its height in 1891, the union reported over a million dues-paying members throughout the South, making it the largest Black-led agrarian organization in US history.[194] Many of the CFA's records have been lost or are otherwise inaccessible, making it practically impossible to confirm whether or not Dorsey and other farmers at the exhibition belonged to the

[192] William F. Holmes, "The Demise of the Colored Farmers' Alliance," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. XLI, No. 2 (May 1975), 187-200.

[193] J. L. Moore. "The Florida Colored Farmers' Alliance, 1891," in *National Economist,* March 7, 1891, reprinted in Milton Meltzer, ed., *In Their Own Words: The History of the American Negro 1865-1916,* vol. 2 (New York Thomas V. Crowd Company, 1965), pp. 109-11.

[194] For more on the little-known organization see Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro in Agrarian Revolt," *Agricultural History*, XXIV (April 1950), 89-95; Abramowitz, "The Negro in the Populist Movement*," Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (July 1953), 257-89; William W. Rogers, "The Negro Alliance in Alabama," *Journal of Negro History*, XLV (January 1960), 38-44; Floyd J. Miller, "Black Protest and White Leadership: A Note on the Colored Farmers' Alliance," *Phylon* XXXIII (Summer 1972), 169-74.

organization. Nevertheless, the farmers' participation in the event recalls the larger legacy of agricultural labor organizing that the CFA spearheaded during the Jim Crow era.

The renowned abolitionist and activist Frederick Douglass also attended the exhibition. In a manner akin to the CFA's advocacy for interracial solidarity, he used the occasion as a platform to champion the cause of integration. Douglass was the closing speaker for the exhibition's second year, a visit the *Times-Union* promoted as "Frederick Douglass Day."[195] Leading up to his speech, the "streets of Jacksonville were thronged with colored people" who were dressed "in the finery of forgotten periods and the unique representations of the present," the paper condescended. A grand procession led by the Knights of Pythias, an African American fraternal organization, welcomed Douglass to the exhibition. A local minister led a public prayer before introducing the famous reformer. Douglass ascended the stage, gazed upon the crowd, and began his remarks on a positive, inspiring note:

> Who dreamed thirty years ago that the people of Florida, the people of this vicinity would ever see a Sub-Tropical Exposition like this, with a Colored Department connected with it? Who ever dreamed of such a thing? Who ever dreamed of the streets of Jacksonville being paraded with drum and fife, and banner and badge, and with brazen trumpets discoursing music, on the part of the black man? It is amazing.

"Our progress has been great," he continued, "but we must not overrate it." He then made a veiled remark about Black separatism, likely alluding to Washington, and argued that only integration could solve the "negro problem."

> One of your distinguished fellow-citizens has suggested that we be set apart in one spot of this country, all in a gang by ourselves. Big mistake! For my part, I am for staying with my white brethren…That is to say, I am going to build my house so near my white brother's house that if my house catches fire the white man's house will be in danger.

[195] The accounts of Douglass's visit are taken from "Frederick Douglass Day," *The Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville, Florida, Friday, April 3, 1889.

> Common danger will induce common safeguards. None of your pushing me off to one side.

It is noteworthy that Douglass campaigned for integration at a segregated exhibition, all the more so given events that had recently rocked Jacksonville.

In 1887, leading up to the inaugural Sub-Tropical Exposition, Jacksonville incorporated several Black neighborhoods from surrounding areas, essentially making the city's population majority Black. Later that same year, a biracial coalition of Republicans collaborated with the labor movement to elect a progressive city government, securing thirteen of the eighteen city council seats, including five seats held by African Americans. Even more encouraging, Black candidates were elected to crucial positions such as police commissioner, city marshal, and municipal judge, among other high-ranking offices.[196] However, these promising developments were soon marred by acts of God and man. Following the inaugural exhibition of 1888, a yellow fever epidemic struck Jacksonville, resulting in the deaths of thousands of residents, a disproportionate number of whom were Black.[197] Worse, Florida's post-Reconstruction Democratic state government exploited the public health crisis to strip Jacksonville of home rule and depose the city's biracial Republican city council. The Governor then replaced the council he had vacated with an all-white board of "Redeemer" Democrats, which quickly enacted poll taxes and other forms of disenfranchisement.[198]

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[196] For more on Black elected officials in Florida in the decades following the Civil War see Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Black Public Officials, 1867-1924* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1998).

[197] Margaret C. Fairlie, "The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1888 in Jacksonville," *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2 (October 1940), pp. 95-108.

[198] Akin, "When a Minority Becomes the Majority" *The Florida Historical Quarterly*.

It is reasonable to suspect that Douglass had prior knowledge of such events when he accepted the invitation to speak at the exhibition. Indeed, cities and towns throughout the post-Reconstruction South had experienced similar episodes, where efforts to promote racial equality were met quickly, and often violently, with racist backlashes. In *The Mind of the South*, writer W.J. Cash observed that

> The conservative Democratic forces were resorting to wholesale intimidation of the black voter and practicing wholesale fraud; were stealing votes by thousands in the confidence, fixed by Reconstruction, that it was entirely justified by the end; in the cool conviction even, I think it may safely be said, that it was no mere necessary immorality but the very shape and substance of morality itself. And everywhere violence was flaring; in the Populist year of 1892, 162 Negroes were lynched in the South, the greatest number on record for any year.[199]

Despite Douglass's best efforts to promote interracial unity, his vision for an integrated America would not be realized anytime soon. Several years later, in 1896, the Supreme Court handed down *Plessy v. Ferguson*, cementing the doctrine of "separate but equal" and effectively upholding Jim Crow.

Nevertheless, the various approaches to equality on display at the exhibition – from Washington's self-sufficiency and Bethune's female empowerment to DuBois's labor organizing and Douglass's integrationist stance – demonstrate the profound role that large-scale, public exhibitions played in the fight for equality in the post-Reconstruction era. As historian Mabel O. Wilson has uncovered, because such "expositions were in fact public spheres, they were open, if unintentionally, to alternative representations of American industry, culture, and national identity. When confronted with these powerful and persuasive narratives of civilization, black

[199] W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 173-74.

Americans used the fairs to vigorously respond to how they were being portrayed and positioned."[200]

Ultimately, the Sub-Tropical Exposition served as a public forum where Floridians of different backgrounds could contest and challenge the very idea of Florida and what it meant to be a Floridian at this time. Whereas the exhibition organizers portrayed the state as an exotic, subtropical paradise for white newcomers, members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida used the event to indigenize the state's evolving destination economy on their own terms, while Black participants harnessed the segregated exhibition to promote various approaches to equality and overcome Jim Crow.

[200] Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Los Angeles: University of California Press: 2023), 8.

