

Public Understanding of Native American History:  
Silver Springs State Park and the Glass Bottom Boats

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## ABSTRACT

Historical tourism is a major industry around the world. However, some locations that utilize history have not typically been considered part of this industry. Such places include Silver Springs State Park, located in Ocala, Florida. The purpose of this study is to explore how Silver Springs impacts public knowledge of Native American history. The first tourist activities began at the springhead of the Silver River in the post-Civil War era. By the 1930s, Silver Springs had become a fully developed amusement park. Most of the current boat fleet was built in the mid to late 1960s and named after historical Native American figures: for example, boats running today include the “Chief Neamathla,” “Chief Micanopy,” “Chief Emathla” and “Chief Charly Cypress.” Western cultural concepts have shaped Native American portrayals at Silver Springs, evidenced by the site’s limited expression of Indigenous facts despite their extensive use of namesakes and history. The Indigenous people of Florida have played a dynamic and important role in the history of the region around Silver Springs and deserve to be recognized properly at the tourist site. While Silver Springs has made an attempt at this recognition, the site has not done so with respect to Indigenous people and cultures. Further efforts to present Native American history need to avoid the tendencies to represent Native Americans with outdated tropes and stereotypes. A focus on historical tourism will increase the authenticity of Native representation at Silver Springs and similar tourist sites.

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## DEDICATION

This is the product of the love and support of my family. To Mom, Dad, and Laura, none of this could ever have been completed without you.

## INTRODUCTION

“Silver Springs was the southern equivalent of Niagara Falls. It was one of the jewels of tourism in Florida.”

– Mr. Scott Mitchell,

Director, Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center.<sup>1</sup>

Historical tourism is a major industry around the world, however, some locations that utilize history have not typically been considered part of the historical tourism industry.

Historical tourism refers to activities and destinations that utilize historical aspects to attract guests.<sup>2</sup> Such places include Silver Springs State Park, located in Ocala, Florida. Silver Springs has a rich history as a major tourist attraction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Silver Springs is most well-known for the operation of the Glass Bottom Boats, which claim to be the longest continuously operated tourist attraction in the state of Florida.<sup>3</sup> Today, the location is operated by the Florida State Park System, acting mostly as a nature preserve and outdoor recreational area.

Central to Silver Springs is the history of Indigenous people in Florida. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Indigenous people in Florida faced many conflicts with authorities from

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Mitchell, Director of the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 10 April 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interviews, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>2</sup> Previous academic studies have utilized similar definitions of historical tourism under the phrase heritage tourism. Information from the American Association for State and Local History clarifies the differences between history and heritage. Based on these definitions, the following report finds the phrase historical tourism most appropriate for this research.

<sup>3</sup> Robbie Morin, Glass Bottom Boat Captain, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 28 March 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

the United States. Driving factors of these conflicts included a push from White society to remove eastern Indigenous people to the west of the Mississippi River. While multiple groups of Native Americans were involved in conflicts with the United States, White society identified all Indigenous Floridians under the catch-all term “Seminole.”<sup>4</sup> White society ignored the complexity of native societies in Florida because defining natives in the region as newcomers erased any ancient land claims.<sup>5</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, a Seminole identity among Indigenous people did not develop until the twentieth century during the Great Depression and New Deal eras.<sup>6</sup>

For a large part of the twentieth century, Native people in Florida faced poverty and a severe lack of economic opportunity. Several Native Floridians found employment by moving to tourist villages, places where visitors paid to visit and see Native people in what was sold as a “traditional environment.” These operations reinforced early connections between Native people and the environment, a process that, as expanded upon in Chapter 4, has resulted in the habitation of Natives being equated to a non-human presence.<sup>7</sup> Tourist villages received heavy criticism from federal authorities. They were known for a significantly high rate of disease, but they did provide many Native people with an opportunity to make money while also maintaining some of their cultural practices.<sup>8</sup> One such tourist village operated at Silver Springs from 1935 to the 1960s. The operation of the Silver Springs tourist village directly connects the history of

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Frank, “Creating A Seminole Enemy: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Conquest of Florida,” *Florida International University Law Review* 9 (2014): 277-278.

<sup>5</sup> Frank, “Creating A Seminole Enemy,” 284.

<sup>6</sup> Harry A. Kersey Jr., “The Florida Seminoles in the Depression and New Deal, 1933-1942: An Indian Perspective,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65 (2) (Oct. 1986): 194. The development of a Native Seminole identity is discussed in greater detail later in this section.

<sup>7</sup> Derek Bousé, “Culture as Nature: How Native American Cultural Antiquities Became Part of the Natural World,” *The Public Historian* 18 (4) (Autumn 1996) 77.

<sup>8</sup> Harry A. Kersey, Jr., *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal: 1933-1942*, (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, 1989), 41.

Silver Springs to Native American history. Since the closure of the tourist village, Silver Springs continues to tap into the history of the Seminoles and other Indigenous people by using Indigenous names on the Glass Bottom Boats and displaying a statue in the likeness of Osceola, a Native American figure related to the Second Seminole War.

Silver Springs has historically and continues to connect itself to the history of Indigenous people today. Silver Springs serves as an excellent example of how the presentation of Native culture and history in tourism influences the public's perception of Native Americans in Florida. Because of cultural and economic factors, Silver Springs has failed to fulfill its responsibility to accurately and appropriately present Native American history. To fully understand how Silver Springs impacts public knowledge of Native American history, this project will begin with an exploration of the history of the State Park, including how Native American history has been depicted and utilized at the public site. The project then explores how Silver Springs highlights historical Native American leaders and discuss portions of their lives that have contributed to their inclusion at Silver Springs and other similar sites. The conclusion of this project analyzes Western cultural concepts that have affected Native American portrayals at Silver Springs and the differences between historical Native Americans and the versions of these figures presented at the state park.

### **Tourism and Indigenous Public History:**

Historical studies play an important role in the public's understanding of history. According to Albert Hurtado, all historians must be aware of what they are reporting to the public (especially regarding Native American history) because it is important to so many people

today.<sup>9</sup> According to the National Council on Public History, the concept of public history refers to the ways that history is utilized in the public sphere.<sup>10</sup> Following this definition, the public history industry is not limited to just professional spheres such as historical monuments and museums. Historical tourism's use of history makes the industry a branch of public history. Regarding Native American history, the public history field has been problematic. Joanhong Zhou and Johan R. Edelheim assert that Indigenous tourism must be centered on Indigenous communities.<sup>11</sup> However, Native American history is connected to historic sites in the United States that have traditionally only presented a Euro-American viewpoint.<sup>12</sup> The focus on Euro-American history has made public history sites a painful experience for some Native people. Fortunately, since the 1990s, there have been efforts to decolonize the public history industry and have Indigenous communities be actively involved.<sup>13</sup> Silver Springs and similar sites typically fall outside of the realm of Indigenous public history, because the park has been characterized by its connections to nature and the environment instead. However, the use of historical references continues to be an important part of the experience at Silver Springs and other similar tourist sites.

At its core, historical tourism brings history to the public, therefore this field of tourism is undeniably a field of public history. Native presentation in tourism is a topic that has not been thoroughly studied. At this time, Katrina Phillips' *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the*

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<sup>9</sup> Albert L. Hurtado, "Public History and the Native American," *The Magazine of Western History*, vol. 40, (2) (Spring 1990), 59.

<sup>10</sup> "About the Field," National Council on Public History, 2023, <https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/>.

<sup>11</sup> Joanhong Zhou and Johan R. Edelheim, "'Ethnic Minority Tourism' and 'Indigenous Tourism': The Critical Distinction," *Tourism, Culture & Communication* 23 (2023): 2.

<sup>12</sup> Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 1.

*Performance of Native American History* is the best study of how Native American history and culture has been utilized in Western tourism. Phillips centers her chronological study around Native theater productions; the Happy Canyon productions, *Unto These Hills*, and *Tecumseh!*<sup>14</sup> What makes Phillips' work so important to the study of Native presentations at Silver Springs is the exploration of the salvage tourism concept. As indicated by Phillips, "Salvage tourism combines the theoretical framework of salvage ethnography with the practices and yearnings of heritage tourism. . . . Salvage tourism is explicitly tied up in trying to salvage American Indian cultures before Indians, in the mind of non-Natives, die off, change or degenerate from their ideals of a pristine Indian past."<sup>15</sup> Salvage tourism resulted from attempts to operate historical tourist sites that failed to separate history from mythology and folklore. Phillips explains that tourism, nostalgia, and authenticity are converging points in the creation of salvage tourism.<sup>16</sup> The concept of salvage tourism can be easily applied to the presentation of Native Americans at Silver Springs as Phillips states in her conclusion that "The importance of salvage tourism lies in its ability to serve as a framework for a wide range of interpretations of Indianness."<sup>17</sup>

Amy Lonetree's book, *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, is a superb study of typical interactions between Native Americans and modern museums. Currently, Lonetree's work is the most important book-length publication to study the field of Native American public history. The research focuses on three primary case studies: the Mille Lacs Indian Museum, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways. Lonetree shows that museums can serve

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<sup>14</sup> Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 21-22.

<sup>15</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 186.

as sites of decolonization by honoring Indigenous worldviews, challenging stereotypical representations, and adequately discussing the uncomfortable truths of the colonial past.<sup>18</sup>

*Decolonizing Museums* first deals with the role museums have played in colonial history. Here, Lonetree covers how many collections of Indigenous artifacts in Western institutions were built through disturbing action. The colonial history of museums is directly tied to theft, desecration, and disrespect for Native communities.<sup>19</sup> Lonetree then focuses on the historiography of Native American museum studies. Ruth Phillips and Robin Boast are among the researchers that have addressed issues between Native Americans and museums, both of which have provided insights into the collaborative process some modern museums have utilized towards representing Native communities.<sup>20</sup> Lonetree declares her work to differ from other studies because “this book is comparative and draws upon data collected from my ten-year, multisite museum project.”<sup>21</sup> By acting as a comparative study between three museums, a more general conclusion can be found regarding how modern museums work with Indigenous communities.

Lonetree’s analysis of the three museums is very detailed, covering the issues of collaboration and authority regarding the history of Native American people and how this history is depicted in museum settings. The Ziibiwing Center shows the result of complete Indigenous control over the museum process, completely removed from Western interpretations. While it is in the best interest of the Indigenous people to regain this control over their history and heritage, it must make sure to still recognize the needs of the audience, which is a topic that Lonetree fails to address in the study of the Ziibiwing Center.

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<sup>18</sup> Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 9-16.

<sup>20</sup> Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 21-24.

<sup>21</sup> Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 25.

Overall, Lonetree's *Decolonizing Museums* is the most thoroughly prepared report regarding Native Americans in public history. This source provides an important foundation for the study of Indigenous public history at other historical sites, including Silver Springs. However, Lonetree focuses completely on the museum industry. There is currently a gap in academic studies regarding Native public history at historical sites outside of the museum industry, including Silver Springs.

Lonetree's research demonstrates that Native American history at museums is among the best-studied portion of Indigenous public history. In the article "Surrounded by Indians: The Exhibition of Comanche and the Predicament of Representing Native American History," historian C. Richard King explores some issues with how Native American history is presented in museums by analyzing the University of Kansas Natural History Museum's exhibition of Comanche, the calvary horse that became popularly known as the sole survivor from the Battle of Little Big Horn and 'Custer's Last Stand.'<sup>22</sup> King clarifies the issues around the Comanche exhibit by stating: "For nearly a century, Comanche embodied the heroism, sacrifice, and tragic triumph ascribed to the Euro-American soldiers who fought and died in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876."<sup>23</sup> In the fall of 1970, Native student activists at the University of Kansas staged a series of demonstrations that addressed the biased perspective of the Comanche exhibition presented in the school's Natural History Museum.<sup>24</sup> By 1971, activist pressure led to a restructuring of the exhibit at the museum that included changes in how Comanche and the Battle of Little Bighorn were presented.<sup>25</sup> While King acknowledges that changes in the exhibit

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<sup>22</sup> C. Richard King, "Surrounded by Indians: The Exhibition of Comanche and the Predicament of Representing Native American History," *The Public Historian* vol. 18 (4), (Autumn, 1996): 37.

<sup>23</sup> King, "Surrounded by Indians," 37-38.

<sup>24</sup> King, "Surrounded by Indians," 42.

<sup>25</sup> King, "Surrounded by Indians," 43-44.



make for substantially better representations of Native American history, the article concludes that there are still more improvements needed to fully address underlying Euro-American biases. King explains “Importantly, the exhibit does not offer a sequential, unified, or linear narrative, but instead, its representation emerges in bits and pieces.”<sup>26</sup>

King believes that while the exhibition of Comanche developed in the 1970s was an improvement over previous iterations, it still failed to present the full picture from a Native viewpoint. King, therefore, concludes that “altering the stories is insufficient; the exhibition of Comanche must be rethought, not simply retold.”<sup>27</sup> The continued misrepresentation of Comanche as the embodiment of tragic heroism is one example of instances proving why public history sites need to rethink how they address Native American history. The need to rethink the communication of Native American history applies to a broad range of historical sites, including Silver Springs. However, the only way to avoid retelling the same problematic stories and folklore is to develop a better understanding of both Native culture and history as well as previous and current problems faced by the presentation of Native Americans at Silver Springs and similar sites.

Laura Peers discusses the role of Native American interpretation and explores the lens of living history sites. In her article, “‘Playing Ourselves’: First Nations and Native American Interpreters at Living History Sites,” Peers defines living history sites as places that employ costumed staff to interpret the past through acting.<sup>28</sup> Peers explains that traditionally “Historic sites have. . . promoted a vision of the past which was narrowly White and prosperous.”<sup>29</sup> By the

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<sup>26</sup> King, “Surrounded by Indians,” 46.

<sup>27</sup> King, “Surrounded by Indians,” 50. During a visit to the University of Kansas Natural History Museum in April of 2023, the Comanche display was “under review” and nearly all of the exhibit had been removed.

<sup>28</sup> Laura Peers, “‘Playing Ourselves’: First Nations and Native American Interpreters at Living History Sites,” *The Public Historian* 21 (4) (Autumn, 1999): 40.

<sup>29</sup> Peers, “Playing Ourselves,” 41.

time of Peer's study, living history sites have added Native encampments and hired Native staff in an attempt to make their portrayal of the past more inclusive as well as historically accurate.<sup>30</sup> Peers demonstrates that with the addition of Native representation many of these sites have begun to present Indigenous historical perspectives, many of which oppose the historical narratives of the dominant society. The result of conflicting perspectives has led to the development of a unique style of interpretation by Native staff that seeks to revise how many visitors view Native people and the past.<sup>31</sup> Efforts to include Native themes, encampments, and staff at living history sites align with a shift in the field of public history. The inclusion of Native interpretations has been part of efforts to rectify these typical trends.