Figures

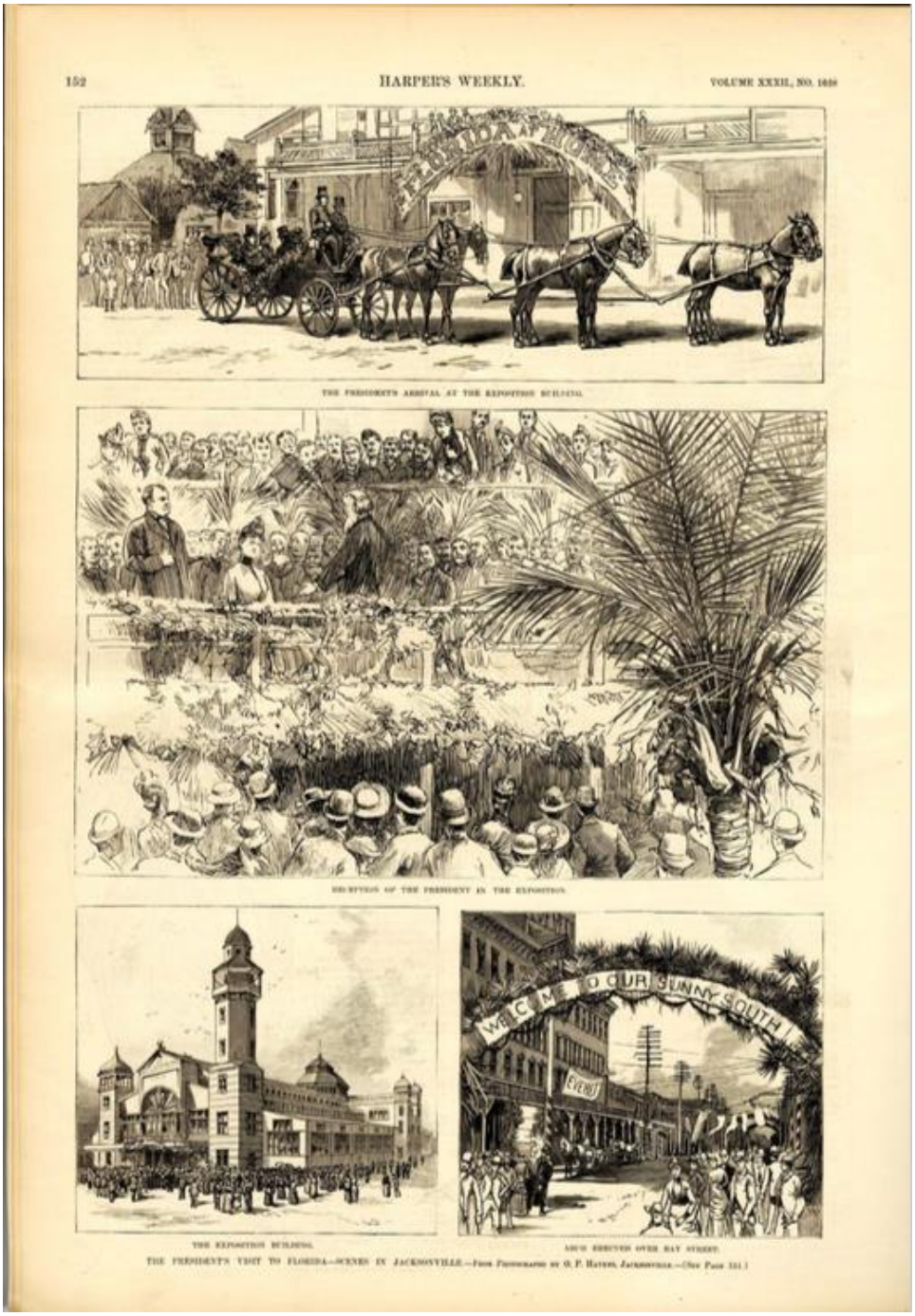
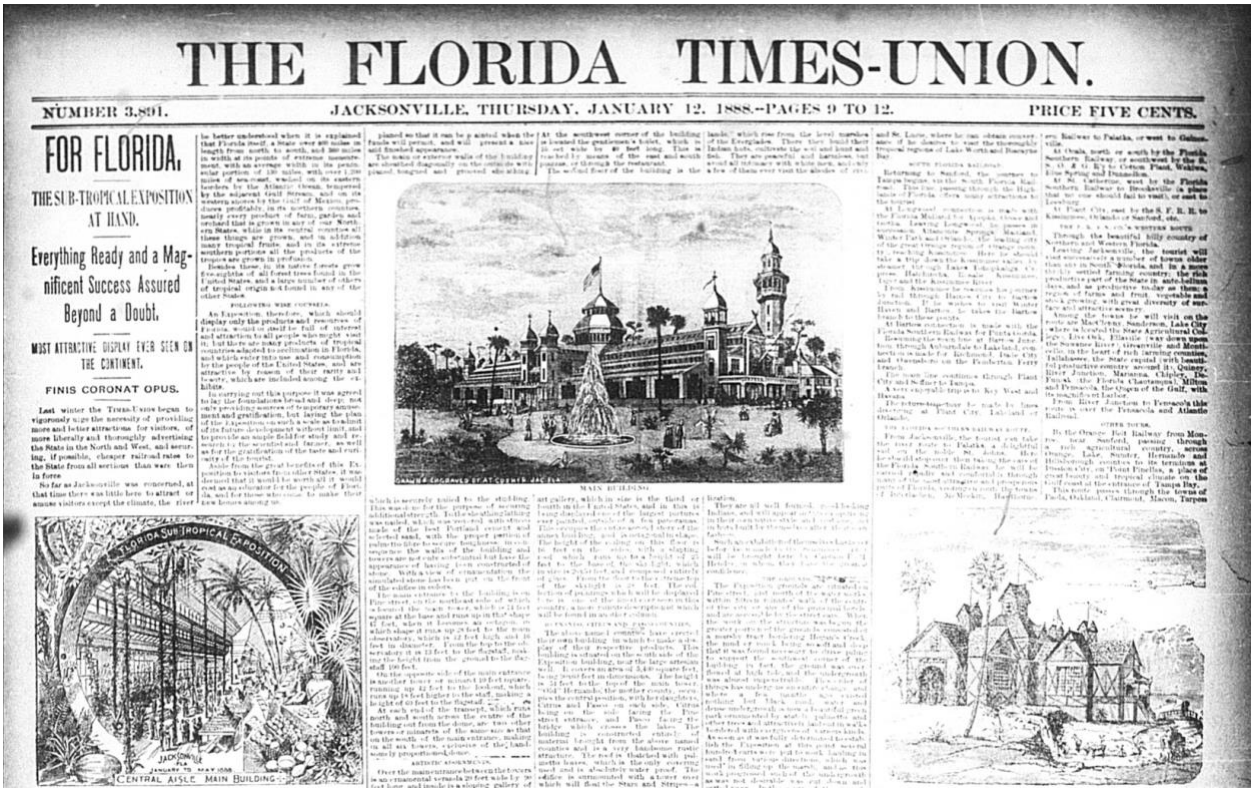


Fig. 3.1
"The President in Florida,"
Harper's Weekly, vol. 38, no. 1628, pg. 151-152,
Richard Mette Collection, Mette #30,
Thomas G. Carpenter Library Special Collections,
University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL



THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION.

NUMBER 3,891. JACKSONVILLE, THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 1888.—PAGES 9 TO 12. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

FOR FLORIDA.

THE SUB-TROPICAL EXPOSITION AT HAND.

Everything Ready and a Magnificent Success Assured Beyond a Doubt.

MOST ATTRACTIVE DISPLAY EVER SEEN ON THE CONTINENT.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

Last winter the Times-Union began to vigorously urge the necessity of providing more and better attractions for visitors, of more liberally and thoroughly advertising the State in the North and West, and securing, if possible, cheaper railroad rates to the State from all sections than were then in force.

So far as Jacksonville was concerned, at that time there was little here to attract or amuse visitors except the climate, the river

MAIN BUILDING.

CENTRAL AISLE, MAIN BUILDING.

Fig. 3.2
Illustrations of the exhibition grounds
"For Florida, The Sub-Tropical Exposition At Hand,"
The Florida Times-Union, January 12, 1888
Floridiana Collection, Jacksonville Public Library,
Newspaper microfiche 3.891

Fig. 3.3
Photograph of the main hall
Photographer unknown
General Collection: N032892,
State Library and Archives of Florida,
Tallahassee, FL

Fig. 3.4
Interior of the main hall
Photographer unknown
General Collection: N033200,
State Library and Archives of Florida,
Tallahassee, FL

Fig. 3.5
Photograph of citrus display at exhibition
Photographer unknown
General collection: N033199
State Library and Archives of Florida,
Tallahassee, FL

Fig. 3.6
C.P. Ream
Still Life with Ewer and Fruit
c. 1880s
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Accession Number: 1999.299.1

Fig. 3.7
Illustrated brochure for Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition,
The Calvert Lithographic Company (1888),
Folded sheet: 21 x 10cm,
Florida Heritage Collection, Thomas G. Carpenter Library,
University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL,
Control Number: 35993718

Fig. 3.8
James Hall and Thomas McKenney, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1842)
Aseola, a Seminole Leader
Lithograph, hand-colored; 20 x 14 1/8 in
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections
Repository No: 970.2 M19.hl

Fig. 3.9
George Catlin
Os-ce-o-la, The Black Drink, a Warrior of Great Distinction (1838)
Oil on canvas; 30 7/8 x 25 7/8 in
Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery
Item number: 1985.66.301

Fig. 3.10
Arthur P. Lewis
Seminole Brave "Billy Bowlegs" (c. 1895)
Gelatin silver print: dimensions unknown
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC
Call number: 12925

Chapter Four
Resort City: St. Augustine, Florida

As the inaugural Sub-Tropical Exposition kicked off to great fanfare in Jacksonville, the oil and railroad magnate Henry Flagler (1830-1913) prepared to unveil a grand resort forty miles away in St. Augustine. Hoping to transform the old capital of Spanish Florida into America's latest luxury winter destination, Flagler embarked on an ambitious project to open three opulent hotels – the Ponce de Leon, the Alcazar, and the Cordova – in St. Augustine's historic center. Unveiled between 1888-1890, the princely buildings were designed in a Spanish Renaissance Revival style that heavily incorporated elements of Moorish architecture and design (fig. 4.1). In addition to their Orientalist appearance, the hotels boasted lavish accommodations and myriad amenities, including a casino, croquet field, Turkish and Russian baths, and an indoor swimming pool. The site also housed studios for the artists of the St. Augustine Art Colony, whose members exhibited their works for the resort's discerning clientele.[201] Flagler widely promoted St. Augustine as the "Winter Newport" and the city soon garnered a reputation as a leading seasonal getaway for the nation's wealthiest vacationers.[202]

Flagler's project emerged from and contributed to the broader American phenomenon of the luxury resort. From the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, domestic travel flourished among affluent tourists as railroads, stagecoaches, and steamboats expanded while islands, beaches, mountains, hot springs, and other "scenic" areas across the country were transformed into extravagant destinations. While some resorts promised visitors tranquil retreats, others granted guests an array of bacchanalian amusements, but most were heavily commercialized

[201] Thomas Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2022).

[202] John Merven Carrère and Thomas Hastings, *Florida: The American Riviera; St. Augustine: The Winter Newport* (New York: Gillis Brothers and Turnure, 1887).

establishments featuring hotels, restaurants, shops, entertainment options, and recreational activities on the premises.[203] The proliferation of resorts led to the rise of resort cities, municipalities where high-end tourism drove the local cultures and economies. Prominent examples of resort cities from the Gilded Age include Newport, Rhode Island; Cape Cod, Massachusetts; Bar Harbor, Maine; Jekyll Island, Georgia; Palm Beach, Florida; White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia; Mackinac Island, Michigan; and of course, St. Augustine, among numerous others.[204] Many of these destinations depend on tourism as a major source of revenue to this day, with historic estates and heritage sites providing contemporary travelers a taste of the grandeur of days gone by.

Defined by their exclusivity, resort cities of this era often relied upon predominantly Black workforces to meet the demands of mostly white, upper-class patrons. This racialized division between leisure and labor came to bear most heavily on the hospitality industry of the Jim Crow South, including that of St. Augustine. The city's transformation into a resort getaway depended upon the erasure of the area's Black histories and discrimination against its Black residents. Throughout, however, the city's Black inhabitants mobilized to assert their rights, championed African American culture and heritage, and created their own spaces of recreation and leisure. Indeed, workers employed in Flagler's hotels organized for better labor conditions and actively campaigned against segregation. In Lincolnville, St. Augustine's majority-Black neighborhood, residents proudly celebrated African American heritage through parades that

[203] For a comprehensive overview of resorts see Robert Christie Mill, *Resorts: Management and Operation*, 3rd edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011); for more on resorts from the Victorian period see Richard Guy Wilson, *Victorian Resorts and Hotels: Essays from a Victorian Society Symposium* (New York: Victorian Society in America, 1982).

[204] For more on resorts, travel, and leisure during the Gilded Age see Joel Schrock, *The Gilded Age* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), particularly Chapter 7, "Leisure Activities," pages 117-150, and Chapter 11, "Travel," pages 225-252.

commemorated Emancipation Day, festivities that were documented by the city's first professional Black photographer. By the 1930s, an oceanfront resort designed exclusively for Black guests opened on St. Augustine's Anastasia Island, one of the first resorts of its kind built in Florida. These events underscore the significant role played by the area's Black community in not only transforming St. Augustine into a popular resort destination but also in responding to Jim Crow by establishing a parallel travel, heritage, and leisure economy catering specifically to African Americans.

In this chapter, I argue that resort towns like St. Augustine operated as two cities within one. The first was the picture-postcard version, the public façade designed to allure wealthy tourists with a meticulously cultivated appearance of opulence and luxury. Yet alongside such extravagance existed another city, one centered in Lincolnville and often characterized as much by exploitation, marginalization, and discrimination as by resilience, advocacy, and community-building. This duality sheds light on the socio-economic disparities of tourism and travel in the Jim Crow South, where the complex interplay between class, race, leisure, and labor defined urban environments and the experiences of tourists and locals alike.

Of the few studies conducted on St. Augustine's development into a tourist destination, most valorize its past glamour and lionize Flagler's role in modernizing the city. Historian Thomas Graham's *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine* and historian Leslee F. Keys's *Hotel Ponce de Leon: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Flagler's Gilded Age Palace* are only two of the handful of works written in this vein. These local historians have produced well-researched micro-histories of Flagler's resort, but the fact that such publications are sold in the city's tourist shops today raises questions about whether they are primarily appreciated as scholarly resources or marketing ones. Building on this existing research, this chapter critically interrogates St. Augustine's

transformation into a resort city by recovering its overlooked Black histories stretching from the colonial era up to the early twentieth century.

A "Spanish Town from the Middle Ages"

During the early 1880s, Henry Flagler and John D. Rockefeller, co-founders of Standard Oil, vacationed together in the sleepy town of St. Augustine. Although the men were charmed by the city's historic character, they left disappointed with its aging Spanish colonial structures and lack of upscale amenities. It dawned on Flagler that he could develop St. Augustine into a seasonal resort town, the "Winter Newport," as he would call it, and "provide accommodations for that class of people who are not sick, but who come here to enjoy the climate, have plenty of money, but can find no satisfactory way of spending it." However, revitalizing one of the oldest, continuously inhabited settlements in North America proved a challenging undertaking. "How to build a hotel to meet the requirements of nineteenth-century America and have it in keeping with the character of the place – that was my hardest problem," Flagler recalled.[205]

To address the challenge, he commissioned the services of Carrère and Hastings, a new architecture firm from New York that would quickly become one of the leading practices of American Beaux-Arts architecture.[206] The firm's brief was to create a design for the proposed Ponce de Leon Hotel that epitomized both modern luxury and historic charm. Accordingly, architects John Merven Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) devised an

[205] Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine*, 44; 66.

[206] Following Flagler's resort, Carrère and Hastings attained national prominence and were commissioned to design the New York Public Library and assist with the Manhattan Bridge and the House and Senate office buildings on Capital Hill. For more on the firm see Mark Hewitt, Kate Lemos, William Morrison, and Charles D. Warren, eds., *Carrère and Hastings: Architects* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006); Heather Ewing and Laurie Ossman, eds., *Carrère and Hastings: The Masterworks* (New York: Rizzoli, 2011).

architectural style based on Florida's Spanish colonial heritage. Carrère remarked that "it was not so much our predilection for Spanish architecture as our conscientious scruples against destroying the characteristic atmosphere of St. Augustine that guided us in adopting the Spanish style for the Ponce de Leon."[207] Between 1885-87, the architects designed and built the Ponce, practically inventing the style known as Spanish Renaissance Revival. When the hotel opened in January 1888, architectural critic William Rau marveled that the design of the building "is such that it really requires the sight of the American flag to persuade the visitor that he is not in a city of sunny Spain."[208]

The Ponce boasted modern engineering, design, and amenities that were nothing short of remarkable for the period. The regal hotel was one of the world's earliest buildings wired with electricity. Thomas Edison, a close friend of Flagler's, provided the hotel with direct current generators to illuminate its hundreds of rooms. Renowned designer Louis Comfort Tiffany of Tiffany & Company spearheaded the interior design, creating ornate suites, dazzling parlors, and a magnificent dining room. The dining room, measuring an impressive 14,000 square feet, contained a forty-eight-foot barrel-vaulted ceiling and more than forty stained glass windows, all crafted by Tiffany himself. The hotel's furnishings were custom made by Pottier & Stymus, a prominent firm from New York, while designer Bernhardt Maybeck supervised the detailed woodwork throughout. The expansive rotunda, essentially the lobby, contained an octagonal inset dome decorated by artist George W. Maynard's allegorical murals (fig. 4.1-4.3). Such

[207] Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine*, 66.

[208] William Rau, *A Descriptive Reading on St. Augustine* (Philadelphia: W.H. Rau, 1890), 828; 831.

finery came at a steep price: it ran guests over $4000 to stay for the winter season, and visitors had to pay for the entire duration whether they remained there that long or not.[209]

The Ponce's inaugural season proved a runaway success, prompting Flagler to open a sprawling second site – an entertainment and leisure annex – across the street the following year (fig. 4.4). He christened it the Alcazar, after the Spanish word for "castle," which is itself based on the Arabic "al-qasr." Much like its predecessor, the Alcazar was designed by Carrère and Hastings in the Spanish style. But the Alcazar distinguished itself inside, where a world of indulgences awaited visitors. It contained a state-of-the-art casino, Turkish and Russian baths, an archery range, a bowling alley, and a kitchen manned by a world-famous Chef de cuisine.[210] These amenities were arranged in a multi-story complex that surrounded the Alcazar's pièce de résistance, the first Olympic-sized indoor swimming pool built in America (fig. 4.5). The pool consisted of "water drawn from an artesian well, aerated to free it from the odor of sulphur, and turned at once into the bath, where it falls in a sheet of beautifully clear greenish water, exactly at the right temperature for swimming," Rau observed.[211] This assortment of activities and amusements underscores the excesses of the Gilded Age, when individuals of means indulged in "conspicuous leisure" not only for their own enjoyment but also to distinguish themselves as affluent members of modern society.[212]

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[209] For more on the design and operations of the Ponce see Leslee F. Keys, *Hotel Ponce de Leon: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Flagler's Gilded Age Palace* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2015).

[210] Ibid.

[211] Rau, *St. Augustine*, 832-833.

[212] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London: Macmillan, 1899).

The next year, Flagler expanded his portfolio yet again by acquiring the nearby Casa Monica Hotel and renaming it the Cordova. He promoted his three princely hotels as an integrated resort that he branded the "Alameda," the Spanish word for "promenade" or "mall." The Alameda swiftly captured the attention of photographers, travel writers, and tourists alike. Photographer Edward Bierstadt, brother to landscape painter Albert (who exhibited at the Sub-Tropical Exposition), was so charmed upon visiting St. Augustine in 1891 that he produced no fewer than three artotype books showcasing the Alameda buildings, including *Picturesque St. Augustine: Views in the Old Florida City*, *Sunlight Pictures: St. Augustine*, and *Gems of St. Augustine*. The 1900 edition of *Baedeker's Guide to the United States*, then the premier travel publication, spotlighted the Alameda complex and described St. Augustine as "one of the most picturesque and interesting little cities in America."[213] Flagler's resort brought so much fame to St. Augustine that author Edith Wharton invited readers of her 1920 novel *The Age of Innocence* to chuckle at the *haut monde* who were known to vacation there. "In obedience to a long-established habit," Wharton wrote, "the Wellands had left the previous week for St. Augustine, where, out of regard for the supposed susceptibility of Mr. Welland's bronchial tubes, they always spent the latter part of the winter."[214]

Flagler also built studios on the premises that housed a group of artists that would come to be known at the St. Augustine Art Colony. Artists such as landscape and still-life painter Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904), Impressionists Felix de Crano (1842-1908) and Reynolds Beal (1866-1951), and portrait and genre painter Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872-1930), who

[213] Karl Baedeker, ed., *Baedeker's Guide to the United States* (New York: Scribner's, 1900-1901), 401.

[214] Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920), 116.

himself would found the Cape Cod School of Art, were provided studios in the resort with the expectation that the works they created there would be exhibited for visitors and made available for purchase.[215] Heade was arguably Flagler's favorite of the group and in Flagler the painter had found his first and most important patron. Works such as *Giant Magnolias on a Blue Velvet Cloth* (c. 1890), which Heade had painted in the resort's studios, are among the most original still lifes created in late nineteenth-century America. The painting's brilliantly lit magnolias contrast its velvety tablecloth and dark background, while sensual colors, rich textures, and the implied fragrance of blooming flora suggest delicious opulence. It is easy to see why Flagler favored the artist; Heade's still lifes of flowers, portraits of hummingbirds, and landscapes of St. Augustine's coastal environs helped visualize the area into an exotic, paradise destination.[216]

Relatedly, Carrère and Hastings infused the resort's Spanish style with many Islamic features. "The Ponce de Leon is built in the style of the early Spanish Renaissance, which was strongly influenced by the Moorish spirit," the architects acknowledged.[217] During eight centuries of Muslim rule over Hispania, the Moors introduced a number of Islamic elements to the built environment of the Iberian peninsula, including horseshoe arches, riad gardens, crenelated parapets, towering minarets, and arabesque motifs in wood, stucco, and tilework. Noteworthy examples of Moorish architecture in Iberia include the Great Mosque at Córdoba,

[215] Sandra Barghini, *A Society of Painters: Flagler's St. Augustine Art Colony* (Palm Beach, FL: Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, 1998); Robert Torchia, *Lost Colony: The Artists of St. Augustine, 1930-1950* (St. Augustine, FL: The Lightner Museum, 2001)

[216] For more on Heade see Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., *The Life and Work of Martin Johnson Heade: A Critical Analysis and Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

[217] John M. Carrère and Thomas Hastings, *Florida, the American Riviera; St. Augustine, the Winter Newport: The Ponce de Leon, the Alcazar, the Casa Monica* (New York: Gillis Brothers & Turnure, The Art Age Press, 1887), 22.

the Royal Alcázar of Seville, and the Alhambra Fortress Palace in Granada, among others. Following the late fifteenth-century Christian "Reconquista" of Hispania, Spanish Renaissance architecture embellished many of these Moorish structures and incorporated numerous Islamic features in new construction.[218] As Spain extended its colonial reach to encompass vast regions of the Americas, these Iberian influences found their way into the built environment of the kingdom's New World territories.[219] In St. Augustine, the late nineteenth-century "revival" of these styles reanimated Florida's Spanish colonial heritage into forms of exotic luxury, a fact most apparent in the very name of the Ponce de Leon Hotel, which pays homage to the Spanish conquistador who "discovered" the area in the sixteenth century.