Peers also discusses a major challenge to making interpretive changes, "What [visitors] see and expect when they come to historic reconstructions can be very different from what site managers and interpreters desire to communicate to them."<sup>32</sup> Dealing with visitors that have pre-existing expectations has forced many Native interpreters to deal with inaccurate, stereotyped, and sometimes outright racist comments.<sup>33</sup> To counteract pre-existing expectations, Peers asserts that "Native interpreters use several techniques to establish authority and to break down the barriers that prejudice erects between peoples," to help visitors see interpreters as people, and challenge previous stereotypes.<sup>34</sup> Such techniques include satirical responses to presumptive questions followed by more serious explanations that dispel stereotypical expectations.<sup>35</sup> Peer's study is unique for delving into how Native people present themselves at historical sites. These approaches may exemplify how to respectfully present Native history at other historical places.

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<sup>30</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves," 40.

<sup>31</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves," 40.

<sup>32</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves," 42.

<sup>33</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves," 43.

<sup>34</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves," 50.

<sup>35</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves,"

Silver Springs faces similar challenges of audience expectations Peers details regarding living history sites.<sup>36</sup>

Historical parks such as Silver Springs stand out as a distinctive portion of public history separate from the museums and living history sites discussed by Lonetree, King, and Peers. Derek Bousé's article "Culture as Nature: How Native American Cultural Antiquities Became Part of the Natural World," highlights how essential Native American history is to national parks. While this study discusses the role of Native American history in the history of the National Park Service, the concepts may easily apply to other nature-based attractions, including state parks. Even among early efforts towards environmental preservation, there has always been a connection to Indigenous cultures.<sup>37</sup> According to Bousé, "Today, NPS [the National Park Service] has become this country's premier guardian and exhibitor of both natural and cultural antiquities. In its attempt to reconcile the management and exhibition of natural environments and cultural history. . . NPS faces the added dilemma of representing two separate cultural histories: White American and Native American."<sup>38</sup>

Bousé argues that the National Park Service has problems with the management and exhibition of Native American cultural antiquities that are rooted in Euro-American intellectual and cultural traditions.<sup>39</sup> Central to problems with Native exhibitions is that Native Americans are defined as a "natural" presence in North America; a definition that implies that Native Americans are not considered a human presence before European contact.<sup>40</sup> The most important

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<sup>36</sup> Peers, "Playing Ourselves," 43; Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 2; and John E. O'Connor, "The White Man's Indian: An Institutional Approach," in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor eds., *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998, reprint ed. 2003) 33.

<sup>37</sup> Bousé, "Culture as Nature," 75-76.

<sup>38</sup> Bousé, "Culture as Nature," 77.

<sup>39</sup> Bousé, "Culture as Nature," 95.

<sup>40</sup> Bousé, "Culture as Nature," 77.

portion of Bousé's article is that he concludes with recommendations for addressing the current problems with Native exhibitions at national parks. This guidance includes suggestions to rethink the interpretative presentation of Native culture and treat the two distinct sections of national parks, cultural and natural, on their own, not as the same things.<sup>41</sup> Bousé's work on the National Park Service is focused on the role that Indigenous history plays at sites that are still closely connected to other portions of history. The operation of Silver Springs as a state park is comparable to the operations of national parks. Bousé's critique of Natives being defined as a "natural" presence is evident in the exhibition of Native history and culture at Silver Springs.

Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* is a superb study that reveals a Euro-American fascination with Native American culture. Deloria begins with a look into early occurrences of "playing Indian" such as the Boston Tea Party.<sup>42</sup> This study begins to explore how White Americans have utilized a process referred to by historians Carter Meyer and Diana Royer as cultural imperialism to distort and appropriate Native culture into their own.<sup>43</sup> Meyer's and Royer's report is an important addition to understanding how Western culture has come to view Native American imagery as a personal possession, a factor that has played a role in Silver Springs's usage of Native American history.

Historian Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* is a superb study of how Western society has developed expectations for how Native people look and act. These assumptions are rooted in misunderstandings and generalizations of Native people. Berkhofer begins by stating that because Native people in the Americas did not have any shared identity before European

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<sup>41</sup> Bousé, "Culture as Nature," 95-96.

<sup>42</sup> Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-9.

<sup>43</sup> Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, "Introduction," in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001), xi.

contact, the belief that Native Americans constituted one monolithic culture had to begin as a White concept.<sup>44</sup> According to Berkhofer, the term “Indian” and the basic imagery of Native people has a Spanish legacy because the first organized efforts to explore and settle the Americas were undertaken by Spain.<sup>45</sup> Berkhofer notes that Columbus was largely responsible for the development of a standard Native American image.

Berkhofer’s study addresses the role of literature and art on Western society’s perceptions of Native Americans. Berkhofer criticized the efforts of artists and writers to capture an authentic representation of Native Americans by stating that “Although each succeeding generation presumed its imagery based more upon the Native American of observation and report, the Indian of imagination and ideology continued to be derived. . . from the polemical and creative needs of Whites.”<sup>46</sup> According to Berkhofer, what has resulted from the role of Native Americans in art has been a continuation of two basic images of good and bad Indians in public perception.<sup>47</sup> Despite mainstream acceptance, “the White man’s Indian” has not gone unchallenged. Historian Fergus Bordewich comments that the early 1990s marked a period of metamorphosis in Indigenous communities that challenged old beliefs regarding Native people.<sup>48</sup> However, despite the advancements and changes Bordewich covers, few have challenged the perception of mainstream America, which is explored by Jacquelyn Kilpatrick’s study of Native Americans in art and media in *Celluloid Indians*. Similar to Berkhofer, this study suggests that literature established audience expectations for Native presentations in film. Kilpatrick claims that the works of James Fenimore Cooper such as *Last of the Mohicans* have “most thoroughly

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<sup>44</sup> Robert F Berkhofer, Jr. *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A Knopf inc., 1978), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 71.

<sup>48</sup> Bordewich, *Killing the White Man’s Indian*, 10-11.

established in the realm of fiction the stereotypical extremes of the Indian.”<sup>49</sup> Kilpatrick concludes her work by explaining that the film industry needs to accept a responsibility to clear misinformation regarding Native American history and culture because film is so connected to everyday life.<sup>50</sup>

While Kilpatrick’s and Berkhofer’s belief that literature and art have impacted the portrayal of Native Americans, historian John O’Connor’s contribution to *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* offers other factors that may have affected Native presentations. According to O’Connor, three production factors have affected the portrayal of Natives in film: dramatic considerations, commercial considerations, and political considerations.<sup>51</sup> Out of these three factors, commercial considerations are the most relevant to the presentation of Indigenous people at Silver Springs. O’Connor states “Hollywood businessmen reasoned that films had to appeal to the broadest possible audience.”<sup>52</sup> O’Connor covers how Native portrayals in film have shifted to match changes in audience expectations. These changes resulted from an effort to increase large audience appeal.<sup>53</sup> O’Connor’s research makes it clear that audience expectations impacted Native presentations because moviemakers had to consider these expectations to ensure their movies are marketable.

Historians such as Lonetree, King, Peers, and Bousé, have greatly increased understanding of how and why Native American culture and history have faced troubles in the public history field. The most complete study of Indigenous public history and tourism utilized in this study are Amy Lonetree’s, *Decolonizing Museums*, and Katrina Phillips’ *Staging*

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<sup>49</sup> Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 233.

<sup>51</sup> John E. O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian: An Institutional Approach,” in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, eds., *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of The Native American in Film*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998, reprinted 2003), 30.

<sup>52</sup> O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian,” 33.

<sup>53</sup> O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian,” 34.

*Indigeneity*. Works such as Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* and Jacquelyn Kilpatrick's *Celluloid Indians* highlight the effect that literature and Hollywood have had on public perception. *The Public Historian* journal has published articles such as those by C. Richard King, Laura Peers, and Derek Bousé that connect Native American history to work conducted in the public history field at museums, living history sites, and national parks. However, there is still a need to study how Native American public history is utilized at sites that are not typically thought of as historic sites. Silver Springs exemplifies a tourist site that is not typically expected to connect to public history, but still utilizes aspects of history, especially local and Native American history, to connect with and attract guests. Audience expectations and the commercial considerations related to expectations discussed by Berkhofer, Kilpatrick, and O'Connor are defining concepts related to the application of Native American history at Silver Springs.

### **Historiography: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Seminoles:**

Native American history presented at Silver Springs showcases numerous Native people that have been viewed by Westerners as leaders of their communities.<sup>54</sup> Understanding the lives of these figures is important to understanding why they have been represented at Silver Springs. The history of the Seminole people has been the primary topic of numerous academic studies over the past half-century. Many studies have focused on the origin of the Seminole people and their connections to the Creek people of the southeast United States. Others have worked on studies regarding Seminole relations with the United States in the nineteenth century and the Seminole War periods. Twentieth-century Seminole history became a well-studied period beginning in the 1990s and early 2000s. The historical studies of Seminole history in both the

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<sup>54</sup> Western society has characterized Native Americans with little regard to Native culture. How Native American society viewed concepts of leadership differed greatly from western society.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflect our understanding of the Seminoles over a large period and present an important look at the lives of the people historical tourist sites such as Silver Springs present to their visitors.

Anthropologist John R. Swanton first published *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors* in 1922. In the “Forward” for the 1998 edition, editor Jerald T. Milanich explains that “John Reed Swanton has authored more classics on North American Indians than any other individual” and that some of his best research was on the Native people of the Southeastern United States.<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors* “also provides important ethnohistorical information on many other southeastern Indians who were adjacent to the Creek Indians and their ancestors from the sixteenth century into the early nineteenth century.”<sup>56</sup> This includes information on the Seminole people and their connections to the Creeks and other Southeastern Indigenous groups.

Swanton believes that the name ‘Seminole’ comes from the Creek language referring to people who remove from populous towns and live by themselves and the common belief of Swanton’s time was that the Seminoles consisted of runaways and outlaws from the Creek Nation proper despite this not being the case.<sup>57</sup> Swanton explains that “the Oconee Indians were a nucleus about which the Seminole Nation grew up.”<sup>58</sup> Swanton states, based on census records, that this group remained near the Chattahoochee for some time in the eighteenth century but seems to have completely moved to Florida sometime between 1799 and 1832. One source Swanton references suggests the first known movement of Seminoles into Florida is listed as

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<sup>55</sup> Jerald T. Milanich “Forward” in John R. Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>56</sup> Milanich “Forward,” 4.

<sup>57</sup> John R. Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 398.

<sup>58</sup> Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, 398.



having started in 1750 under the leadership of a chief named Secoffee. Swanton assumes 1750 is at least a moderately correct date for when early Seminole settlements in Florida were established.<sup>59</sup>

Swanton also explores Seminole leadership, starting with Secoffee. According to Swanton, a common belief is that he was also known by the English as ‘the Cowkeeper.’ After the Cowkeeper, leadership was passed to King Payne, then to his brother Bowlegs (known also as Islapaopaya) where some earlier accounts incorrectly state that Payne and Bowlegs were the sons of the Cowkeeper. Swanton corrects this by explaining that inheritance traveled through the matrilineal line and so the Cowkeeper would have been the uncle of the two later leaders, just as their nephews most likely played a part in Seminole leadership after them.<sup>60</sup> With this study, Swanton states that “We may therefore say that the nucleus of the Seminole Nation was not merely a body of “outcasts” as has been so often represented, but a distinct tribe.”<sup>61</sup> As for their connections to the Creek Confederacy, Swanton explains that the Oconee were “affiliated, it is true with the Creeks, but always on the outer margin of the confederacy and to a considerable extent an independent body, representing not the Muskogee but the Hitchiti speaking peoples of southern Georgia—those who called themselves Atcik-hata.”<sup>62</sup>

The rest of Swanton’s study regarding the Seminoles details what is known about their early settlements. This source does not seem to have the problems that many others have of following too much of a Western mindset but instead clearly presents both Western knowledge as well as information from an Indigenous perspective. All these factors make this source very

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<sup>59</sup> Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, 398-399.

<sup>60</sup> Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, 399.

<sup>61</sup> Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, 400.

<sup>62</sup> Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, 400.

useful even today, an idea that the editor, Milanich, indicates makes this a classic source in the field of study.<sup>63</sup> It is important to note that Swanton's work is considered an example of salvage ethnography, a concept explored by Phillips while studying salvage tourism.<sup>64</sup> Swanton's study acts as a base to the academic knowledge of Seminole history, and despite its age offers a background to understand early Seminole culture and history displayed at Silver Springs.

*Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People*, by J. Leitch Wright, Jr., published in 1986, primarily studies "the second destruction of these southeastern Indians and to a much smaller extent the fate of survivors after their dispersal to Oklahoma, Texas, Mexico, the West Indies, and elsewhere."<sup>65</sup> This serves as a great introduction to the history of both the Seminole and Creek people by illustrating the connections between the two groups. Wright first begins by explaining the terminology that the book uses, then goes into the development and organization of the Seminole and Creek people in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Defining terminology is important to help avoid any possible confusion concerning the complexities of Creek and Seminole societies. According to Wright, "Muscogulge" refers to many Southeastern Indians such as Creek and Seminole people.<sup>66</sup> However, Wright explains that the Muscogulge people were not all homogenous, and shows this by explaining that many Muscogulges spoke languages that were a part of the Muskogean linguistic family, such as *Muskogee* (the language still spoken by Creek people today), but "Muscogulges spoke not only Muskogean languages but also those in entirely different linguistic families such as Yuchean, Algonquian, and Iroquoian."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, 3-4.

<sup>64</sup> Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 21-22.

<sup>65</sup> J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), xiii.

<sup>66</sup> Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, xiv.

<sup>67</sup> Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, xiv.

Wright states that terms such as Muscogulge, Creek, or Seminole, are often oversimplified identifiers, however “The alternative to referring to them as Muscogulges, Creeks, and Seminoles is to rely on a welter of tribal (or linguistic) names: Yamasee, Tuckabatchee, Hitchiti, Koasati, Alabama, Timucua, Natchez, Shawnee, and Yuchi. The list is long, fifty to a hundred or so.”<sup>68</sup> According to Wright, European colonial powers were the first to oversimplify the abundance of diversity among the Muscogulge people, and from these simplifications are where the terms Creek and Seminole are derived.

Wright differs from Swanton in their explanations of the term “Seminole” by stating that it comes from the Spanish word *cimarron* (meaning wild or untamed). The Spanish used the term to refer to hostile non-Whites throughout their New World colonies. Wright’s research notes that the ‘cimarrones’ that ended up settling around Alachua (around what is now modern-day Gainesville, Florida) identified themselves not as Creeks but as Cimarrones, which in their language was pronounced as “Cimallon,” and over time this term and identification would develop into “Seminole.”<sup>69</sup> British Indian Agents such as John Stuart classified Natives in the Alachua region as “Seminole Creeks” through the American Revolution.<sup>70</sup>

Overall, J. Leitch Wright, Jr.’s account of the history of the Creeks and Seminoles is a source to utilize in the study of multiple Native leaders. Wright provides an important look into the life of Micanopy, a principal chief during the Second Seminole War and a figure Silver Springs recognizes through the operation of the Glass Bottom Boat Chief Micanopy.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 4.

<sup>71</sup> J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles*, 254; and Nicky Aiken, email message to B. Cordell Moats, 20 May, 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

John K. Mahon's work, *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842*, was published in 1985 and specifically studies the events of the Second Seminole War. While this study is still one of the most specific in terms of time and focus, Mahon continuously fails to provide any Indigenous perspective in his presentation of the Second Seminole War. The structure of this study centers on White leadership during the war. The role of Indigenous leaders is either under-analyzed or over-inflated.

Exaggerations of Indigenous leadership are most notable for Osceola's role in the Second Seminole War. Mahon asserts that Osceola played a major leadership role among the Indigenous people during the Second Seminole War.<sup>72</sup> Mahon relies completely on reports from Osceola's White contemporaries to determine his role in the conflict, without consideration of how these reports may include misleading details. Indian Agent Wiley Thompson may have called Osceola 'bold and dashing' in an attempt to explain away his failures in negotiations.<sup>73</sup> General Thomas Jesup may have blamed Osceola for holding back other Indigenous people from immigration to excuse his failures to force immigration upon the Seminole people.<sup>74</sup> While the issues of John Mahon's study make it a problematic secondary source, by recognizing the biases and flaws of the book, the information found within it can aid in a study of Native leadership.

Mahon writes that among the people of the United States, Osceola's short life, his treacherous capture, and his death in prison had gripped the imagination of the country.<sup>75</sup> This portrayal sheds light on how Euro-American contemporaries viewed and remembered Native leaders from the Second Seminole War. Silver Springs has relied on the memories of Osceola

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<sup>72</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), 91.

<sup>73</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 91.

<sup>74</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 204.

<sup>75</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 218.

presented by his Euro-American contemporaries, as the life of Osceola has historically been referenced on numerous occasions, and today is recounted on a statue located near the Silver River springhead.<sup>76</sup>

C. S. Monaco's *The Second Seminole War and the Limits of American Aggression*, and John and Mary Lou Missall's *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict*, are substantial improvements upon Mahon's writing. Monaco focuses on dispelling misinformation regarding debated topics including the importance of Osceola and African American involvement in the Second Seminole War.<sup>77</sup> The Missalls study the entire Seminole War era from 1817 to 1858 and provide connections between each of the three conflicts that are usually presented individually. Other notable work on nineteenth-century Native Americans in Florida includes the overly dramatic account presented by Ron Soodalter, which plays into a folklore style of storytelling.<sup>78</sup> Parts of all of these studies, along with the work of other nineteenth-century historians such as Mahon and Wright, assist in comprehending the lives of important historical Native American figures that continue to be utilized in tourist efforts at sites such as Silver Springs.

Twentieth-century Seminole history has only been thoroughly explored in a small selection of publications. Harry Kersey's study *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal, 1933-1942* argues that the Depression and New Deal eras signified a period of change and cultural

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<sup>76</sup> B. Cordell Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*, personal photograph, 17 March, 2020; and Bruce Mozert. *Young visitors standing by a statue of Osceola at Silver Springs*. 1950 (circa). Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/343852>; and Andy Fillmore, "WILD WATERS Last splash - The water park next to Silver Springs hosts its final customers," *The Daily Commercial*, (Leesburg, FL), September 6, 2016: 3, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/15F3EC2F08385AD8>.

<sup>77</sup> C. S. Monaco, *The Second Seminole War and the Limits of American Aggression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), **Pages**.

<sup>78</sup> Ron Soodalter, "On Removing Seminoles." *Military History* 29 (2) (July 2012): 66-67.

adaptation for the Seminoles.<sup>79</sup> Kersey briefly looks at the Seminoles just before the Great Depression. Many Seminole people had already begun to face hardships in the early twentieth century with the demise of hunting and trapping as the base of their economy.<sup>80</sup> Following an analysis of how the Depression affected the Seminoles, Kersey focuses heavily on New Deal policies and their impact on Indigenous Floridians.

Kersey concludes by examining the impact the Great Depression and New Deal eras had on the Seminoles that grew up during that time. Kersey observes, “Nearly a decade of depression era economics and Indian New Deal policies provided the crucible in which Seminole culture began to be dramatically, if not immediately, reshaped.”<sup>81</sup> This is discussed in detail by historian Andrew Frank, who explained in 2014, that “Nineteenth-century Americans created the idea of a “Seminole” nation.”<sup>82</sup> As established by these researchers, the Great Depression and the New Deal thus signify a period of cultural change, which led to the development of a Seminole ethnic identity among what had previously been multiple Indigenous cultures.<sup>83</sup>

*The Seminoles of Florida*, by James Covington, specifically explores the history of the Seminole people from their settlement in modern-day Florida to the establishment of Seminole reservations and beyond. Covington intends to provide a comprehensive historical account of the Seminole people and therefore spends time discussing every period of Seminole history. Covington begins by reinforcing a common mistake that he believes in regarding the origin of the Seminole people by stating that “The first Seminoles were really Creeks who had migrated to Florida, and so they operated under the Creek form of government.”<sup>84</sup> Covington also introduces

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<sup>79</sup> Harry A. Kersey Jr., *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal, 1933-1942*, xi.

<sup>80</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 171.

<sup>82</sup> Frank, “Creating a Seminole Enemy,” 277.

<sup>83</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 171; Frank, “Creating a Seminole Enemy,” 277.

<sup>84</sup> James, W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1993), 5-6.

the Creek people concerning the Creek Confederation and fails to note the differences between the Creek Confederation and the Creek people. Not all the people that Covington refers to as Creek were part of the Creek Confederation.<sup>85</sup> This is a major issue at the very beginning of Covington's work and hurts the work's initial credibility.

Covington utilizes a problematic style and focus. Writing from a Western perspective, Covington appears to unintentionally belittle or disrespect Indigenous people. A sign of this is in the discussion of the early Indigenous groups that lived in modern-day Florida, where the author uses outdated terms and phrases such as "The peaceful and *semicivilized* Apalachees" and "*savage* Calusa Indians."<sup>86</sup> This issue continues throughout the study. Another example is Covington's focus on glorifying White attempts to "help" Native people and blaming the Natives for failures "Over a short span of years the combined efforts of private and governmental agencies to aid the Seminoles were doomed to failure, for the Seminoles did not want to learn English or to farm extensively when they were free to roam throughout southern Florida."<sup>87</sup> All these issues reflect the period it was written, but it is still a good source for basic facts about the Seminoles if discretion is used. With these caveats considered, it still provides a good explanation of what is known regarding the decline of other groups indigenous to Florida, and how many Native people moved into the area following that decline. Groups such as the Timucuas dealt with issues including: "Carolina slave raiders, migrations, disease, and war with the Spanish."<sup>88</sup> Covington argues that disease affected the Calusas and took a major toll on their

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<sup>85</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 3-4. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>87</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 164.

<sup>88</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 3.

population.<sup>89</sup> Silver Springs mostly focuses on the history of later Indigenous Floridians, however, Covington verifies the few references the site makes to earlier inhabitants of Florida.

Covington dedicates a few chapters to the history of the Seminole Wars but focuses primarily on the post-war periods. The establishment of Seminole reservations receives the most attention. According to Covington, White society did little to assist Seminole people within Florida in the early years following the end of the Seminole Wars. Covington explains that in 1899 the Florida legislature “set aside a large tract of land for the use of the Seminoles, but since practically all of the land had already been deeded to corporations and individual citizens, the action was fruitless.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly, early attempts to establish a school in Brevard County never moved past the planning stages.<sup>91</sup>

Both Kersey and Covington provide needed references to the life of Charley Cypress, a Seminole leader connected to Silver Springs in the early twentieth century.<sup>92</sup> Covington is one of a few sources to reference the life of Charley Cypress. Covington says Cypress was “the last of the old-time canoe makers.”<sup>93</sup> Art historian Dorothy Downs also briefly mentions Cypress for his skills as a craftsman in her book *Art of the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians*. Jerald Milanich’s and Nina Root’s publication of Julian Dimock’s photographs, *Hidden Seminoles: Julian Dimock’s Historic Florida Photographs*, contains the earliest physical records of Cypress.<sup>94</sup>

Another historian whose research has provided insights into Cypress’s life is Merwyn Garbarino,

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<sup>89</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 4.

<sup>90</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 164.

<sup>91</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 164.

<sup>92</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 41; and Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 208.

<sup>93</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 208.

<sup>94</sup> Dorothy Downs, *Art of the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 245; and Jerald T. Milanich and Nina J. Root, *Hidden Seminoles: Julian Dimock’s Historic Florida Photographs*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 1-2, 140-41, 144, 147, 148, and 135.



but this is limited by a lack of direct references.<sup>95</sup> Cypress lived part-time at Silver Springs beginning in 1935. Today Silver Springs continues to reference Cypress' life with the operation of the Glass Bottom Boat Chief Charley Cypress.<sup>96</sup>

While Kersey, Frank, and Covington explored Seminole history during the twentieth century, the most important look into this period is Betty Mae Tiger Jumper's and Patsy West's *A Seminole Legend: The Live of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper*. Furthermore, Patricia Wickman's book on late twentieth-century Seminoles, *Warriors Without War: Seminole Leadership in the Late Twentieth Century*, is a good supplemental study to Tiger Jumper's and West's work. However, Silver Springs' historical references to twentieth-century Seminoles deal primarily with the early to mid-periods of the century, so Wickman's focus on the later portion of the twentieth century limits the contributions of her study to this work. Tiger Jumper's and West's book is not a typical autobiography or historical publication. The authors illustrate their contributions to the publication by italicizing the sections written by Tiger Jumper and using Roman type for West's contributions.<sup>97</sup> This helps the reader understand which parts are autobiographical and which parts offer historical context and interpretation. Silver Springs has recently begun to reference Tiger Jumper's life with the addition of an ADA-accessible Glass Bottom Boat named the Chief Potackee Betty Mae Tiger Jumper in 2020.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Merwyn S. Garbarino, *Big Cypress: A Changing Seminole Community* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, inc., 1972), 2-3.

<sup>96</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, 1989) 41; Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 208; and Nicky Aiken, email message, 20 May 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and Patsy West, *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), xv.

<sup>98</sup> Danielle Johnson, "All aboard! Silver Springs State Park welcomes first wheelchair-accessible glass-bottom boat," *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, August 26, 2021, NewsBank: Access World News. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/184A0E58D60705D8>.

Tiger Jumper showcases an Indigenous style of telling her own story. This is done by beginning the story multiple generations before Tiger Jumper's birth with an account of how her family, the Snake clan, survived in Florida during the Second Seminole War.<sup>99</sup> Tiger Jumper's great-grandmother and her sister escaped capture and forced immigration to Indian Territory.<sup>100</sup> The survival of the Snake clan in Florida is not typically expected to be included in a twentieth-century story, however; Tiger Jumper depicts the importance of her family's history to her identity.

Importantly, Tiger Jumper and West do not focus on just the four years that she served as the "Chief" or Chair of the Seminole Tribal Council. Instead, they cover Tiger Jumper's childhood education and her role as a spokesperson through tribal news. These two portions of Tiger Jumper's life are vital in developing her as a leader in her community. In discussing her life, Tiger Jumper states, "I hope that it will be possible for more to follow and as I saw children following in my footsteps toward an education I knew then that I would never quit school which my grandmother wished me very much to do, because it means everything to me to see my tribe take an interest toward the school which we need so badly."<sup>101</sup> While seeking her education, Tiger Jumper became a trailblazer for others from her tribe to gain an education. While elders such as her grandmother, saw her actions negatively, today it appears that access to education helped the Seminole people to develop and grow in their own way. Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and Patsy West showcased a distinctive form of leadership within the Indigenous Seminole culture.

### **Summary:**

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<sup>99</sup> Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 1-7.

<sup>100</sup> Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 3-7.

<sup>101</sup> Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 117.

The Silver Springs tourist site exhibits specific figures from Native American history. Who these figures were, and the portions of their lives that have had lasting, memorable, impacts, play a key role in why they are included at Silver Springs. Wright and Mahon explore the fundamental history of Indigenous people in the nineteenth century. Sources dealing with the twentieth century such as Covington, Frank, Kersey, and Tiger Jumper and West, have made significant additions to our understanding of Native American life and experiences in the time after the Seminole Wars. A number of these sources, especially those from Mahon and Covington, face issues of Western bias, however, they still include important insights into Native American history in Florida. All available sources are essential to accurately reconstruct the lives and accomplishments of the figures related to Native American history and Silver Springs.

Comprehension of sources from the fields of public history and Native American history is essential to understanding how Silver Springs has appropriated Native American culture and history. Unfortunately, few publications address the role of Native American history at tourist sites besides traditional historic locations and museums. Silver Springs exemplifies non-traditional historical tourism and how such sites have employed Native American history for their considerations. To fully comprehend the misuse of Native American history requires critical analysis of each Native leader referenced at the park to contrast their portrayal with historical reality. Academics such as Phillips, Berkhofer, Kilpatrick, and O'Connor have exposed the driving factors that have shaped the misrepresentation of Native people by the American public. The work of these scholars is a guide to untangling the inaccurate Seminole depictions at Silver Springs and how they originated.

## Chapter I:

### HISTORY OF TOURISM AT SILVER SPRINGS

“Silver Springs. . . renowned in my youth for its glass-bottom bats and rattlesnake milking and alligator wrestling shows, has added retail stores, a jeep safari, a water park, and concerts. The reptile shows retired with Ross Allen in the mid-’70s and swimming was restricted in the late 60’s. But the boats with their underwater views still are a major attraction.”

–Susan Harb, *New York Times* Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002.<sup>102</sup>

The Silver Springs of my youth was the Jeep Safari, Wild Waters water park, and concerts that Susan Harb described in 2002, but it was also the Glass Bottom Boats that have persevered through two world wars, segregation, and multiple ownership changes. Historians including Evan Nooe have stated that “The cool, freshwater springs of Florida have drawn explorers, migrants, and tourists for centuries.”<sup>103</sup> The Silver Springs of today, a Florida State Park, is easily described as a shell of the park that was once “the monarch of all the state’s many attractions.”<sup>104</sup> Nearly all the rides have been removed, making the Glass Bottom Boats once again the location’s only attraction. Today the importance of Silver Springs as a tourist destination is difficult to understand given the small exposure the park has to modern audiences. However, Silver Springs developed and defined the tourism industry of Florida for nearly a century. By analyzing the history of Silver Springs, from its first use as a tourist destination to the modern day, this chapter will showcase the importance of the park as a major point of development in the state of Florida.

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<sup>102</sup> Susan Harb, “Central Florida, Pre-Mickey: A Former Resident Returns to Canoe, Tour Back Roads and Shop in Small Town Just a Short Drive from Orland,” *New York Times* (1923-), Nov 17, 2002, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/central-florida-pre-mickey/docview/92276476/se-2>.

<sup>103</sup> F. Evan Nooe, “Reveries of Florida’s Past: Documenting Historic & Imagined Florida,” *Journal of Florida Studies* 1 (7) (2018) 5.

<sup>104</sup> Tim Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails: Florida’s Tourist Springs*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2006), 6.

Only a few academic-level studies have been conducted on the history of Silver Springs. While the work of other historians helps provide context and overviews of the park's history, the currently published material provides an incomplete picture of the history at Silver Springs. A major portion of Silver Springs's history is dependent on oral histories. Studies such as Lu Vickers and Cynthia Wilson-Graham's *Remembering Paradise Park* contain excellent uses of oral histories. Other primary sources often are found in two forms, newspapers or photographs. Silver Springs had a resident professional photographer, Bruce Mozert, who enjoyed almost exclusive access to photograph the park through a large portion of the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> Many of Mozert's photos are now available to the public through the Florida Memory Project of the Florida State Library and Archives. This chapter will utilize as many of these sources as possible to better understand the full history of Silver Springs and its role in the tourist industry of Florida.