It is notable that the invention of Spanish Renaissance Revival architecture coincided with the rise of Moorish Revival (or Neo-Moorish) architecture, both of which emerged in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. This blend between Hispanic and Islamic styles is evident throughout the Alameda resort. The hotels' exteriors include mother-of-pearl stucco finishes, red terracotta roofing, and an abundance of horseshoe arches, arabesque tiling, and minarets with ornamental spires. The landscaping even evoked the lush beauty of riad gardens (fig. 4.6-4.7). The interior court of the Ponce featured "[p]alms, vines, roses, as well as plants and flowers strange to a Northerner," while the Alcazar likewise contained "sparkling fountains and parterres of tropical plants" and "an interior court with a garden and fountains."[220]

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[218] Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992); Felix Arnold, *Islamic Palace Architecture in the Western Mediterranean: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Jonathan M. Bloom, *Architecture of the Islamic West: North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

[219] Rexford Newcomb, *Spanish-Colonial Architecture in the United States* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1990).

[220] *Harper's Weekly*, July 21, 1888; Rau, *St. Augustine*, 832.

Furthermore, the Alcazar's swimming pool recalled the legendary water features of the Alhambra, while the names of the Alcazar and Cordova hotels were lifted directly from Iberian place-names. Upon the resort's opening, the frontpage of *The Florida Times-Union* newspaper proclaimed that the "great Oriental group at St. Augustine" had outdone "all antiquity," while travel writers described the resort as a "Moorish palace" and "a revelation, a scene from the *Arabian Nights*."[221]

As novel as Flagler's resort was, an eccentric mansion located nearby had likely informed its Orientalist design. Built in 1883, the "Villa Zorayda" was Boston millionaire Franklin Smith's private St. Augustine residence. The Neo-Moorish manor took its name from the princess in Washington Irving's popular romance novel *Tales of the Alhambra* and featured trademark elements of Moorish architecture, such as a crenelated parapet, horseshoe arches, *zellij* tilework, an interior court with a fountain, and a carved wooden ceiling that loosely replicated the Alhambra's Hall of the Abencerrajes (fig. 4.8).[222] According to travel writer Charles Bingham Reynolds, above "the front entrance is the inscription in Arabic letters: *Wa la ghalib illa lla* – "There is no conqueror but God.""[223] Smith had also amassed an impressive collection of decorative arts and antiques consisting of Blackamoor statues, Persian rugs, and Spanish ceramics, which he liked to show off to admirers, including to Flagler. In fact, Flagler had visited the mansion on numerous occasions, once writing to a friend that Smith was the "the owner of

[221] *The Florida Times-Union*, Monday, January 16, 1888; quoted in Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine*, 154.

[222] Beth Rogero Bowen/St. Augustine Historical Society, *St. Augustine in the Gilded Age* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 53.

[223] Charles Bingham Reynolds, *The Standard Guide: St. Augustine* (St. Augustine: E.H. Reynolds, 1890), 21.

the 'Lion' of St. Augustine, to wit, 'the Moorish house,' pictures of which I believe I have shown you."[224] As with Smith's Villa Zorayda, Flagler's Alameda drew upon the architectural and design heritage of Moorish Iberia as a source of exotic inspiration, calling to mind historian Jacques Barzun's claim that Spain is one of "the appendages of the Occident."[225]

The Iberian-inspired buildings in St. Augustine demonstrate the popularity of Orientalist architecture and design in middle to late nineteenth-century America. Other noteworthy examples of Moorish Revival buildings from the period include showman P.T. Barnum's Connecticut mansion, Iranistan (1848); painter Frederick Edwin Church's manor overlooking the Hudson River, Olana (1872); millionaire Henry Osbourne Havemeyer's residence on Fifth Avenue, designed by Tiffany & Company (1889-91); and the Great Saltair Resort, built on the shores of Great Salt Lake, Utah (1893). Beyond the Neo-Moorish style, a significant portion of American architecture and design from this period took inspiration from South Asia and East Asia, as well. For instance, the Ahmedabad Wood Carving Company's teak interiors, which were based on Indian craft traditions, graced the residences of the country's wealthiest families, while *chinoiserie* export porcelain and Japanese-inspired "bamboo" furniture became sought-after treasures, prominently displayed in luxury showrooms across the nation. At this time, opulence and Orientalism went hand in hand; by incorporating elements associated with distant lands and cultures, the elite of the Gilded Age could showcase their sophistication, taste, and worldliness, reflecting the era's obsession with conspicuous consumption and the display of wealth.

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[224] Quoted in Graham, *Mr. Flagler's St. Augustine*, 47.

[225] Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (New York: Harper, 2001), 92.

As Flagler's resort drew increasing numbers of visitors to St. Augustine each year, the city seized upon its Orientalist associations, transforming them into commercial ventures through souvenirs, gift shops, and other attractions. An intriguing artifact from this period exemplifies this trend. This unique paper souvenir contains sixteen lithographic views of St. Augustine that are mounted onto blue boards with gold decoration and assembled into a shape that resembles the open petals of a lotus flower (fig. 4.9). Such keepsakes would have been readily available in gift shops that sprang up around the Alameda, some of which adopted the label "bazaar." One such store is immortalized in a photograph taken in the 1890s by travel photographer William Henry Jackson (Fig. 4.10), whose work I previously discussed in relation to Magnolia Plantation & Gardens.[226] The photograph shows the so-called "Persian Bazaar" located a mere block from Flagler's resort complex. An assortment of signs and sandwich boards announce the store's offerings: "Oriental Art Jewelry," "Special Silk Shawls," "Oriental Kimonas [sic], Capes, Jackets, etc." Moreover, the strip of buildings in which the Persian Bazaar resides incorporates elements of Moorish Revival architecture, namely horseshoe arches and wooden balconies with arabesque ornamentation. The networks of trade, patterns of consumption, and habits of taste that drove Victorian Orientalism intersected at St. Augustine into forms of mass market kitsch, underscoring the burgeoning popularity of this particular brand of exoticism.

In the broader context of late nineteenth-century exoticism, an ersatz Orientalism primarily based on Iberian motifs provided the foundational aesthetic for St. Augustine's modernization into a resort destination.

[226] Michael Carlebach, "William Henry Jackson in Florida," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, no. 23 (1998): 86–95.

"Coming to it from bustling, active towns," Rau noticed of St. Augustine, "one is conscious of a complete and sudden change in time and place – as if the brief ride on a steamer and railway had produced magic results, and landed him in some quaint, old, dead-and-alive Spanish town from the Middle Ages."[227] The phrase "Spanish town from the Middle Ages" precisely encapsulates St. Augustine's meticulously crafted "place-image." According to sociologist Rob Shields, a place-image refers to the mental picture that defines a particular location's identity in the popular imagination. This is formed through an array of representations within the public domain, including architecture, design, landscaping, photography, travel writing, printed matter, and other forms of visual and material culture.[228] Similarly, tourism scholar Kye-Sung Chon introduces the term "destination-image" to specify the place-image associated with a tourist location in particular.[229] While aspects of this style had already surfaced in buildings and furnishings elsewhere in the country, St. Augustine distinguished itself among other resort cities of the period as a place where Orientalist forms of architecture, design, leisure, and consumption converged on a single location. St. Augustine's resort economy thus *orientalized* the city's urban environment, giving the town the appearance of "an Oriental city," in the words of one late nineteenth-century observer.[230] This process of orientalization, not unlike the coterminous process of subtropicalization, aimed to immerse tourists in a fantastical,

[227] Rau, *St. Augustine*, 821.

[228] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).

[229] Kye-Sung Chon, "The Role of Destination Image in Tourism," *Revue de tourisme*, no. 2 (1990): 2–9.

[230] Lady Duffus Hardy (Mary McDowell), *Down South* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1883), 20.

exotic world right here at home, reflecting the sensibilities and desires of many consumers at this time.[231]

I have thus far identified the two dominant imaginative geographies that defined modern Florida. St. Augustine embodied Iberian Orientalism, harking back to the peninsula's history as a Spanish colony. Meanwhile, Jacksonville played host to the other version, a Caribbean-influenced subtropicalism that was based on the state's proximity to the West Indies. The two styles quickly spread across Florida as public officials and private developers throughout the state drew inspiration from the imagery, sensibilities, and cultures associated with the Caribbean Basin and the Mediterranean world.[232] In fact, Flagler would soon pioneer a hybrid of both styles for development projects in places like Miami and Palm Beach, creating a distinctive architectural signature that still defines much of the state's built environment to this day.[233] As Flagler's new resorts pulled the center of Florida's travel economy southward, his hotels in St. Augustine began to suffer as a consequence. Eventually, the pressures of the Great Depression caused the Alcazar, which had been combined with the Cordova, to close its doors in 1931. The Ponce shuttered not long thereafter in the early 1940s. However, amid the rise and fall of Flagler's resort, another side of the city experienced its own transformations and challenges.

[231] For more on Orientalism see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[232] Henry Knight, *Tropic of Hopes: California, Florida, and the Selling of American Paradise, 1869-1929* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2013).

[233] One notable example of this is Mar-a-Lago, former President Trump's private club and residence in Palm Beach.

Revisiting Black St. Augustine

St. Augustine's transformation into a leading resort city commodified the state's Spanish colonial heritage into forms of Orientalist consumption, thereby obscuring the involvement of Black individuals in the area's colonial history. Moreover, the city's rise as a prominent vacation destination depended upon a large Black labor force. These workers countered their exploitation by organizing for better labor conditions, while the city's Black residents commemorated African American heritage on their own terms. In a poignant twist of fate, Flagler's hotels closed their doors just as a beachfront resort for Black guests opened nearby, calling attention to the alternative travel and leisure economy that African Americans created for themselves in response to Jim Crow. In this section, I recover St. Augustine's Black histories from the colonial era up to the eve of WWII, finding that an alternative, resistant form of urbanism defined the city before, during, and after its heyday in the Gilded Age.

Behind the city's Orientalist façade lay the remnants of Florida's actual colonial history, which consisted of a significant Black and mixed-raced community. In fact, the earliest presence of Black individuals in St. Augustine and throughout the Spanish Americas can be traced to the European voyages of discovery and expeditions of conquest that began in the late fifteenth century.[234] Historian Sam Haselby is one of an appreciable number of scholars to posit that

[234] For Spain, these trans-Atlantic voyages are inseparable from the "Reconquista" of Iberia. Following almost eight centuries of Muslim rule over Hispania, Christian forces regained control of the last Islamic territory in the region, the Emirate of Granada (1238-1492), on January 2nd, 1492, when Emir Muhammad XII (c.1460-1533) surrendered the Alhambra to Queen Isabelle I of Castile (1451-1504) and King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452-1516). Notably, Christopher Columbus witnessed the occasion, writing to the Spanish monarchs that "I saw the royal banners of Your Highnesses planted by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra." Columbus would depart for his fateful voyage across the Atlantic in April that same year, unwittingly introducing Islam to the shores of the New World. For more see Christopher Columbus, *Personal Narrative of the First Voyage of Christopher Columbus to America*, translated from Spanish (Boston: Thomas B. Wait and Son, 1827), 9; for more on the Reconquista see Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Richard Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Brian A. Catlos, *Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain* (New York:

moriscsos, or those Muslims who were forced to convert to Christianity during the Inquisition, "almost certainly" sailed with Christopher Columbus, surely "carrying Islam in their hearts and minds."[235] Importantly, *moriscos* who accompanied Spanish conquistadors were the first Black individuals to step foot on the continent. One such figure was Juan Garrido (c. 1480 - c.1550), an Afro-Spanish explorer. Born in an Islamic area of West Africa in the late fifteenth century, he traveled to Portugal during the height of the Inquisition and converted to Catholicism, adopting a Christianized name that translates to "Handsome John." During the early sixteenth century, Garrido accompanied conquistadors Hernán Cortés (1485-1547) and Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán (1490-1558) on their various conquests of Meso-America.[236] Garrido was but one of many *moriscos* to have played an important role in Spain's colonization of the Americas.[237]

Over and above conquest, the trans-Atlantic slave trade provided the major source of Africans in the Americas.[238] It is estimated that of those captives who survived the arduous

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Basic Books, 2018); Simon Barton, *Beyond the Reconquista: New Directions in the History of Medieval Iberia (711-1085)* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2020).

[235] Haselby reminds us that the "first words to pass between Europeans and Americans…were in the sacred language of Islam. Christopher Columbus had hoped to sail to Asia and had prepared to communicate at its great courts in one of the major languages of Eurasian commerce. So when Columbus's interpreter, a Spanish Jew, spoke to the Taíno of Hispaniola, he did so in Arabic." For more see Sam Haselby, "Muslims of Early America," *Aeon*, May 20, 2019, accessed online at https://aeon.co/essays/muslims-lived-in-america-before-protestantism-even-existed.

[236] Peter Gerhard, "A Black Conquistador in Mexico," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 58, no. 3 (August 1978): 451-459; Matthew Restall, "Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America," *The Americas*, vol. 57, no. 2 (October 2000): 171-205.

[237] It is quite ironic that the specter of Islam followed the Spanish across the ocean to the New World. "It is too often forgotten," historian Kambiz GhaneaBassiri contends, "that European voyages of discovery in the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were in large part intended to find new mercantile routes to circumvent the overland and maritime routes through rival Muslim empires – mainly the Ottoman (1299-1923) and Mamluk (1250-1517) Empires." For more see Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

[238] For more see Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: NYU Press, 1998); Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Middle Passage, between 1 and 2 million were transported to Spain's American holdings. In Spanish La Florida, the enslaved faced a distinct form of slavery. Unlike the Caribbean colonies of Cuba and Hispaniola, La Florida never formally adopted a chattel or race-based system of slavery but instead implemented a practice of debt peonage modeled after the *encomienda* system. This feudal structure of dependency subjected a more heterogeneous group of debtor-slaves – including Africans, Native Americans (specifically Timucua), and individuals of mixed ancestry – to regular tribute, domestic service, and/or military conscription.[239]

Throughout the seventeenth century, the British and Spanish vied for control over territory and resources in North America, implicating the enslaved in their struggles. The geopolitical maneuvering of the period saw the Spanish effectively outlaw slavery in La Florida and appeal to those individuals enslaved on plantations in British colonies in a bid to undermine their imperial rivals. In 1693, King Charles II of Spain issued a royal decree offering asylum to fugitive slaves on the condition they convert to Catholicism and serve in the colonial militia. As a result, scores of enslaved individuals from British Carolina fled southward, crossing the St. John's River to seek refuge in St. Augustine. This influx suggests that hundreds of fugitive slaves must have attempted to escape British territory for Spanish Florida.

As the number of runaways seeking refuge in St. Augustine continued to increase, Spanish colonial authorities deemed it necessary to build a fort to permanently house them. In 1738, Florida Governor Manuel de Montiano (1685-1762) authorized the establishment of the fortified town of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, also known as Fort Mose, the first legally

[239] Larry E. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000).

sanctioned, free Black settlement in North America.[240] Situated a few miles north of St. Augustine proper, the village was arranged in a semi-circular layout and contained private homes and communal spaces, as well as shops, gardens, and pasture. Fort Mose quickly became a sanctuary for escaped slaves and free Blacks, while also serving as the first line of defense against potential British attacks. The site's dual function – providing refuge for former slaves while also putting them in harm's way – reflects the complex realities faced by colonial St. Augustine's Black community.

Gov. Montiano's choice to appoint Francisco Menéndez (c.1700-c.1760s) as commander of Fort Mose is illustrative. An ethnic Mandinka born along the Gambia River around the year 1700, Menéndez was raised Muslim before being kidnapped and sold into slavery in British Carolina sometime between 1710-1715. He most likely ran away to St. Augustine in the early 1720s. After converting to Catholicism, in 1726 he became the commander of St. Augustine's free Black militia and in 1728 he defended the city against a British attack.[241] His loyalty to the Spanish Crown and demonstrated bravery in defending St. Augustine earned him the respect and trust of Gov. Montiano, who recognized Menéndez's potential as a leader.[242] That a man with Menéndez's background could rise to such a prominent position speaks to the unique forms of

[240] Kathleen Deagan and Darcie MacMahon, *Fort Mose: Colonial America's Black Fortress of Freedom* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995).

[241] Matthew Clavin, *The Battle of Negro Fort: The Rise and Fall of a Fugitive Slave Community* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).

[242] Christine Miller and Kailey Williams, "Fort Mose: America's First Free Black Settlement," *Journal of America's Military Past*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2020): 5-10.

social mobility available to Black residents, and in particular Afro-Muslim converts, in Fort Mose.[243]

The success of Fort Mose made it both a desirable destination and a potential target. On the one hand, those enslaved in British colonies admired the garrison as a beacon of freedom. In fact, the fort's existence is thought to have inspired the Stono Rebellion of 1739, a slave revolt that erupted on September 9th of that year near the Stono River in the colony of South Carolina.[244] Led by an enslaved man named Jemmy (also known as Cato), a group of about twenty enslaved Africans who had recently been imported from the Kingdom of Kongo took up arms against their enslavers and marched toward La Florida in hopes of finding freedom in St. Augustine. The band recruited sixty other slaves along the way and killed twenty whites before the South Carolina militia intercepted and killed them.[245] Ever since, the Stono Rebellion has been regarded as one of the most significant slave revolts in North America.

On the other hand, the British regarded Fort Mose with hostility as a symbol of their thwarted imperial ambitions. British officers led multiple assaults on the fort in the middle of the eighteenth century, including during the War of Jenkin's Ear (1739-1748) and the Seven Years War (1756-1763). As a result of their victory in the Seven Years War in 1763, the British acquired most of Florida, including St. Augustine. They quickly seized much of Fort Mose and re-instituted chattel slavery, causing many residents to flee. Menéndez himself took refuge in

[243] For more on the social dynamics of Fort Mose see Jane Landers, *Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose – A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida, The American Historical Review*, vol. 95, no. 1 (February 1990): pp. 9-30.

[244] In 1732, British Carolina was divided into several smaller colonies, including North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, among others.

[245] Peter Charles Hoffer, *Cry Liberty: The Great Stono River Slave Rebellion of 1739* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Cuba, where he founded the village of San Agustín de la Nueva Florida.[246] During the War of 1812, what little remained of Fort Mose was destroyed, obliterating any trace of its past inhabitants. The first free Black settlement in colonial North America had officially come to a close.

A handful of decades later, in 1866, the newly emancipated residents of St. Augustine, an appreciable number of whom had likely lived in Fort Mose, established a majority-Black neighborhood in the heart of the city. Initially called "Little Africa," the community later adopted the name "Lincolnville" in honor of President Lincoln. Overtime, Lincolnville flourished into a vibrant community boasting numerous businesses, schools, and churches, many constructed in an elaborate Victorian style that reflected the inhabitants' aspirations. A late nineteenth-century map of the city illustrates the area's distinctive architecture as well as its narrow streets and small lots (fig. 4.11), documenting an urbanism markedly different from the grand Orientalist resort that would soon dominate St. Augustine's landscape.[247] These architectural differences parallel the spatial and socio-economic disparities that defined cities in the segregated South, yet they also represent the hopes and ambitions of a resilient community that forged its identity amid the challenging circumstances of Jim Crow.