Human history at Silver Springs began long before the expansion of tourism into the region. The earliest evidence of people around the area now part of Silver Springs dates back to the Ice Age, and some archeological sites have been dated back to 12,000 to 14,000 years ago.<sup>106</sup> Archaeologist Jason O'Donoughue explores early human history along the Silver River in his book, *Water from Stone: Archaeology and Conservation at Florida's Springs*. O'Donoughue explains that "Several pre-Columbian archaeological sites have been recorded proximate to Silver Springs."<sup>107</sup> Among the Indigenous artifacts found around Silver Springs and the Silver

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<sup>105</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 19-20; and Lu Vickers and Cynthia Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park: Tourism and Segregation at Silver Springs* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015) 148.

<sup>106</sup> Scott Mitchell, Director of the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 10 April 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interviews, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124); and Jason O'Donoughue, *Water from Stone: Archaeology and Conservation at Florida's Springs*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 143.

<sup>107</sup> O'Donoughue, *Water from Stone*, 143.

River are pottery fragments, hunting remains, and a canoe that was dated between 1030 and 1250 CE.<sup>108</sup> The pre-Columbian canoe is still in the Silver River and is even highlighted during current Glass Bottom Boat tours. O'Donoghue references archeological studies that have been completed around the Silver River, "it is clear that the primary activity taking place at Silver Springs was the mobilization and reduction of lithic raw materials."<sup>109</sup> The pre-Columbian history of Silver Springs establishes long-term human usage of the location.

Tim Hollis' book, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails: Florida's Tourist Springs* published in 2006, offers the most detailed historical account of Silver Springs tourism. The first recreational visitors to the springhead of the Silver River, where Silver Springs was later established, began to arrive in the post-Civil War era.<sup>110</sup> The Silver River is a tributary of the Ocklawaha River, which in turn flows into the St. Johns River where the water flows into the Atlantic Ocean. Early visitors traveled up these rivers on steamboats to reach the clear waters and beautiful landscape of inland Florida.<sup>111</sup> The land surrounding the springheads of the Silver River was owned by multiple individuals in the Post-Civil War era, however, in 1924 a major turning point occurred when two competing local businessmen teamed up to purchase the land. Carl Ray and W.C. "Shorty" Davidson invested in the land and built a fully developed amusement park around the springs and defined the location for the next four decades.<sup>112</sup>

At the time of Ray and Davidson's purchase, the primary asset of the park was the small fleet of Glass Bottom Boats. Previous studies of the park, such as one conducted by Wendy King in 2004, identify a man named Phillip Morell as the inventor of the Glass Bottom Boat. The first

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<sup>108</sup> O'Donoghue, *Water from Stone*, 143.

<sup>109</sup> O'Donoghue, *Water from Stone*, 150.

<sup>110</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 7.

<sup>111</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 7.

<sup>112</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 8. Silver Springs was considered an amusement park from 1923 to 2013 as it featured various attractions and events for entertainment purposes.

boat was built in the 1870s, however, it was not until the 1890s that the boats were put into commercial use.<sup>113</sup> However, current Glass Bottom Boat captain Robbie Morin stated during a recent interview that “they’ve been running [Glass Bottom Boats] since 1878, a 14-year-old boy named Hemmell Jones took a wooden rowboat, put a piece of glass in the bottom of it and he started paddling up and down the river, doing tours for about a nickel a piece.”<sup>114</sup> Hollis’ more recent work finds that the exact origin of the boats is debated. Some historians have stated that they have been unable to identify any records of Glass Bottom Boat voyages earlier than 1880, while others have stated that the boats were not invented until the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>115</sup>



Figure 1: First glass bottom boat at the Springs–Silver Springs, Florida. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida.

Figure 1, dated 1910, titled “First glass bottom boat at the springs–Silver Springs, Florida,” is from the Florida Memory Project of the Florida State Library and Archives. It is unclear if this is the first glass bottom boat to operate on the Silver River, but the image does at least showcase the first commercial design of the Glass Bottom Boat, a small rowboat operated with two paddles, positioned at one end of the vessel.<sup>116</sup> A postcard photo,

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<sup>113</sup> Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs: Tourism and the Politics of Vision,” *Americanana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* 3 (1) (spring 2004), [https://americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring\\_2004/king.htm](https://americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2004/king.htm).

<sup>114</sup> Robbie Morin, Glass Bottom Boat Captain, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 28 March 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>115</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 9-10.

<sup>116</sup> *First glass bottom boat at the springs - Silver Springs, Florida*. 1910. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/149849>>, accessed 28 November 2022.

most likely from the early twentieth century, shows that as the boats were made larger, the paddles were moved to just slightly forward of the vessel's middle.<sup>117</sup>

At the start of the Ray and Davidson era, the Glass Bottom Boat fleet operated with gas-powered outboard motors. Figure 2 shows the design of the Glass Bottom Boats during the duration of the time Silver Springs was owned by Ray and Davidson. Passengers were enclosed in the main portion of the vessel by windows and



Figure 2: Glass bottom Boat “Bonnie Ray” - Silver Springs, Florida. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida.

there was a small deck at the front of the boat.<sup>118</sup> A reported tragedy occurred at Silver Springs in 1931, when an explosion set fire to a Glass Bottom Boat claiming the life of one individual and injuring several.<sup>119</sup> In 1932, the fleet was reoutfitted with electric motors.<sup>120</sup> No reports suggest that the decision to switch the boats to electric motors was due to the 1931 tragedy, but the timing of the tragedy most likely had a role in the decision to change. Oral traditions reported by Robbie Morin state that the move to electric power was in response to a boat fire, though he believed no one had been onboard. Morin also believes Thomas Edison, Charles Goodyear, and Harvey Firestone designed and built the first electric motors for Glass Bottom Boats.<sup>121</sup> While this oral tradition offers value to connect the electrification of the boats to the 1931 tragedy, the

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<sup>117</sup> *Glass bottom boats on the springs - Silver Springs, Florida*, 20th century, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/149839>>, accessed 30 November 2022.

<sup>118</sup> *Glass bottom boat “Bonnie Ray” - Silver Springs, Florida*, 20th century, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/165996>>, accessed 30 November 2022.

<sup>119</sup> “One Dies, 13 Saved in Blast on Boat: Glass-Bottom Tourist Craft is Burned at Resort in Florida,” *The Washington Post (1923-1954)*, Feb 07, 1931, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/one-dies-13-saved-blast-on-boat/docview/150187250/se-2> (accessed November 30, 2022).

<sup>120</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 10.

<sup>121</sup> Morin, Zoom interview, 28 March 2023.



involvement of famous inventors such as Edison has yet to be verified. The current fleet at Silver Springs State Park, built in the 1960s, still run on similar electric motors powered by eight lead-acid batteries.<sup>122</sup>

While under the ownership of Ray and Davidson, Silver Springs began to grow by expanding from a singular Glass Bottom Boat attraction to include reptile exhibits and shows, a longer river boat tour known as the Jungle Cruise, and other attractions that appealed to middle-class Americans.<sup>123</sup> The first addition to Silver Springs was the Reptile Institute, founded by Ross Allen in 1930. Ross Allen is described by Tim Hollis as “A young man. . . [who] had made a hobby of capturing snakes, turtles, and other reptiles from the swampy bogs around Silver Springs.”<sup>124</sup> The Reptile Institute featured snake milking and Alligator wrestling along with educational showcases. A newspaper report from 1930 found that Silver Springs had attracted approximately fifty tourist parties to the Ocala area during the winter season. Tourist parties this year included over six hundred people from Illinois, Indiana, New England, and other regions from the northeast of the United States.<sup>125</sup> Wendy King notes that the Reptile Institute at Silver Springs exemplified a cultural shift in tourism away from the upper-class genteel culture as the market became more readily available in the twentieth century to the middle class.<sup>126</sup>

Despite the addition of attractions that appealed to the middle class, King also noted that American tourism never completely subverted the genteel culture that dominated in the late

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<sup>122</sup> Danielle Johnson, “All aboard! Silver Springs State Park welcomes first wheelchair-accessible glass-bottom boat,” *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, August 26, 2021, NewsBank: Access World News. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/184A0E58D60705D8>.

<sup>123</sup> Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

<sup>124</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 11.

<sup>125</sup> “Silver Springs Draws Visitors to Ocala, FLA.: Fifty Tourist Parties Already Booked for Noted Resort,” *The Christian Science Monitor (1908-)*, Dec 12, 1930, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/silver-springs-draws-visitors-ocala-fla/docview/512910432/se-2>.

<sup>126</sup> Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

nineteenth century.<sup>127</sup> King states that “Silver Springs as a uniquely American landscape, as a sublime and picturesque earthly paradise, and the glass-bottom boat as a privileged way of seeing, all have their roots in European aesthetics and scientific tradition that attempt to elevate and contain the natural landscape.” King relies on promotions of the park as evidence to make her case that up to 2004, the park always relied on and still relies on its upper-class tourist origins. When Allen opened the Reptile Institute, little was changed in the park’s promotional material, where Florida and Silver Springs are framed as an earthly paradise.<sup>128</sup>

As one of Florida’s leading tourist sites, Silver Springs was a founding member of the Florida Attractions Association (FAA), formed in 1949. In Dorothy Mays’ research on an unrelated Florida attraction, she notes that the FAA was “a professional organization that played an important role in safeguarding Florida’s reputation as a place for a quality family vacation.”<sup>129</sup> The FAA recognized that “Dirty or substandard facilities, cheap souvenirs, maltreated animals, or attractions which advertised far more than they delivered gave the entire tourist attraction industry a bad name.”<sup>130</sup> Membership in the FAA required that attractions provide a level of quality for tourists, and the primary benefits of membership included inclusion in the FAA’s official map of attractions and other promotional efforts.<sup>131</sup> The efforts of the FAA to protect the tourist industry also protected visitors to the state from being cheated by unprofessional roadside attractions around the state.

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<sup>127</sup> Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

<sup>128</sup> Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

<sup>129</sup> Dorothy Mays, “Gatorland: Survival of the Fittest among Florida’s Mid-Tier Tourist Attractions,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, 87 (4) (Spring 2009), 522.

<sup>130</sup> Dorothy Mays, “Gatorland,” 522.

<sup>131</sup> Dorothy Mays, “Gatorland,” 522-523.

Tim Hollis also credits Ross Allen, founder of the Reptile Institute, with creating the Seminole Village, a replica of a Seminole village in the Everglades, in 1935.<sup>132</sup> Seminoles from the Big Cypress Reservation, including Charley Cypress and his family, were hired to live in the village.<sup>133</sup> Oral reports have suggested that Allen stepped in to manage the village following an early falling out between the Seminole residents and the original manager.<sup>134</sup> The village is no longer standing, so the conditions of the village are unknown.

Silver Springs was a late, northern, addition to the Seminole tourist village market. Often criticized as exploitative and disease-ridden, Seminole tourist villages inhabit a complicated portion of Seminole history. The first Seminole tourist village was opened in 1914 by Henry Coppinger. Coppinger's initial operation of a tourist village appears the most exploitative as he initially did not pay the village members. Instead, they were compensated by selling craft goods to his curio shop also located on the property.<sup>135</sup> As other tourist villages began to form, village members began to receive compensation via tourist admission fees.

The operation of Seminole tourist villages including the one at Silver Springs was driven by guest expectations of Native people. The village was promoted as "America's strangest community," and the home of "Primitive people at work and at play in their natural surroundings, just as they are in the heart of the impenetrable Everglades."<sup>136</sup> The use of generic "Indian" symbols such as totem poles and the presentation of a male "Chief" in charge of the

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<sup>132</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 11.

<sup>133</sup> Wilfred T. Neill, "Dugouts of the Mikasuki Seminole," *The Florida Anthropologist* 6 (3), (September 1953): 77.

<sup>134</sup> Mitchell, Zoom interview, 10 April 2023.

<sup>135</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 190.

<sup>136</sup> Handbill, 1999.1.6, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation.

<https://semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/archive/46FDE02D-594F-4121-B670-462295482923>; and *See Silver Springs Brochure, ca. 1934*. 1934 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

<<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341237>>, accessed 12 June 2023.

village were also all directly tied into guest beliefs of Native people and their culture.<sup>137</sup> The presentation of Native people in a fashion that satisfied guest expectations failed to properly educate the public on the complexities of Seminole history and culture.

In the 1930s, around the time the Silver Springs village began operating, the pay for living in a tourist village averaged around six dollars per week per family, and food was provided.<sup>138</sup> Many complaints made against the tourist villages came from federal Office of Indian Affairs officers such as James Glen.<sup>139</sup> However, a part of Glen's argument against tourist villages was the belief that "As long as such places were allowed to exist as an alternative to employment, the process of getting the Seminoles into proper industrial pursuits on the reservations would be prolonged."<sup>140</sup> Such complaints against the operation of tourist villages usually contained assimilationist rhetoric and less than altruistic motivation. Despite the bias of many critics, certain points did merit value, especially the issue of disease. There was a high rate of venereal diseases among residents of tourist villages throughout the twentieth century.<sup>141</sup> The experience for Native people living at Silver Springs was similar to other tourist villages in Florida. The long-time manager of the village, Ross Allen, is reported to have treated the Native workers well, but most of the park operators, including Ray and Davison, did not. Most people saw the Seminole residents as money-makers.<sup>142</sup>

Another important viewpoint often not considered by those that criticized tourist villages was the opinion of the Seminoles that participated in these tourist attractions. Historian Harry

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<sup>137</sup> Dorothy Downs, *Art of the Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 250; and Handbill, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

<sup>138</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 191.

<sup>139</sup> Harry A. Kersey, Jr., *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal: 1933-1942*, (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, 1989), 40.

<sup>140</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 40.

<sup>141</sup> Kersey, *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 40.

<sup>142</sup> Mitchell, Zoom interview, 10 April 2023.

Kersey Jr. points out, “Certainly the Indians went there of their own free will, and it has been suggested that the lifestyle was not too different from what they had known in the Everglades except they were getting paid to let tourists see them performing everyday tasks.”<sup>143</sup> Many Seminoles found tourist villages to be an environment of compromise between earning an income and preserving their traditional culture.<sup>144</sup> Historian Andrew Frank observes, “Seminole Indians, for their part, responded to the growth of Florida tourism by inserting themselves into and often taking some control of the process.”<sup>145</sup> Frank also discusses the effects of participating in Florida tourism on Seminole culture. Many cultural activities presented as authentic traditions were adopted after their invention as tourist activities.<sup>146</sup> Tourist villages like the one at Silver Springs thus also assisted in changing Seminole culture as well as preserving other portions of it.

Another mainstay at Silver Springs during the Ray and Davidson era was an African American woman called Aunt Silla. Aunt Silla was a resident storyteller at Silver Springs and specialized in telling “The Legend of the Bridal Chamber.” This story supposedly explained how one of the springs was named, and followed a plot of ‘star-crossed lovers.’<sup>147</sup> Aunt Silla passed away in 1950, claiming to have lived to 110, but her story continued to be used for some time after her passing.<sup>148</sup> Both Hollis and King note that by the early twenty-first century, a new story regarding the name of the Bridal Chamber Spring had been adapted to the Glass Bottom Boat

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<sup>143</sup> Kersey, Jr., *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 41.