Once Flagler's resort opened, a significant number of Lincolnville residents found employment there. Interestingly, some bellhops, waiters, and kitchen staff were recruited to play for the first professional Black baseball team in the country, the Cuban Giants (fig. 4.12). The

[246] Jane Landers, "The Atlantic Transformations of Francisco Menendez," in Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, eds., *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 213.

[247] Among these significant institutions was the Church of St. Benedict the Moor, a Catholic church and school that was founded in the 1870s. It was named after a sixteenth-century African saint who was regarded as the patron saint of African Americans and individuals of African descent.

Giants were led by S.K Govern, a labor organizer, journalist, and Shakespearean actor originally from St. Croix in the Virgin Islands, as well as Sol White, a player-coach, and Frank P. Thompson, who had worked in the hospitality industry in other resort towns. Between 1885-86, the Giants "played a series of games in every large city from St. Augustine to Philadelphia," winning forty straight games.[248] The team's summer camp was based at the Argyle Hotel in Babylon, New York, while their winter camp was based at Flagler's resort in St. Augustine. The experiences of the Cuban Giants provide a lens into broader conditions faced by the area's Black community in navigating the realities of St. Augustine's resort economy.

While many team members held service jobs at the Alameda hotels, "their primary responsibility was to entertain guests with their skills on the diamond," a fact reflected in the breathless reporting from the period.[249] "The colored employees of the Hotel Ponce de Leon," announced the *St. Augustine Weekly News* in 1889,

> will play a game today at the fort grounds with a picked nine from the Alcazar. As both teams possess some of the best colored talent in the United States, being largely composed of the famous Cuban Giants, the game is likely to be an interesting one.[250]

Consequently, the team became part of the array of leisure and entertainment options offered by Flagler's resort, alongside activities such as swimming, gambling, bowling, and other amusements. By doubling as a form of live entertainment for guests, the Giants engaged in a type of "conspicuous labor" akin to the caretakers at Magnolia Plantation & Gardens. This

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[248] Sol White, *Sol White's History of Colored Baseball, With Other Documents on the Early Black Game*, 1886-1936 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 134.

[249] Michael E. Lomax, *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs, 1860-1901: Operating By Any Means Necessary* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), xx.

[250] Quoted in Jerry Malloy, "The Birth of the Cuban Giants: The Origins of Black Professional Baseball," in Bill Kirwin, ed., *Out of the Shadows: African American Baseball from the Cuban Giants to Jackie Robinson* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 5.

underscores the role of Black performance within the context of Jim Crow tourism, where the spectacle of Blackness was commodified into a profitable asset. In an era marked by racial segregation and systemic discrimination, Black performers, athletes, and entertainers – many of whom were pioneers in their fields – were often conscripted into roles that formed an essential part of the economy of Southern tourism.

None of the team members were actually Cuban, though. In a 1938 article in *Esquire*, White, one of the team's managers, recalled

> when that first team began playing away from home, they passed as foreigners – Cubans, as they finally decided – hoping to conceal the fact that they were just American Negro hotel waiters, and talked a gibberish to each other on the field which, they hoped, sounded like Spanish.[251]

Whether this story is apocryphal or not, it introduces the possibility that the team adopted a Caribbean identity to enhance its marketability to spectators. The ostensibly exotic identifier may have allowed the players to transcend the South's strict white-Black binary, granting them a degree of freedom and mobility otherwise denied them. Michael Lomax, a historian of the Giants, contends that "Cuban" could have been "a stage name exemplifying their vaudevillian flair on the diamond instead of signifying their racial or ethnic heritage."[252] Regardless of the exact motivations behind the team name, the use of the "Cuban" identifier aligns with what historian Samantha A. Noël calls the "tropical aesthetics of Black modernism." Noël argues that throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Black artists, entertainers, and writers embraced tropicalist representations to challenge colonialist or white-dominated conventions and craft identities that expressed their sense of diasporic belonging.[253] In contrast to

[251] See Alvan F. Harlow, "Unrecognized Stars," *Esquire*, September 1938, p. 75.

[252] Lomax, *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs*, 78-79.

[253] Samantha A. Noël, *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

the Sub-Tropical Exposition in Jacksonville, which maintained the primitive/modern dialectic common to discourses of tropicality, the type of tropicality embodied by the Giants represents a certain identitarian malleability that allowed the team to transcend rigid racial categorizations. Recognizing that tropicality was a major source of inspiration for Black modernism, the Giants' self-exoticization becomes a creative strategy of of resistance and empowerment in the face of racial subjugation.

However, the Giants were not content with merely entertaining spectators. In the 1890s, Thompson, Govern, and Ben Holmes, the team's third baseman, founded an advocacy group called the Progressive Association of the United States of America. The organization advocated for overturning segregation and campaigned specifically against "the unpardonable sin of racial prejudice practiced in the dining room of the Ponce de Leon."[254] Their efforts were surely inspired by the activism of figures like Frederick Douglass, who visited St. Augustine as part of his 1889 trip to Florida, when he also spoke at the Sub-Tropical Exposition. On April 7, 1889, Douglass lectured at St. Augustine's Genovar Opera House to a crowd of more than seven hundred. As he had done in his speech in Jacksonville, Douglass used the occasion to draw attention to the continuing struggles of African Americans in the post-Reconstruction South. Douglass must have considered the region's tourist destinations to be strategic locations in which to wage the fight for equality. Like much of the South, these cities were often distinguished by substantial Black populations and smaller numbers of whites, a demographic advantage that Douglass could mobilize through his mere presence. Moreover, resort cities like St. Augustine and public exhibitions like the Sub-Tropical Exposition received extensive coverage in popular

[254] Lomax, *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs*, 94-95.

media, making such places evocative settings in which to stage public appeals for equality and increase the visibility of his cause.

By the early twentieth century, photographer Richard Twine (1896-1974) documented the state of Black life in St. Augustine, particularly in Lincolnville (fig. 4.13). Twine, the first Black photographer to work professionally in the city, took photographs of neighborhood children, married couples, and community events like the annual Emancipation Day Parade. In a photograph of one such parade from 1922, revelers can be seen riding bikes, playing instruments, twirling flags, and marching along Lincolnville's dirt roads in a public procession held to commemorate the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (fig. 4.14). The Emancipation Day Parade and Lincolnville's honorific name reflect the broader effort on the part of the nation's Black population to create and commemorate forms of heritage that they could claim as their own following the abolition of slavery and emancipation of slaves. As historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage observes in *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Emancipation Day celebrations

> demonstrated the dedication of blacks to acknowledge and ennoble what writer and activist James Weldon Johnson called their "gloomy past." With the end of slavery, southern African Americans not only joined the ranks of the free but also gained the capacity to celebrate their history in ways that had been impossible during slavery. Blacks eagerly grasped this opportunity and worked during the half century after the war to establish a commemorative tradition that made sense of the past and accorded them a central role in it.[255]

Although St. Augustine's resort economy cultivated a picture-postcard version of the area's history that would appeal to the sensibilities of upper-class whites, the town's Black residents

[255] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 57.

made sure to reassert African American history as a fundamental component of St. Augustine's heritage.

Eventually, St. Augustine's Black community would possess a resort all its own. In the 1920s-30s, prominent Lincolnville businessman Frank Butler began buying property on Anastasia Island, several miles outside St. Augustine, to create a beachfront resort dedicated to Black travelers. On July 5, 1937, Butler announced the grand opening of the "Sea Breeze Kaseno – the New Colored Recreation Center" at the newly named Butler Beach, one of the first beaches and resorts devoted to Black tourists in Florida.[256] The resort boasted an array of amenities, including a casino, inn, restaurant, and other businesses. At a time when segregation laws barred Black individuals from accessing most "public" beaches, Butler Beach emerged as a haven for Black tourists seeking recreational opportunities. A photograph from the period captures the vibrant atmosphere of the beach, teeming with automobiles and sun-seeking tourists reveling in the freedom offered by this Black-owned and -operated retreat (fig. 4.15). Almost simultaneously, Jacksonville-based businessman Abraham Lincoln Lewis, Florida's first Black millionaire and president of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, opened American Beach, another beach reserved for Black visitors, on Jacksonville's Amelia Island.[257] The coterminous founding of Butler Beach and American Beach some forty miles from one another represented a crucial milestone, offering not only recreational opportunities but also serving as powerful symbols and spaces of empowerment within the Black community.

[256] Barbara Walch, *Frank B. Butler: Lincolnville Businessman and Founder of St. Augustine, Florida's First Black Beach* (St. Augustine: R.B. Hadley, 1992).

[257] Marsha Dean Phelts, *An American Beach for African Americans* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010).

The founding of these two Black beaches calls attention to the larger history of Black tourism in the Jim Crow South, intimately connected to Victor Hugo Green's groundbreaking publication "The Negro Motorist Green Book." Published between 1936-67, Green's guidebook became a quintessential resource for Black road trippers, earning the moniker "the Bible of Black travel." The guide listed lodgings, businesses, and gas stations that welcomed Black patrons, offering a lifeline for individuals and families on the road and facilitating a form of community-driving tourism.[258] For the 1946 green book, only a handful of such establishments were listed in St. Augustine. Notable entries include two "Tourist Homes," private properties offering temporary accommodations for travelers. One, operated by "F.H. Kelley," was located at 83 Bridge Street, and the other, named "H.G. Tye Apts.," was found at 132 Central Avenue.[259] Both sites were located in or around Lincolnville, highlighting the neighborhood's role in supporting the local Black community and extending hospitality to African American travelers, too. The lack of accommodations in St. Augustine stands in stark contrast to the comparatively abundant offerings in the nearby city of Jacksonville, which contained multiple hotels, tourist homes, and even a night club exclusively dedicated to Black patrons. This contrast suggests that many visitors to Butler Beach may have traveled from places beyond St. Augustine, possibly staying at the beach for the day before returning to a city with more accommodations for Black travelers.