<sup>144</sup> Kersey, Jr., *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 41.

<sup>145</sup> Andrew K. Frank, “Authenticity for Sale: The Everglades, Seminole Indians, and the Construction of a Pay-Per-View Culture,” in Karen L. Cox, *Destination Dixie: Tourism and Southern History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 286.

<sup>146</sup> Frank, “Authenticity for Sale,” 294.

<sup>147</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 12-13.

<sup>148</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 13, and Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

Tour. The newer story involved an “Indian Prince” and his lost love.<sup>149</sup> King notes that these stories “[illustrate] the continued presence of Native American and gender stereotypes at Silver Springs.”<sup>150</sup> Similarly, Aunt Silla’s role at Silver Springs, and the use of her story after her passing in 1950, points out how race has been an issue at Silver Springs for an extended time.

During a 2008 interview, Cynthia Wilson-Graham stated that “You don’t see anything about Paradise Park in Silver Springs history, and that’s what is missing.”<sup>151</sup> From 1949 to 1969, Paradise Park operated as the only option for African Americans to visit the Silver Springs attractions. Wilson-Graham later co-authored *Remembering Paradise Park: Tourism and Segregation at Silver Springs* with Lu Vickers. This publication serves as the best study of the history of Paradise Park. The evidence Vickers and Wilson-Graham utilized includes photographs, brochures, and, most notably, oral testimony from former employees and park guests. Other sources that discuss Paradise Park typically explore how the park began, but do not explore the operational history of the facilities as presented by *Remembering Paradise Park*.

Paradise Park did not begin as an African American tourist destination. The original form of Paradise Park was founded by M. R. Porter in 1927 and acted as competition to Silver Springs. From 1927 to 1935, Silver Springs owners Carl Ray and Shorty Davidson fought legal battles with Paradise Park in an attempt to eliminate their competition. When the court avenue failed, Silver Springs resorted to buying out Paradise Park in 1935.<sup>152</sup> During WWII, a tourist

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<sup>149</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 13, and Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

<sup>150</sup> Wendy Adams King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

<sup>151</sup> Joe Vanhoose, “Lecturer sees Paradise Park as Hidden History,” *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, February 11, 2008, *NewsBank: Access World News*. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/11ECEB3513B764D0>.

<sup>152</sup> Joe Callahan, “Paradise Park thrived as Springs alternative.” *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, November 25, 1996: 6. *NewsBank: Access World News*. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/1033811BD71CDBCE>.

boom hit Silver Springs with members of the armed forces stationed in Florida visiting the park. Following the war, Ray and Davidson's advertising efforts kept their market growing. Vickers and Wilson-Graham state that the number of "Visitors to Silver Springs quadrupled after the war."<sup>153</sup>

In the growing tourism market, however, the laws and customs of the Jim Crow South left out a major segment of the population. Vickers and Wilson-Graham state that "To their credit, during an era when swimming pools, lakes, and even beaches on the Atlantic Coast were hard to come by for African Americans. Carl Ray and Shorty Davidson turned to Eddie Vereen, a Silver Springs boat captain, not only to manage Paradise Park but essentially create it from the ground up using their resources."<sup>154</sup> It is unclear what remained of the original Paradise Park in 1949. Since the park had been shut down for over ten years, Vickers and Wilson-Graham's claim that the 1949 reopening was created from the ground up is most likely accurate.

Of course, the owners marketed the venture to open a new park for African American guests as altruistically as they could. However other, more practical motivations were also involved, most notably "They also created Paradise Park to answer the demands of the Glass Bottom Boats drivers."<sup>155</sup> For a majority of the park's history, the Glass Bottom Boats had been captained by African American men. Despite this, these men and their families were not allowed to visit the park as guests.<sup>156</sup> Boat captains such as Eddie Vereen wanted to allow their families and friends to see and experience the Springs. This desire was central to the opening of Paradise Park.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Lu Vickers and Cynthia Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park: Tourism and Segregation at Silver Springs* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 3.

<sup>154</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 8.

<sup>156</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 8.

<sup>157</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 9.

Carl Ray and Shorty Davidson's true intentions behind opening Paradise Park cannot be discerned today. The input of African American employees appears to have played a clear role. Economic gain also played a role, as there were few competitors for African American tourism in the region at the time.<sup>158</sup> Also, personal beliefs and opinions must have affected the decision. Glass Bottom Boat captain Edgar Samuel recalled the Ray family's treatment of him and other African American employees as mostly positive, "Carl Ray was a very kind man; he treated his employees fair. . . [Walter C.] Buck Ray, Carl's son, was a kind man; when I needed something for my family he was always there for me. Buck Ray was always in my Corner."<sup>159</sup> Shorty Davidson is remembered less fondly, Paradise Park guest, James Curley Sr. reported that Shorty Davidson was a nice man but had no hesitation in using racial slurs.<sup>160</sup> Regardless of the motivation for Ray and Davidson's new venture at Paradise Park, the decision proved to be a lucrative investment.

Cheryl Murphy, archives coordinator and historian at the Howard Academy & Community Center, stated in a 1996 interview that "More than 100,000 people each year visited Paradise Park, most of whom were travelers coming from New York to Miami, using Paradise Park as a stop over."<sup>161</sup> By all accounts, the park was a great experience, Bill "Blue" Ray, the son of park owner Carl Ray, stated that "the colored people did not consider themselves deprived during trips to the park; as a matter of fact they had just as much fun as the people at the head of the Spring; it seemed like they had more fun."<sup>162</sup> It is important to consider the bias of Blue Ray's interpretation. As the son of a park owner, he would feel that their efforts were successful.

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<sup>158</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 11.

<sup>159</sup> Edgar Samuel in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 12.

<sup>160</sup> James Curley Sr. in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 127.

<sup>161</sup> Joe Callahan, "Paradise Park thrived as Springs alternative."

<sup>162</sup> Bill "Blue" Ray in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 127.



However, Vickers and Wilson-Graham remarked that “Ray and Davidson spared no expense in creating a beautiful landscape with swaying palm trees and lush flowerbeds.” Blue Ray does also acknowledge that there were differences between Silver Springs and Paradise Park, he admits that the differences were wrong, even though he leaves the exact differences unstated.<sup>163</sup>

Glass Bottom Boat Captain Leon Cheatom explained that while Ray and Davidson officially owned Paradise Park: “They let Eddie run it. He’d come to them if he had problems or



Figure 3: Boys in uniform boarding the “Mariam Ray” glass bottom boat at Paradise Park. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida.

needed something. He made money and he did it on his own: he knew what he was doing. He was a smart businessman.”<sup>164</sup> Eddie Vereen and his family were keys to the success that Paradise Park experienced. Vereen even spent time as park manager helping guests find accommodations, which was a major problem the park faced. At the time, there were only about fifty motel rooms in the area open to African Americans, while the park received an average of 6 busloads of guests every day.<sup>165</sup>

Attractions at Paradise Park mirrored what could be found at Silver Springs, including Ross Allen’s Reptile Institute, and the Glass Bottom Boats. Ross Allen himself worked some of the reptile shows performed at Paradise Park on busy days. Reginald Lewis, the grandson of Eddie Vereen stated that “Ross Allen had everything down there that was up at the white end.”<sup>166</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 13; and Bill “Blue” Ray in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 127.

<sup>164</sup> Leon Cheatom in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 130.

<sup>165</sup> Joe Callahan, “Paradise Park thrived as Springs alternative.”

<sup>166</sup> Reginald Lewis in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 135-136.

Among the Paradise Park reptiles was ‘Old Coochie,’ a female alligator that was nineteen and a half feet long from nose to tail.<sup>167</sup>

In the clearest example of the illogical nature of racism, Paradise Park did not possess its own Glass Bottom Boat fleet. Instead, they used the same boats and same captains that Silver Springs utilized. Once there were enough people gathered for a glass bottom boat ride at Paradise Park, a dispatcher called up to Silver Springs to have a boat sent downriver. In the introduction to *Remembering Paradise Park*, Vickers and Wilson-Graham recalled the question of a young Paradise Park visitor who asked her mother, “don’t they know we’re swimming in the same water and riding on the same boats?”<sup>168</sup>

The boat rides that left from Paradise Park were never able to tour the head of the spring, where the Silver Springs tours launched from, and the rides from Silver Springs never went as far downriver as Paradise Park. However, the ride experiences were otherwise nearly identical.<sup>169</sup> Figures 3 and 4 showcase how the same boat was in use as attractions at both Silver Springs and Paradise Park.<sup>170</sup> Also, sources have referenced a dock at



Figure 4: Miriam Ray glass bottom boat at Silver Springs. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida

Paradise Park that was like the dock at Silver Springs. However, in Figure 3, no dock can be seen. Perhaps the absence of the dock is just due to circumstances in the particular instance

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<sup>167</sup> Reginald Lewis in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 136.

<sup>168</sup> Johnnye Jacobs in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 1.

<sup>169</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 12.

<sup>170</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Boys in uniform boarding the “Miriam Ray” glass bottom boat at Paradise Park*, 1950 (circa), Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341077>; and Bruce Mozert, *Miriam Ray glass bottom boat at Silver Springs*, 1960 (circa), Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341882>.

captured here, but it is worth noting when looking at the Glass Bottom Boat experience at the two parks.

By 1962, Silver Springs served 1,750,000 guests a year. In May of the same year, news broke that Carl Ray and Shorty Davidson were planning on stepping away from their ownership roles, and connections to the park overall, by selling to the American Broadcasting Company (ABC)- Paramount Theatres.<sup>171</sup> ABC did finalize the purchase of both Silver Springs and Paradise Park by November 1962. While the purchasing price was never publicly disclosed, the *Wall Street Journal* reported at the time that the sale was “understood to be about 7.5 million dollars.”<sup>172</sup> Following the sale, one of Carl Ray’s sons, Carl “Buck” Ray, remained on staff as a consultant to ease the ownership transition.<sup>173</sup> Immediately after the purchase, ABC did not make many changes to the park. However, shifts in company culture soon began to set in.<sup>174</sup>

Leon Cheatom told Vickers and Wilson-Graham that under the management of ABC working at Silver Springs no longer felt “like family.”<sup>175</sup> Cultural changes in the attractions included efforts to homogenize the Glass Bottom Boat rides, under the previous ownership, the individual styles that each of the Glass Bottom Boat captains utilized were valued and made for unique experiences. Cheatom stated that “People wanted folklore, and we gave it to them.”<sup>176</sup> Under ABC ownership, speaking coaches were hired to help fine-tune tour narratives. However,

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<sup>171</sup> “ABC-Paramount Plans to Buy Florida Tourist Attraction,” *Wall Street Journal* (1923-), May 29, 1962, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/abc-paramount-plans-buy-florida-tourist/docview/132729579/se-2>.

<sup>172</sup> “ABC-Paramount Buys Silver Springs, Fla., A Tourist Attraction.” *Wall Street Journal* (1923-), Nov 01, 1962. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/abc-paramount-buys-silver-springs-fla-tourist/docview/132763099/se-2>.

<sup>173</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 31.

<sup>174</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 31, and Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 14-15.

<sup>175</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 14.

<sup>176</sup> Leon Cheatom in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 15.

this move resulted in much of the colorful tales and experiences being stripped from the attraction.<sup>177</sup>

Paradise Park also experienced troubles under new ownership. Eddie Vereen, park manager since the 1949 opening, retired in 1967.<sup>178</sup> As the era of segregation began to come to an end in the 1960s, the need for Paradise Park began to fade. Vickers and Wilson-Graham state that in 1969, “Rather than consulting with the community or integrating the park into Silver Springs, ABC made the decision simply to shut it down, to gate and lock the road leading into the park.”<sup>179</sup> Just the previous year, Paradise Park had reported the largest crowd of the summer season for its traditional Labor Day events, showing that the location was still a major attraction when it was quietly shut down and erased.<sup>180</sup> Within one generation, the park that had served so many African American guests for twenty years had nearly been forgotten.

Despite management changes Silver Springs remained a great tourist attraction through the 1960s.<sup>181</sup> However, in 1971, with changes in competition, Silver Springs lost the title of Florida’s primary tourist destination. Disney World, located just outside of Orlando, about two hours away from Silver Springs after the completion of Interstate 75, opened to near instant success. Other portions of the Florida tourist industry suffered greatly from the increased competition, but Silver Springs was able to continue.<sup>182</sup>

Through the 1980s, Silver Springs lost many of its major attractions built during the Ray and Davidson era. Ross Allen retired in the mid-1970s and with him gone, his reptile institute soon followed.<sup>183</sup> New attractions soon replaced the old, the Florida charm that the park used to

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<sup>177</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 14-15.

<sup>178</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 130.

<sup>179</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 15.

<sup>180</sup> Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park*, 170.

<sup>181</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 31-33.

<sup>182</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 33.

<sup>183</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 33 and Susan Harb, “Central Florida, Pre Mickey.”

market itself around for over four decades was largely erased. Only the natural aspects of the park were left untouched, which preserved the place of the Glass Bottom Boats at the park.

Figures 2, 3, and 4, also show some of the names of the featured Glass Bottom Boats during the era when Silver Springs was owned and operated by Ray and Davidson. According to the obituary of Bill “Blue” Ray, Silver Springs owner Carl Ray had both a daughter-in-law and a granddaughter named Miram.<sup>184</sup> The boat in both Figures 3 and 4 may have been named after either, or both, of them. Similarly, the boat in Figure 2, “Bonnie Ray,” may also have been named after a member of Carl Ray’s family. Similarly, a photograph from Bruce Mozert’s collection captures a Glass Bottom Boat named “Col. Davidson,” which may have been named after park owner Shorty Davidson or one of his family members.<sup>185</sup>



Figure 5: Glass bottom boats named after Chiefs at Silver Springs. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida.

Under ABC the boats, and their names, were changed. As shown in Figure 5, the boats were now more rounded at the front, with portholes along the top of the walls and a shorter front deck. Figure 5 also shows the names of some of the new boats and includes “Chief Micanopy,” “Chief Billy Bowlegs,” and “Chief Arpeika.”<sup>186</sup> Aside from maintenance periods, many of the boats built

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<sup>184</sup> Ann Sperring, “Bill Ray, former Silver Springs executive, dies at age 81,” *Ocala Star Banner*, March 30, 2011, <https://www.ocala.com/story/news/2011/03/30/bill-ray-former-silver-springs-executive-dies-at-age-81/64287626007/>.

<sup>185</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Young woman being photographed near the “Col. Davidson” glass bottom boat at Silver Springs*. 1950 (circa). Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341056>.

<sup>186</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Glass bottom boats named after Chiefs at Silver Springs*, 1960 (circa), Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341053>.

during ABC's ownership have been operational since the 1960s and continue to provide river tours today.<sup>187</sup> The reason to name the boats after Native American leaders remains unclear, including who made the decision and why each name was chosen. While there may be no current record explaining this, further oral history research may be able to shed information on the process.