Ultimately, the discrepant tourist geographies of St. Augustine, epitomized by Flagler's Orientalist resort, on the one hand, and Lincolnville and Butler Beach, on the other, encapsulate many of the social dynamics of tourism in the post-Civil War South. While Flagler's resort

[258] For more see Taylor Candacy, *Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America* (New York: Abrams Press, 2020).

[259] H.V. Green, *The Negro Motorist Green-Book* (New York: V.H. Green, 1946), 36.

symbolized opulence and exclusivity, reinforcing racial hierarchies, Lincolnville and Butler Beach emerged as spaces of resilience and self-determination for the Black community.

Figures

Fig. 4.1
William Henry Jackson
Ponce de Leon Hotel, front view and entrance
1890s
Glass plate negative
Call number: LC-D418-7906
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

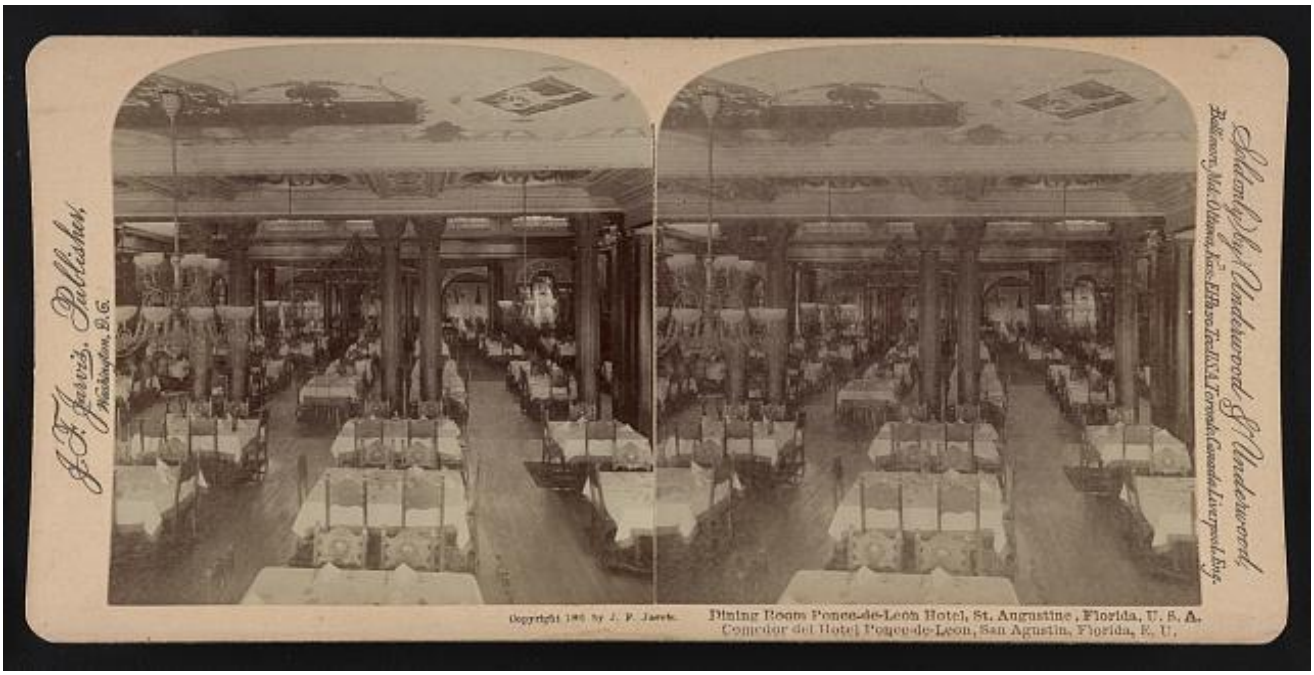

Fig. 4.2
Photographer unknown
Dining room at Ponce de Leon Hotel
1891
Call number: LC-DIG-stereo-1s11818
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 4.3
William Henry Jackson
Parlor of the Ponce Hotel
1890s
Call number: LC-D4-3529
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 4.4
William Henry Jackson
Hotel Alcazar
1890s
Call number: LC-D4-14252
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 4.5
William Henry Jackson
Bathing pool in the casino
1890s
Call number: LC-D4-3534
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 4.6
William Henry Jackson
Court at Ponce de Leon Hotel
1890s
Call number: LC-D4-500166
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 4.7
William Henry Jackson
Interior court at Hotel Alcazar
1890s
Call number: LC-D4-17495
Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 4.8
Villa Zorayda
Photographer Unknown
Late nineteenth century
Image number: N039470
General Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida
Tallahassee, FL

Fig. 4.9
Souvenir from St. Augustine
Circa 1880-1890
Shelf location: AA735 Sa18 Sa18 S
Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

Fig. 4.10
William Henry Jackson
Commercial Street with Persian Bazaar, St. Augustine
1890s
Call number: LC-D4-30796
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

4.11
Detail of Lincolnville
From *Bird's-Eye View of St. Augustine*
Norris, Wellge & Swift
1885
Printed on cardboard; 26x31cm
Map number: fmc0107
Florida Map Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida
Tallahassee, FL

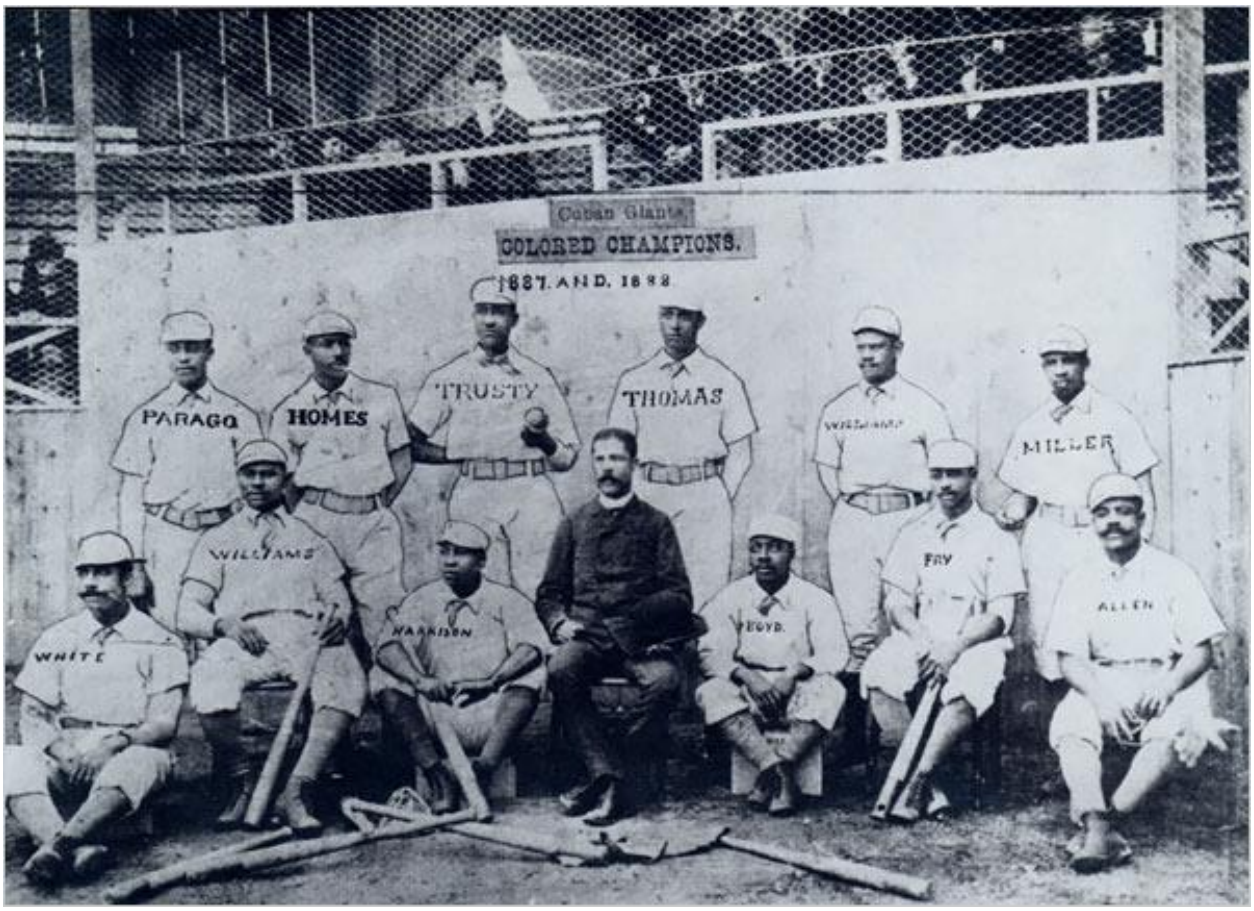

Fig. 4.12
Photographer unknown
Photograph of Cuban Giants
1887-1888
Publicly available

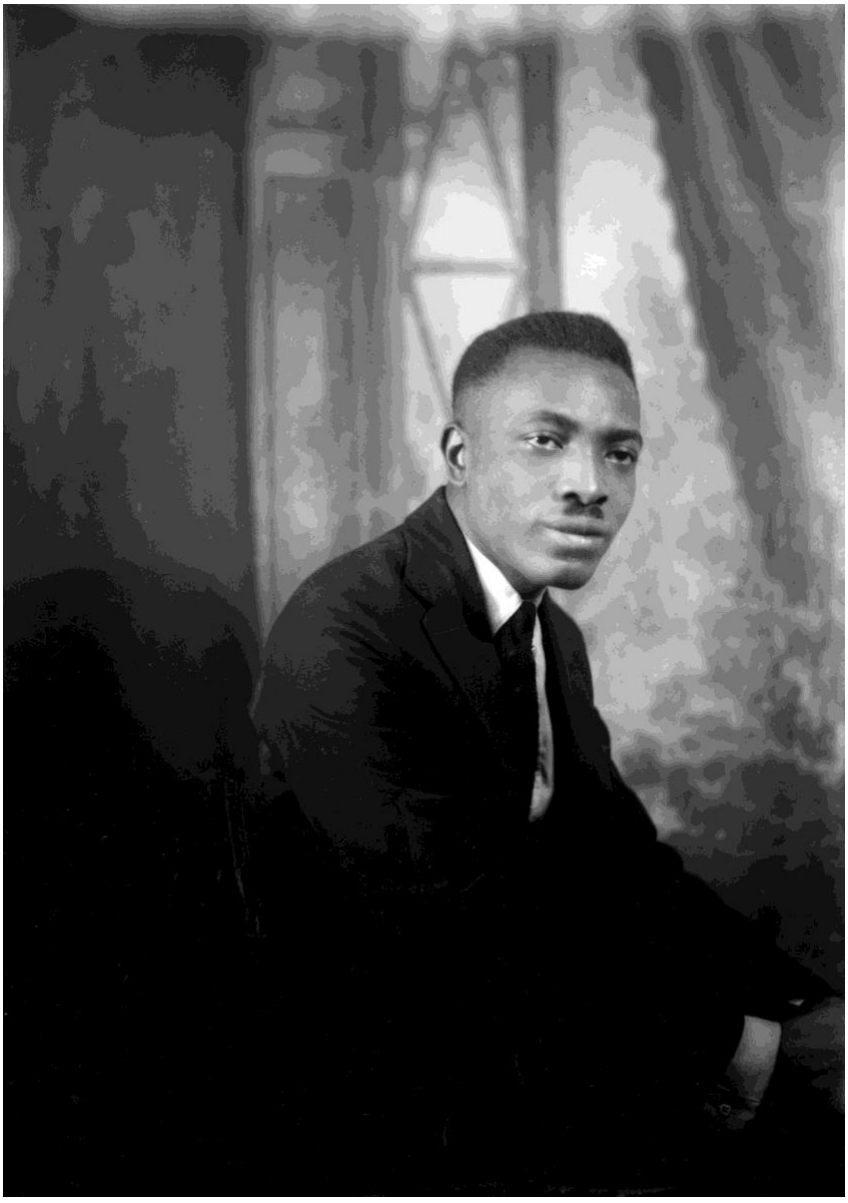

Fig. 4.13
Richard A. Twine
Self-Portrait
Circa 1922
Black-and-white photoprint; 8x10in
Image number: LV002
Richard A. Twine Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, Florida

Fig. 4.14
Richard A. Twine
Annual Emancipation Day Parade – Saint Augustine, Florida
Circa 1922
Image number: LV025
Richard A. Twine Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida
Tallahassee, Florida

Fig. 4.15
Butler Beach – Anastasia Island, Florida
Photographer unknown
c. 1940s-60s
Black-and-white photoprint; 8 x 10 inches
Image number: RC12413
Reference collection,
State Library and Archives of Florida,
Tallahassee, Florida

Epilogue

This project has considered four case studies that demonstrate the ways in which tourism has invented not just *the* New South but *many* New Souths – by modernizing parts of the Southern economy; fostering ideas about the region's heritage, culture, and identity, as well as myths and misconceptions; proliferating depictions of the Southern landscape and Southerners themselves; investing many of its cities with distinct place-images and spurring urbanization; influencing forms and institutions of artistic production; and shaping the ways people engage with and understand the South.

The first chapter examined the history of plantation tourism through Charleston's Magnolia Plantation & Gardens. I argued that tourism has commodified the plantation into a spectacle of an idealized Southern past, obscuring the forms of repression – and resistance – that have characterized the institution throughout its history. Although the site catered to white visitors' nostalgic fantasies of the antebellum South, the site's emancipated and free-born employees managed to engage in strategic acts of defiance, such as assisting Edwin and Elise Harleston in secretly accessing the segregated estate. There, the couple made artworks that challenged the plantation's picturesque identity and reimagined the site into a space of Black possibility. I then observed how the plantation has recently functioned as a museum, making efforts to go beyond "white-centric exhibition narratives" to present a more inclusive, counter-history of the plantation.

Whitney Plantation in Wallace, Louisiana, stands out as a pioneering example of plantations that have successfully staged such counter-histories. Since its reopening in 2014, the plantation has been on a mission to educate the public about the harsh realities of slavery. Unlike many other sites, Whitney employs a unique approach by utilizing preserved structures, slave

memorials, commissioned works of art, and curated exhibitions. This strategy serves to counter-narrate the plantation's past from the vantage point of the enslaved individuals who lived and toiled there. This innovative, revisionist model of historical interpretation challenges traditional narratives and strives to foster a deeper understanding of the painful history associated with plantations. It is crucial to recognize, however, that Whitney's commitment to this approach remains an exception rather than the norm, highlighting the need for more inclusive forms of curating at plantation museums.

The second chapter focused on the Telfair Museums of Art to explore the development of the "Southern museum," particularly the institution's evolving relationship to slavery and its afterlives. Whereas the Academy embodies the inclination to *rehabilitate* the Southern past by obscuring evidence of slavery and glorifying Southern society, the OTHSQ reflects a commitment to *recount* the South's history of slavery, especially urban slavery, through narrating the lives of the enslaved, while the Jepson Center epitomizes how modern and contemporary museums in the region have sought to *redress* the afterlives of slavery through collections, exhibitions, and programs that highlight the work of Black artists from the South. Treating the Telfair museums as a case study, I contend that the three sites encapsulate some of the leading approaches that museums in the South have taken as they attempt to reconcile the troubling legacies of slavery with the larger artistic and cultural heritage of the region.

Charleston's recently opened International African American Museum (IAAM) stands as a powerful testament to the role that museums in the South can play in confronting the South's complex history and celebrating the rich contributions of Black Southerners. Opened in 2022, the IAAM serves as a poignant reminder of the integral role Charleston, like Savannah, played in the transatlantic slave trade. The museum's exhibits employ wall texts, audio-visual technology, and

immersive installations to provide a comprehensive narrative the spans from the early days of the Black diaspora to the present. By highlighting stories of resilience, resistance, and cultural vibrancy, the museum aims to contribute to a broader dialogue amongst museums on racial justice.

The third chapter analyzed the Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition to trace the origins – and costs – of the state's reputation as one of the country's leading destinations. Ushering in a process of subtropicalization, the exhibition primed the public to perceive Florida as an exotic destination while contributing to the construction of a social reality that perpetuated hierarchies of economic and cultural dominance that fell most heavily on the state's Seminole community and Black inhabitants. Yet, the event also occasioned in participants various forms of resilience and resistance, revealing the exhibition's role in constructing *and* contesting the very idea of Florida and what it meant to be a Floridian at this time. Whereas public officials organized the exhibition to exoticize Florida into a subtropical destination and attract predominantly white newcomers to the state, members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida seized the opportunity to reassert their place on the peninsula in the face of dispossession, while Black participants leveraged the segregated exhibition in the fight for economic freedom and civil rights.

One contemporary site in Florida that can be seen as redressing the primitivizing conditions of the Sub-Tropical Exposition is the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, nestled in the Florida Everglades and dedicated to preserving the rich history of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Opened in 1997 on the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation, the museum's name translates to "a place to learn" in the Seminole language. The museum's collections include objects of tribal heritage, including crafts, clothing, and tools, offering a glimpse into the daily lives of Seminoles. Immersive displays and oral histories convey the community's lifeways from their formation in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the present day. The museum also contains vast records and archives of Seminole history and culture, which are only accessible to Seminole community members. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum therefore stands not only as a repository of Seminole history but as an institutional guardian over it.

The fourth chapter critically historicized how St. Augustine's transformation into an "exotic" resort city depended on obscuring the area's Black histories and contributed to the exploitation of its Black residents. Throughout, however, the city's Black inhabitants mobilized to assert their rights, championed African American culture and heritage, and created their own spaces of recreation and leisure, underscoring the significant role played by the area's Black community in not only transforming St. Augustine into a popular resort destination but also in responding to Jim Crow by establishing a parallel travel, heritage, and leisure economy catering specifically to African Americans.

In many ways, the discrepant tourist geographies of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century St. Augustine continue to shape the city's tourism industry to this day. Today, the Hotel Alcazar, Villa Zorayda, and Fort Mose have all undergone transformations into history museums or heritage sites. The Lightner Museum, formerly the Alcazar, primarily hosts exhibitions that romanticize the hotel's perceived heyday during the glittering years of the Gilded Age. The Villa Zorayda Museum functions as a house museum, notably an Orientalist one, preserving and exhibiting the collections of its previous owners, which consist of blackamoor statues, Persian rugs, and "cursed" Egyptian artifacts. Meanwhile, the Fort Mose Historic State Park, which is located a few miles away from these other sites, educates the public about the fort's remarkable history through multi-media exhibits, colonial-era re-enactments, and community events. The collective *museumification* of these three sites underscores the

importance of heritage tourism to St. Augustine today, and raises questions about their capacity, and willingness, to critically narrate the city's history.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Southern tourism underwent profound transformations, shaping the region's identity in ways that endure today. The postwar era witnessed the rise of new institutions and destinations, each contributing to ideas of Southern heritage and regional culture. As the region grappled with the legacy of slavery and the challenges of Reconstruction, tourism became a space of contestation through which the South's evolving identity was negotiated and presented to the country. Although the shadows of Jim Crow segregation created discrepant and discriminatory tourist geographies, the stories of figures like Aunt Phoebe and the Harlestons as well as places like Butler Beach serve as powerful reminders of resilience and resistance. Simultaneously, the commodification of Southern landscapes, both natural and cultural, into marketable products and experiences helped craft the enduring legend of the Old South and laid the groundwork for Florida's "Sunshine State" mantra. Efforts to rebuild the Southern economy through tourism led to distinct urban "place-images" and the creation of museums, exhibitions, resorts, beaches, and sundry other attractions. Today, many Southern cities and states continue to rely on tourism as a vital economic source, with the industry perpetually shaping and reshaping ideas of regional identity, culture, and heritage to this day.

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