In 1978, ABC added a water park addition to their Silver Springs holdings. Construction photos taken by Bruce Mozert show the development of the separate amusement park venture known as Wild Waters.<sup>188</sup> Wild Waters was connected to Silver Springs, but admission to Wild Waters was separate from the main Silver Springs attractions, and it operated as a stand-alone attraction. When the water park first opened, Wild Waters featured a wave pool, water slides, and a souvenir store called the Silver Valley Emporium.<sup>189</sup>



Figure 6: Slides shown during construction of the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida.

Figure 6 showcases the construction work on the Wild

Waters slides.<sup>190</sup> Similar to the addition of Glass Bottom Boats named after Native American leaders at Silver Springs, Wild Waters connected to Florida's Indigenous history through the

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<sup>187</sup> Danielle Johnson, "All aboard!"

<sup>188</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Installation of powerlines during construction of the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341033>.

<sup>189</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Landscapers working around the wave pool at the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341031>; Bruce Mozert, *Silver Valley Emporium being constructed at the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341032>; and Bruce Mozert, *Slides shown during construction of the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341026>.

<sup>190</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Slides shown during construction of the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341026>.

name of one water slide, Osceola's Revenge. Other attractions operated at Wild Waters included the Kids Zone and the waterslides Bunyan's Bend, the Silver Bullet, and the Mini-Monster.<sup>191</sup>

No records exist that indicate why ABC decided to expand Silver Springs into two parks with the opening of a water park attraction. The new venture served as an effort to attract more tourists to the location.

ABC only owned Silver Springs for twenty-two years, in 1984 the company sold Silver Springs to Florida Leisure Attractions. According to an *Orland Sentinel* article in 1985, Florida Leisure Attractions was a group of five unnamed executives who had previously worked for the American Broadcasting Company. The article reported that the park was still successful at this time, as "thousands of tourists each year come to take the glass bottom boat rides, stroll through the nature preserve, take the jungle cruise, and feed tame animals."<sup>192</sup>

Hollis affirmed that Florida Leisure Attractions sold the park in 1993 to the State of Florida but continued to operate the park under a lease agreement until 1999.<sup>193</sup> However, this conflicts with a report from the time, which stated that Silver Springs was bought from Florida Leisure Acquisition in 1996 by another corporation.<sup>194</sup> According to the *Ocala Star Banner*, the Ogden Corporation was "a publicly traded company whose major holdings are in energy production, including hydroelectric generation in Latin America and geothermal generation."<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Andy Fillmore, "Wild Waters Last splash - The water park next to Silver Springs hosts its final customers," *The Daily Commercial*, (Leesburg, FL), September 6, 2016: 3, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/15F3EC2F08385AD8>.

<sup>192</sup> Ritchie, Lauren. "Silver Springs." *The Orlando Sentinel*, May 26, 1985: 14. *NewsBank: Access World News*. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0EB6BE66CC88B563>.

<sup>193</sup> Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails*, 33.

<sup>194</sup> Christopher Lloyd, "Silver Springs -- Ogden Corporation is looking to sell Silver Springs attraction and more than a dozen other tourist parks as part of a move to divest itself from the entertainment industry," *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, November 24, 1999, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/10526C5D8F637D73>.

<sup>195</sup> Lloyd, "Silver Springs."

While Ogden may have been primarily an electrical company, it also operated a substantial entertainment division that hosted concerts, handled food distribution to event venues, and included a park group of about fifteen tourist attractions such as Silver Springs.<sup>196</sup> Both the *Ocala Star Banner* account and Hollis' account regarding ownership were partially correct. An article in the *Gainesville Sun* newspaper reported that Florida Leisure Attractions sold the land to the state of Florida and was operating the park under a lease agreement with the state until 1996 when the Ogden Corporation purchased the lease. What the Ogden Corporation owned, therefore, was not Silver Springs itself, but the management contract to operate the park at the site owned by the State of Florida.<sup>197</sup> The author of the *Ocala Star Banner* article, Christopher Lloyd, did not understand the complexity of ownership at Silver Springs at the time, while Hollis' account simplifies these complexities.

While the Ogden Corporation was involved in the operation of Silver Springs, the park experienced a major expansion, including eight new attractions at the main park and three more added to the Wild Waters water park. The multimillion-dollar expansion saw the addition of bear and alligator enclosures, and new restaurants.<sup>198</sup> Bob Gallagher, Vice President and GM of Ogden Entertainment, reported that 1999 represented a turnaround year for Silver Springs & Wild Waters.<sup>199</sup> Silver Springs had set daily admission to the park at around thirty-one dollars for adults and twenty-one for children. However, the park's new target audience had shifted to Ocala residents. To attract residents, Silver Springs introduced the One Pass ticket, which included park

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<sup>196</sup> Lloyd, "Silver Springs."

<sup>197</sup> Janine Young, "Silver Springs, Wild Waters are sold New management," *Gainesville Sun, The (FL)*, March 28, 2000, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/1294E8D44EE42DF8>.

<sup>198</sup> Lloyd, "SILVER SPRINGS."

<sup>199</sup> Tom Powell, "Silver Springs & Wild Waters Thrive in 1999; Concerts, One Pass Pay Off," *Amusement Business* 112 (11) (Mar 13, 2000): 30, <https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/silver-springs-amp-wild-waters-thrive-1999/docview/209426093/se-2>.



admission for an entire year, free parking, and admissions to the park's concert series and other special events, and cost about ten dollars more than the daily admission rates.<sup>200</sup>

Gallagher additionally stated that Silver Springs' national advertising efforts had been discontinued, "We're confining most of our efforts now to north and central Florida. Our area of emphasis next year will be with tour and travel groups to lure senior bus tours."<sup>201</sup> Despite the high investments and good reports from Silver Springs, shortcomings in Ogden's profit projections led to a change in executive leadership, which decided to begin divesting from their entertainment division. Operation of the park was later sold after only four years under the Ogden Corporation. The purchasing corporation, Alfa Alfa Holdings, acquired Silver Springs and Wild Waters along with thirteen other parks from Ogden's entertainment division in a one hundred and forty-eight million dollar purchase finalized in early 2000.<sup>202</sup> Alfa Alfa Holdings was a corporation based in Greece with ventures in civil construction, packaging, family recreation, and privatized operation of public utilities. The purchase of Ogden's amusement park and entertainment division was the company's first investment in the United States.<sup>203</sup>

By the recession period at the end of the 2000s, the operation of Silver Springs had passed to Palace Entertainment and its parent company Parques Reunidos. Palace Entertainment operated more than thirty water and amusement parks across the country. According to an *Ocala Star Banner* article, Florida's tourism marketing corporation, Visit Florida, reported a more than thirteen percent drop in the final quarter of 2008 and a significant decrease in out-of-state

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<sup>200</sup> Powell, "Silver Springs & Wild Waters Thrive in 1999."

<sup>201</sup> Powell, "Silver Springs & Wild Waters Thrive in 1999."

<sup>202</sup> Young, "Silver Springs, Wild Waters are sold New management."

<sup>203</sup> Young, "Silver Springs, Wild Waters are sold New management."

visitors.<sup>204</sup> However, park operators were optimistic about attracting the local community to the park and indicated that events with a regional focus, such as the Festival of Lights around the holiday season and the park's first Halloween Nights event in October of 2008, were still tremendous successes.<sup>205</sup> Other efforts to bring in a larger crowd included the addition of classic rock performances to the Park's concert series, which had previously featured mostly country music.<sup>206</sup> The change, while not as big of a hit with regular concert visitors, did bring new guests to the park.<sup>207</sup> Unfortunately, these efforts were not successful in maintaining park attendance, and on the first of October, 2013, Palace Entertainment departed from its operator's role.<sup>208</sup> The park was merged with the surrounding Silver River State Park to form Silver Springs State Park.<sup>209</sup> Silver Springs continues to be operated as a state park to the present day.

As a state park, Silver Springs is hardly a tourist attraction at all. Shortly after the transition, the Silver Springs Advisory Group, a twenty-one-member panel of representatives tasked with crafting a long-range plan for the new state park, recommended that Wild Waters be permanently shut down and dismantled.<sup>210</sup> Efforts to continue the operation of the water park officially ended in 2016.<sup>211</sup> By 2018, the park had further deteriorated and plans for its

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<sup>204</sup> Dave Schlenker, "Trying to survive, Silver Springs seeks new crowd," *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, March 29, 2009, NewsBank: Access World News, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/12B37DE1A6873860>.

<sup>205</sup> Schlenker, "Trying to survive."

<sup>206</sup> Schlenker, "Trying to survive."

<sup>207</sup> Schlenker, "Trying to survive."

<sup>208</sup> Bill Thompson, "Silver Springs advisory group recommends closing Wild Waters," *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, January 5, 2014, NewsBank: Access World News, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/14B2A3DA17572C88>.

<sup>209</sup> Thompson, "Silver Springs advisory group recommends closing Wild Waters."

<sup>210</sup> Thompson, "Silver Springs advisory group recommends closing Wild Waters."

<sup>211</sup> Andy Fillmore, "Wild Waters Last splash."

deconstruction were being developed by the Florida Park Service, and by 2019, the former water park was nearly gone.<sup>212</sup>

The Glass Bottom Boats still operate at Silver Springs with great success, the last surviving attraction of the former amusement park. Boat captain Robbie Morin stated that during the spring season of 2023, they have been scheduling around 680 to 700 boat rides a day.<sup>213</sup> A new addition to the Glass Bottom Boat fleet was added in 2021, the “Chief Potackee – Betty Mae Tiger Jumper.” This first-of-its-kind, ADA-accessible Glass Bottom Boat was named after the only female chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.<sup>214</sup> Robbie Morin reported that the new boat is currently facing some challenges in implementation, but it can accommodate up to 26 wheelchairs.<sup>215</sup> Concessions are still available onshore and there are now canoe and kayak rentals available at the park.<sup>216</sup> Visitors to Silver Springs State Park today still get to experience the beauty of the springs but may be surprised to learn that once, just a few generations ago, the site was the location of the birth of Florida tourism. The park’s legacy lives on, both in the current operation of the Glass Bottom Boats and in the value of today’s Florida tourism industry. Due to the efforts of individuals such as Carl Ray, Shorty Davidson, Eddie Vereen, numerous Glass Bottom Boat captains, and many more, tourist attractions in Florida had a successful model to emulate for more than one hundred years.

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<sup>212</sup> Carlos E. Medina, “Abandoned park deteriorates - Wild Waters property sits as state navigates bureaucracy,” *The Daytona Beach News-Journal, (FL)*, November 18, 2018: B7, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/16FC8B5DEE9CDC80> and Robert Knight, “The past and future glory of Silver Springs,” *Gainesville Sun, The (FL)*, March 8, 2019, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/172100BF34021640>.

<sup>213</sup> Morin, Zoom interview, 28 March 2023.

<sup>214</sup> Danielle Johnson, “All aboard!”

<sup>215</sup> Morin, Zoom interview, 28 March 2023.

<sup>216</sup> Andy Fillmore, “Wild Waters Last splash.”

## Chapter II:

### NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATIVE HISTORY AT SILVER SPRINGS

“It is proper for us to consider, that the Indian tribes who venture into war with us, fight for their soil, for their homes, and for freedom, and for nothing else; which all men do, which we would do, and which all men would be despised for *not* doing.”

–Quote from the April 1841 edition of the *Knickerbocker* periodical.<sup>217</sup>

Silver Springs currently serves as a potential Indigenous public history site. Glass Bottom Boat captains like Robbie Morin reference Native American history during their tours, and the park contains multiple references to historical Native leaders.<sup>218</sup> Considering Southeastern Native American communities, especially the Creeks and Seminoles, many Indigenous leaders have marked their time in ways that should not be overlooked. Today Silver Springs references Indigenous leaders from the nineteenth century including Neamathla, Micanopy, Osceola, and Charley Emathla. Native American leadership needs further study to appreciate their numerous contributions and influence on today’s society. To fully comprehend the misuse of Native American history at Silver Springs requires critical analysis of each Native leader that the park references to contrast their portrayal with historical reality.

Source biases will always be problematic in the study of Native American and Indigenous people. Written primary documents are all from a Euro-American perspective, which forces historians to counter an anti-Indigenous bias in their analysis. Unlike many European and Euro-American leaders, Native American leaders often left no known written record. This leaves

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<sup>217</sup> “Neamathla: The Head Chief of the Creek Indian Nation,” *Knickerbocker; or, New-York Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, Politics & Society*, 17 (4) (April 1841): 337-338.

<sup>218</sup> Robbie Morin, Glass Bottom Boat Captain, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 28 March 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

historians with the difficult task of reconstructing their lives with information derived from the people in direct conflict with the subjects. This work directly combats the Euro and Anglo-American bias found in military reports, newspapers, and periodicals from the mid-nineteenth century to provide insights into the lives of Seminole leaders.

John Mahon's *History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842*, published in 1985, provides some valuable information on the lives of many Native American leaders, but it fails to remove Euro-American biases. This is most evident in the work's structure, where entire chapters are dedicated to leaders of the American forces. More recent studies such as John and Mary Lou Missall's *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* and C. S. Monaco's *The Second Seminole War and the limits of American Aggression*, are more well-rounded in their presentation of both sides of the U. S. – Seminole conflicts, therefore giving better insight into the lives of Native American Leaders of the 1800s. Other important sources discussing Native American leadership include articles by William Belko, Joe Kentsch, and Samuel Watson, each discussing the contributions of historical Native individuals.

The structure of Native society in 1800s Florida shaped the leadership of the region's Native population. As explained by Andrew Frank, "Nineteenth century Americans created the idea of a "Seminole" nation."<sup>219</sup> Nineteenth century Euro-Americans developed and popularized the term "Seminole" to define the Native inhabitants of Florida. The use of the term did not reflect the identities these Native people maintained.<sup>220</sup> Frank lists the three components nineteenth-century Euro-Americans used to define the term "Seminole" as Natives that had run away from the Creek nation, mixed with African American runaways, and constituted a

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<sup>219</sup> Andrew K. Frank, "Creating A Seminole Enemy: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Conquest of Florida," *Florida International University Law Review* 9 (2014): 277-278.

<sup>220</sup> Andrew K. Frank, "Creating A Seminole Enemy," 278.

monolithic culture.<sup>221</sup> The process of defining the Indigenous people of Florida in the nineteenth century under one catch-all term directly impacted the historical understanding, and often misunderstandings, of these people and their leadership structures.<sup>222</sup>

### Neamathla

Neamathla was an important Native American leader from the early nineteenth century. The “Chief Neamathla” is one of multiple Glass Bottom Boats in current operation at Silver Springs State Park. This boat was constructed in 1972 and was refurbished between 2013 and 2014.<sup>223</sup> The “Chief Neamathla” is identical in design to many of the other Silver Spring Glass Bottom Boats, measuring in at a length of 31 ft., with a beam of 11 ft., and weighing 20 net tons.<sup>224</sup>

Neamathla’s importance to Indigenous history began in the early 1800s. One contributing factor to these conflicts was the question of who had claims on land in the Southeast region. In 1817, the United States still nationally recognized Florida as a Spanish possession. While the Monroe administration wished to possess the territory for the United States, they feared challenging a European power.<sup>225</sup> In this conflict of international powers, there was also the presence of Indigenous people including Creeks and Seminoles. Many Euro-American documents and early writings on Southeastern Indigenous people fail to recognize any distinction

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<sup>221</sup> Andrew K. Frank, “Creating A Seminole Enemy,” 283.

<sup>222</sup> This paper continues to use the term “Seminole” to assist the audience with contextual understandings. The use of “Seminole” is not meant to disregard the self-identifications of any person(s) discussed in this paper.

<sup>223</sup> Nicky Aiken, email message to B. Cordell Moats, 20 May, 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>224</sup> Treasury Department form in Nicky Aiken, email message to B. Cordell Moats, 20 May, 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733. Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>225</sup> John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America’s Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 34.



Figure 7: Image of Neamathla, Chief of Fowltown, Photo accessed from John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 36.

between Indigenous peoples labeled as Seminoles and Creeks. Overlapping land claims between Seminoles and Creeks added to confusion between the two.<sup>226</sup>

The Red Stick War of 1813-1814 ended with most Creek lands in the State of Georgia being ceded to the United States, but not all of the Indigenous people living on disputed land were Creek. Such was the case for the Mikasuki Seminole village of Fowltown, located along the Flint River on the

Georgia side of the border with Florida. The chief of Fowltown, Neamathla, did not participate in the Red Stick War, and he was not present or represented in

the process of ceding the land to the United States.<sup>227</sup> John and Mary Lou Missall explain in their book, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict*, "The Mikasukis and other Seminoles did not consider themselves Creeks and had not taken part in the civil [Red Stick] war. In their eyes, Fowltown and the surrounding areas were not Creek land to be given away."<sup>228</sup> U.S. military leaders in the region, including Brigadier General Edmond Gaines, stationed at the nearby Fort Scott, disagreed. Despite the Mikasuki rejection of the treaty, United States officials, believing that Seminole and Creek people were the same, did feel that Creek

<sup>226</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 36.

<sup>227</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 36.

<sup>228</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 36.

cessions applied to the residents of Fowltown and that they had the authority to remove them from their land.<sup>229</sup>

The destruction of Fowltown began with a disagreement between Neamathla and General Gaines in November of 1817. Missall and Missall detail, “In order to chastise Neamathla, Gaines sent a force of 250 men across the river to seize the chief.”<sup>230</sup> The American forces returned to Fort Scott without Neamathla following a small skirmish outside of Fowltown. This failure only further angered General Gaines, who ordered another attack on the town that destroyed the settlement.<sup>231</sup> Historian William Belko adds significant details to the disagreements between Neamathla and Gaines: before the destruction of Fowltown, Neamathla warned Gaines that he should not send troops into his territory for any reason.<sup>232</sup> According to Belko, the cause for conflict on November 21 was that Neamathla refused to attend a conference to which Gaines had summoned him. In the skirmish, the Seminoles quickly fled and evaded capture. It was not until two days later that a larger U.S. force returned to Fowltown for a second capture attempt. Again, the Seminoles fled the village, however, this time the troops set fire to the village as well as its surrounding fields.<sup>233</sup>

Academics including Belko, and Missall and Missall place the beginning of the First Seminole War at the destruction of Neamathla’s village.<sup>234</sup> However, there is still an ongoing disagreement regarding when the war truly began. Following the destruction of Fowltown,

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<sup>229</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 35-36.

<sup>230</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 36.

<sup>231</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 36.

<sup>232</sup> William S. Belko, “Epilogue to the War of 1812 : The Monroe Administration, American Anglophobia, and the First Seminole War,” in *America’s hundred Years’ War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858*, William S. Belko ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 76.

<sup>233</sup> Belko, “Epilogue to the War of 1812,” 76.

<sup>234</sup> Belko, “Epilogue to the War of 1812,” 76; John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America’s Longest Indian Conflict*, 37-38.



Seminole warriors attacked and killed a military detachment under the command of Lieutenant Richard Scott.<sup>235</sup> The attack on Lieutenant Scott's detachment became known as the Scott Massacre and has often been considered the start of the war.<sup>236</sup> Many historians such as David and Jeanne Heidler, believe that the Scott Massacre was primarily used as an excuse to invade Florida.<sup>237</sup> Regardless of the controversy, the result of these conflicts was the start of the First Seminole War.

In 1819, about a year after the First Seminole War, Spain surrendered the Florida territory to the United States. With Florida now a U.S. territory, the federal government began to negotiate with the Seminoles to remove them from Florida. Neamathla was one of the chiefs involved in these negotiations, which resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823.<sup>238</sup> Neamathla stood in strong opposition to the outcome of this treaty. "The Conspiracy of Neamathla" article from *the Knickerbocker or the New-York Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, Politics & Society*, published in 1840, states that "none opposed [the treaty] more strongly than Neamathla, principal chief of the Mickasookies."<sup>239</sup> Despite the clear Euro-American bias, this source does provide important information, especially on how Neamathla's Anglo-American contemporaries viewed him.

"The Conspiracy of Neamathla" article reveals that Neamathla "was a remarkable man; upward of sixty years of age, about six feet high, with a fine eye, and a strongly-marked

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<sup>235</sup> David Heidler and Jeanne Heidler, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 107.

<sup>236</sup> Any use of the term "massacre" to note any attacks of the Seminole Wars is solely to recognize these events in the historical record. Terms such as these can be problematic, as they are often used to vilify the attackers, this is especially problematic when similar attacks on Seminoles are often not labeled as a "massacre."

<sup>237</sup> David Heidler and Jeanne Heidler, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire*, 108.

<sup>238</sup> David Heidler and Jeanne Heidler, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire*, 232; and "The Conspiracy of Neamathla," *Knickerbocker; or, New-York Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, Politics & Society* 16 (4) (October 1840), 343.

<sup>239</sup> "The Conspiracy of Neamathla," 343.

countenance, over which he possessed great command.”<sup>240</sup> This source also recounts the interactions between Neamathla and the first U. S. Governor of the Florida Territory, Governor William Duval. Neamathla’s village at this time was only three miles from the newly established territorial capitol at Tallahassee, allowing Neamathla and Duval to occasionally meet.<sup>241</sup> During one of these meetings, Governor Duval asserted that he was of higher authority than the chief. Neamathla responded with “a fit of laughing, and declared that all he had said was in joke.”<sup>242</sup> The conflicts with Governor Duval demonstrate Neamathla’s leadership and courage. His refusal to bend to the governor’s desires shows his determination to defend his people and way of life.

A newspaper article by the *Essex North Register* from 1836 recounts Neamathla’s capture by General Thomas Jesup. According to this source, “no Indian, living, or dead, ever cherished feelings of deeper that for the white man than Neamathla.”<sup>243</sup> While this is a hyperbolic statement, it does confirm that, by at least 1836, Neamathla had developed a major dislike of representatives from the United States. This article names Neamathla as an instigator at the start of the Second Seminole War, declaring “Prompted by this feeling, he resolved on stirring up the Creeks” and that “The Creeks were excited to action, and Neamathla indulged all hopes, and the prospect was fair for the shedding of much blood.”<sup>244</sup> This incorrect statement regarding Neamathla’s involvement in starting the Second Seminole War may have been an attempt to increase the importance of his capture, which is the major focus of the article.<sup>245</sup> This source is also another example of the Creek and Seminole people being mislabeled as the same Indigenous group.

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<sup>240</sup> “The Conspiracy of Neamathla,” 343.

<sup>241</sup> “The Conspiracy of Neamathla,” 343.

<sup>242</sup> “The Conspiracy of Neamathla,” 344.

<sup>243</sup> “Neamathla, the Captive Chief,” *Essex North Register* 3 (32) (August 5, 1836), 1.

<sup>244</sup> “Neamathla, the Captive Chief.” 1.

<sup>245</sup> “Neamathla, the Captive Chief.” 1.

The same New York magazine provides a more dramatic account of both Neamathla's capture and later death in the article "Neamathla: The Head Chief of the Creek Indian Nation." This source again misnames the Seminoles as Creeks but fits into the larger events of the Second Seminole War. The article states that Neamathla, upon learning two of his daughters reluctantly agreed to emigrate to Indian Territory, disguised himself as a common Indian, rode his pony into the army camp, and escorted his daughters away. Some "friendly Indians" recognized him and alerted General Thomas Jesup to his location.<sup>246</sup> Even late in his life, Neamathla never conformed to the United States's demands of emigrating to Indian Territory. Neamathla's death is reported in the statement same periodical: "The chain wore in upon his soul: and before the emigrating nation had left the land of their fathers, being on their march, Neamathla breathed his last, from the mere act of grief and sorrow, and was buried, as he had resolved to be, under the soil which his people once called their own, bestowed, as they piously said, by the Great Spirit."<sup>247</sup> The accuracy of this source in recounting Neamathla's death is not fully known, but it does characterize his powerful fighting nature as seen by Euro-American contemporaries.

### **Osceola:**

The life of Osceola, also known as Tallahassee Tustenuggee and often referred to as Billy Powell in Anglo-American sources, is a fascinating story from the early to mid-1800s.<sup>248</sup> One of the few Southeastern Native Americans whose name could be considered commonly known, Osceola was an important figure during the Second Seminole War. Historian John Mahon explains that Osceola was born in present-day Alabama to a Creek mother. Accompanying a

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<sup>246</sup> "Neamathla: The Head Chief of the Creek Indian Nation," 335-336.

<sup>247</sup> "Neamathla: The Head Chief of the Creek Indian Nation," 337.

<sup>248</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), 91.

group of Red Sticks, Osceola and his mother migrated to Florida sometime after the Creek War.<sup>249</sup> The name Osceola is derived from the Creek phrase ‘black-drink singer’ *Asi Yaholo* or *Asi Yoholo*.<sup>250</sup> The “Chief Yoholo” is one of multiple Glass Bottom Boats in current operation at Silver Springs State Park, and it may be a reference to Osceola. Along with the “Chief Neamathla,” this boat was constructed in 1972 and refurbished between 2013 and 2014.<sup>251</sup> Along with the possible reference to Osceola in the Glass Bottom Boat names, Silver Springs also recognizes the historical importance of Osceola in other ways. The inclusion of a statue near the spring head of the Silver River, and Wild Waters operation of the waterslide Osceola’s Revenge from 1978 to 2016 both tapped into the history of Osceola.<sup>252</sup>

According to Mahon, the United States became aware of Osceola in the fall of 1834. Agent Wiley Thompson, the U.S. Indian Agent tasked with handling the negotiations of Seminole removal to Indian Territory, conveyed a series of meetings centered on the topic of removal.<sup>253</sup> At this time, Osceola had not gained status as a Native leader and therefore was not a part of these negotiations with Agent Thompson. However, following the first meeting on the removal topic the Seminoles gathered in their council. The Osceola statue’s inscription claims “The Seminole Indians met in council at these springs to discuss demands of the United States for their removal to the West.”<sup>254</sup> Historian James Covington confirms that Silver Springs was indeed the meeting location by stating, “After Thompson had made his presentation, Holata

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<sup>249</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 91.

<sup>250</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 91.

<sup>251</sup> Nicky Aiken, email message, 20 May, 2023.

<sup>252</sup> B. Cordell Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*, personal photograph, 17 March, 2020; and Andy Fillmore, “Wild Waters Last splash - The water park next to Silver Springs hosts its final customers,” *Daily Commercial, The (Leesburg, FL)*, September 6, 2016: 3, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/15F3EC2F08385AD8>.

<sup>253</sup> C. S. Monaco, *The Second Seminole War and the Limits of American Aggression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 47-48.

<sup>254</sup> B. Cordell Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*, personal photograph, 17 March, 2020.

Emathla. . . announced that there would be councils held in the Seminole camp at Silver Springs two miles away.”<sup>255</sup> It was in these council meetings that Osceola first appeared publicly.<sup>256</sup> In these early reports, Osceola is represented as an outspoken supporter of resistance and advocated for the condemnation of any Seminole who supported migration.

Osceola’s hard stance against removal continued as tensions rose through 1835. Early in the year, “the Indians showed no disposition to modify their stand, and swore injury to anyone who consented to migrate.”<sup>257</sup> Throughout this time, negotiations between Seminoles and U.S.



Figure 8: Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park, B. Cordell Moats, Personal Photograph, 17 March, 2020.

representatives such as Agent Thompson and General Duncan Clinch continued. A popular story from one of these negotiations recounts that Osceola drove his knife through a document lying on the table before General Clinch. However, Mahon states that “no observer on the spot left any record of this moment of drama. It may have occurred, or it may be purely legend.”<sup>258</sup> No matter the case, this story conveys the notion that Osceola was a well-established leader among the Native Americans before the Second Seminole War.

The statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park, shown in Figure 2, depicts the Native American leader stabbing a paper document. The statue is referencing the alleged conflict between Clinch and Osceola, making this story crucial to how

<sup>255</sup> James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 73.

<sup>256</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 47-48; and John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 91.

<sup>257</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842*, 93.

<sup>258</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842*, 98.

Silver Springs remembers and represents Osceola.<sup>259</sup> At this time, it is unclear when the Osceola statue was added to Silver Springs, an inscription on the base of the statue lists Bernice West as the sculptor, and a historic photograph confirms its placement dates at least back to sometime in the 1950s.<sup>260</sup>

Several statements on the inscription make the statue of Osceola at Silver Springs problematic. While academic sources do confirm that the Seminoles met at Silver Springs in the fall of 1834, the specific statements regarding Osceola are misleading and romanticized. This includes referring to Osceola as the “head war-chief” of the Second Seminole War and declaring that “Osceola became an important Indian military genius and strategist of American history.”<sup>261</sup> Osceola was never recognized as the head of the war efforts, and his lack of involvement after his capture two years into the war signifies the overall small but memorable role Osceola played in the seven-year-long conflict.

Osceola was involved in the deaths of two other important historical figures shortly before the outbreak of the Second Seminole War. The first of these figures was another Native American leader named Charley Emathla, and the second figure was Indian Agent Wiley Thompson. Emathla believed that migration to Indian Territory had to be accepted. Mahon writes that when Emathla began to prepare for migration, Osceola and a band of other Native Americans intercepted him, and “After a bitter colloquy, Osceola shot him dead on the trail, leaving his carcass for the wolves and vultures.”<sup>262</sup> The age and biased weaknesses of Mahon’s study are present in his accounts of events such as the execution of Charley Emathla, which he

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<sup>259</sup> Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*, personal photograph, 17 March, 2020.

<sup>260</sup> Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*; and Bruce Mozert, *Young visitors standing by a statue of Osceola at Silver Springs*. 1950 (circa), Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/343852>.

<sup>261</sup> Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*.

<sup>262</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842*, 101.

refers to as a murder. From a Seminole viewpoint, events such as Emathla's execution are not seen this way, but the fulfillment of a capitol sentence for treason against the Seminole people. In a more recent work, historian C. S. Monaco refers to this action taken against Emathla as an "execution," rather than "murder."<sup>263</sup> According to Monaco, the Seminole council had previously ruled that anyone who agreed to U.S. demands and accepted removal was subject to the death penalty.<sup>264</sup>

Mahon's account of Agent Thompson's death is similarly flawed with romanticism and Western bias but highlights the role that Osceola played in the historical event. Late in December 1835, Osceola led an ambush on Agent Thompson as he left Fort King, located in present-day Ocala, Florida. Mahon notes that this was part of a Seminole plan to eliminate the troublesome agent, and also strike against the meager American military forces in the territory. However, Mahon also places a great amount of emphasis on Osceola's motives for killing Agent Thompson.<sup>265</sup> Earlier that year, Thompson had detained Osceola, which Mahon cites as creating a personal grudge between the two opposing leaders.<sup>266</sup> Monaco also discusses the detainment of Osceola and the personal grudge that the Native American leader maintained against Agent Thompson. According to Monaco, Osceola was held in the guardhouse jail of Fort King due to his insolent manner. While Monaco explains how exactly Osceola was insolent towards Thompson is unclear, some reports indicate he threatened Thompson by suggesting that he should leave Florida.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 53.

<sup>264</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 53.

<sup>265</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 103.

<sup>266</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 96.

<sup>267</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 50.

In his discussion of Agent Thompson's assassination, Monaco observes how historians have typically highlighted the role that Osceola played in Thompson's death. However, the war council tasked Osceola with eliminating Thompson. Regardless of personal motives, killing Thompson was also a war assignment.<sup>268</sup> On the same day as the death of Agent Thompson, another contingent of Seminoles attacked a group of U.S. soldiers under the command of Major Frances Dade on their way from Fort Brooke to Fort King.<sup>269</sup> Just as Mahon expresses, the Seminoles struck against the American military forces and dispatched the primary U.S. negotiator in one military maneuver.



Figure 9: Portrait of Osceola from the Smithsonian Institute, produced by George Catlin, Photo found in John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), 90.

Treachery on the part of the American military leader General Thomas Jesup led to Osceola's removal as a leader during the Second Seminole War. In October of 1837, Osceola and a few other Seminole leaders agreed to a negotiation under a flag of truce. General Jesup ordered the arrest of the men during this peace conference, along with around eighty more Native Americans that attended with them.<sup>270</sup> Mahon correctly states that “[Jesup] could not have guessed that Osceola's capture would attract nationwide attention, characteristic American attention that would create a martyr and a villain, the latter Jesup himself.”<sup>271</sup> The act of

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<sup>268</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 58.

<sup>269</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 106.

<sup>270</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 214-216.

<sup>271</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 216.



deception to capture Osceola under a flag of truce wounded General Jesup's image among both the Seminoles and his Anglo-American peers.

To confirm Osceola's martyr status, we have to consider his short time as a prisoner of war. After his capture, the military imprisoned Osceola in Fort Marion in St. Augustine, then in Fort Moultrie in Charleston.<sup>272</sup> During this time Osceola's health severely declined, his final cause of death is believed to have been related to a case of malaria, which he contracted several months prior.<sup>273</sup> After his death, Dr. Frederick Weedon reportedly cut off Osceola's head and embalmed it for preservation.<sup>274</sup> This desecration of Osceola's body added to his image as a martyr after his death. Mahon explains that Osceola's short life, his treacherous capture, and his death in prison gripped the imagination of U. S. citizens.<sup>275</sup> As Monaco notes, "The death of Osceola evolved into one of the top news stories of 1838. One outcome of this notoriety was the appearance of carefully crafted public imagery that was marketed for a variety of self-serving intentions."<sup>276</sup> Indicated by Silver Springs' and Wild Waters' presentation of Osceola, the image of the famous leader built after his death still lingers in the public's historical understanding today.

### **Micanopy**

While Osceola may be the best-known leader of the Second Seminole War, he was never the chief of the Seminoles – he was not even a minor chief among the Seminole people, but as has been discussed was descended from Red Stick Creek ancestry. At the start of the Second Seminole War, it was a leader named Micanopy that served as the paramount chief of the

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<sup>272</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 217-218; and Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 175.

<sup>273</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 217-218; and Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 175.

<sup>274</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 218.

<sup>275</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 218.

<sup>276</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 177.

Seminole people.<sup>277</sup> Due to the popularity of Osceola, Micanopy's time as paramount Seminole chief is often overlooked. His contribution to these important events merits just as much discussion as others like Osceola. At Silver Springs, the "Chief Micanopy" is one of the oldest currently operating Glass Bottom Boats. This boat was built in 1965 and refurbished between 2013 and 2014, making the boat nearly 60 years old.

J. Leitch Wright Jr. states, in his work *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People*, that "The Historic or 'true' Seminoles were those Lower Creeks who in the mid-eighteenth century had moved from Georgia into the Payne's Prairie-Alachua region. By the time of the Second Seminole War, they had resided there for nearly a century and their principal chief Micanopy was a lineal or collateral descendant of Payne and Cowkeeper."<sup>278</sup> Wright adds that Micanopy was portrayed in primary sources as lethargic and indecisive, and suggests that this may have been out of caution.<sup>279</sup>

Military historian Ron Soodalter includes the detail of Micanopy's involvement in the Dade massacre in his article "On Removing Seminoles." According to Soodalter, five days before Osceola attacked Indian Agent Thompson at Fort King, two companies of soldiers under Major Francis Dade embarked from Fort Brook to reinforce Fort King.<sup>280</sup> Dade had not sent out any scouts, meaning he had no way of knowing that 180 Seminoles led by Micanopy had been following them for nearly the entire march. Soodalter's account of the battle claims, "Suddenly a single shot rang out as Micanopy fired a ball that struck Dade in the heart. The rest of the war party then opened fire, killing about half the soldiers in the first volley, as the others clawed

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<sup>277</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 12.

<sup>278</sup> J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 254.

<sup>279</sup> Wright, *Creeks and Seminole*, 254.

<sup>280</sup> Ron Soodalter, "On Removing Seminoles." *Military History* 29 (2) (July 2012): 66-67.

desperately for their cartridge boxes.”<sup>281</sup> It is unclear where this account originated, specifically the details of Micanopy personally firing the first shot of the battle and killing Major Dade. It indicates that Micanopy acted as a primary figure at the battle. Also, while the killing of Agent Thompson was an important part of the Seminole strategy at the start of the Second Seminole War, it was the success of eliminating the soldiers under Major Dade that “was the last [triumph] of this magnitude they would ever know.”<sup>282</sup>

Records from the United States perspective have stained Micanopy’s image with an indication that he was indecisive. This can be seen in the *Army and Navy Chronicle* from April

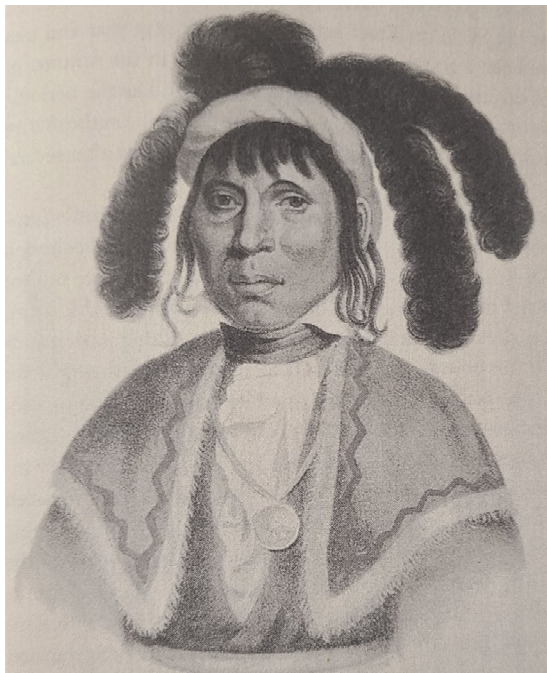


Figure 10: Image of Micanopy from the Florida State Archives. Photo taken from Samuel Watson, “Seminole Strategy, 1812-1858: A Prospectus for Further Research,” in *America’s Hundred Years’ War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole*, 1763

of 1837 detailing communications received from General Jesup. Jesup reports, “the principal chief of the Seminoles, Micanopy, has been with them since the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup> [of March], and has approved the convention entered into by the second, third and fourth chiefs of the nation.”<sup>283</sup> Micanopy reportedly informed Jesup that he intended to emigrate because he now believed that the Great Spirit had ordered him to do so. General Jesup believed the Second Seminole War to be nearly over, and reported that the Seminoles had agreed to emigrate to Indian Territory.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Soodalter, “On Removing Seminoles,” 66-67.

<sup>282</sup> Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 252.

<sup>283</sup> “From the Army,” *Army & Navy Chronicle* 4 (15) (April 13, 1837): 236.

<sup>284</sup> “From the Army,” 236.

However, unlike what General Jesup believed, regarding the end of the war in 1837, the war was not over. Joe Knetsch explains in his article, “Strategy, Operations, and Tactics in the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842,” that from the middle of May to early June, many Seminole leaders arrived at Fort Brooke and began to negotiate the process of removal. However, on June 5<sup>th</sup>, Micanopy, other Seminole leaders, and 700 of their followers left overnight.<sup>285</sup> The older historical study by John Mahon credits Osceola for this sudden fall-through of negotiation, stating that he “abducted” many of the leaders present at Fort Brooke.<sup>286</sup> Recent studies such as Knetsch’s article argue outlooks like Mahon’s overlook other important elements, such as the influence of Abiaka (Sam Jones), that may have persuaded leaders such as Micanopy to leave and continue to resist emigration.<sup>287</sup>

Micanopy’s capture holds many similarities to the capture of Osceola, most notably on how their capture has contributed to their historical remembrance as Native leaders. Missall and Missall state that in the Fall of 1837, a delegation of Cherokees was sent to Florida by the U.S. government to assist in negotiations and to persuade the Seminoles to move west.<sup>288</sup> Joshua Giddings’s book, *The Exiles of Florida; or, The Crimes Committed by our Government Against the Maroons, Who Fled from South Carolina, and other Slave States, Seeking Protection Under Spanish Laws*, published in 1858, remarks “After great effort, Micanopy, the most important chief in the Nation. . . , agreed to accompany a portion of the Cherokee Delegation to General

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<sup>285</sup> Joe Knetsch, “Strategy, Operations, and Tactics in the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842,” in *America’s Hundred Years’ War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858*, William S. Belko ed., (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 140.

<sup>286</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 204.

<sup>287</sup> Knetsch, “Strategy, Operations, and Tactics in the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842,” 140.

<sup>288</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 141.

Jessup's camp, for the purpose of negotiation."<sup>289</sup> Micanopy and his delegation, along with the Cherokees, entered the American camp under a flag of truce. General Jessup again seized the Seminole leaders who were then quickly sent by steamboat to St. Augustine as prisoners of war, where he was held with Osceola and others that had been previously captured.<sup>290</sup> Jessup later removed Micanopy and Osceola from Fort Marion to Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>291</sup> From this point, Micanopy was no longer a principal leader of the Seminoles. Even without his presence, the Second Seminole War continued until 1842.

### **Emathla and Yahalochee:**

The phrase 'Emathla' can refer to multiple Native American leaders of the 1800s. John Mahon states, "when proved in war, [a Seminole or Creek man] might become the leader of a band and be entitled to the designation 'Emathla.'"<sup>292</sup> This clarifies why there are so many Seminoles referred to as Emathla, it was a title, not a name. Silver Springs operates a Glass Bottom Boat named "Chief Emathla." Which of the numerous Indigenous leaders referred to as Emathla the Glass Bottom Boat is meant to recognize is currently unclear. However, the most commonly referenced Emathla was Charley Emathla. Charley Emathla is known for his vocal support of emigration to Indian Territory before the Second Seminole War. Similar to Osceola, Charley Emathla was a Creek descendant that moved south sometime in the late 1820s.<sup>293</sup> His support of emigration brought him into conflict with many other Seminoles and eventually resulted in his death.

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<sup>289</sup> Joshua Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida; or, The Crimes Committed by our Government Against the Maroons, Who Fled from South Carolina, and other Slave States, Seeking Protection Under Spanish Laws* (Columbus: Follett, Foster and Company, 1858), 170.

<sup>290</sup> Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida*, 170.

<sup>291</sup> Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida*, 180.

<sup>292</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842*, 10.

<sup>293</sup> Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 250.

Charley Emathla first appears in the historical record as one of seven Seminole representatives that traveled to the Indian Territory in 1833.<sup>294</sup> This group of Seminole leaders toured the area for several months and spoke with the Creeks already living in the region. Missall and Missall state, “On March 28, 1833, at Fort Gibson, Arkansas, the seven chiefs signed a paper stating that they were satisfied with the proposed territory and agreeable to the emigration of their people.”<sup>295</sup> However, Monaco explains that the representatives of the United States present at the signing of the Treaty of Fort Gibson forced the Seminole Representatives to sign under duress. The Seminole delegation reportedly refused to sign the treaty, claiming that they had no authority to make such an agreement, the Indian agent that oversaw the negotiations, John Phagan, threatened to abandon the Seminole Delegation in the Indian Territory during the Midwinter if they refused to sign.<sup>296</sup> There is no record of the negotiations at Fort Gibson, so no exact account can confirm Phagan’s threats.<sup>297</sup> The Seminoles had no other option than to sign the treaty, as they could not reject the outcome of the negotiations while in Indian Territory.<sup>298</sup>

At the time of the Treaty of Fort Gibson, it appears that Charley Emathla was unsupportive of emigration to Indian Territory. Later in the year, Emathla was present at a series of councils held in October between Seminole leaders and Indian Agent Thompson. Here Emathla again insisted that the treaty of Fort Gibson was invalid as “Major Phagan had been guilty of passionate action while they were at Fort Gibson, and had caused much of the trouble.”<sup>299</sup> In response Agent Thompson supposedly dismissed these concerns, claiming the purpose of the council was to determine *how* to emigrate the Seminoles, not *if* to emigrate.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 84; and Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 23.

<sup>295</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 84.

<sup>296</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 23.

<sup>297</sup> Missall and Missall, *The Seminole Wars*, 84.

<sup>298</sup> Monaco, *The Second Seminole War*, 23.

<sup>299</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 92.

<sup>300</sup> Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 92.

Despite his refusal to recognize the Treaty of Fort Gibson, Charley Emathla became a vocal supporter of emigration as tensions began to rise among the Seminoles in the 1830s. J. Leitch Wright Jr. recognized that Emathla denounced the process of signing the treaty, but says that this does not mean that he was unsupportive of the removal outcome.<sup>301</sup> Mahon lists Charley Emathla as one of four chiefs that had steadily favored emigration despite sometimes talking against it. In the fall of 1835, “Notwithstanding that he had denounced the removal treaties at the October Councils, Charley Emathla had made up his mind to go.”<sup>302</sup>

Emathla’s acceptance of emigration to Indian Territory was in direct opposition to the decision of the Seminole council. As such, his resolve was seen as an act of treason in the eyes of the Seminoles that wished to resist removal. As discussed earlier, Osceola was the one to execute him. After Emathla had sold his cattle, Osceola intercepted him on the way home, after Emathla’s death, Osceola is reported to have scattered the money from the cattle sale on the ground around the body.<sup>303</sup> Emathla’s death sent a message to the United States of continued Seminole resistance to removal and the rest of the Seminole people warning against defying the council’s decisions. Emathla’s actions to agree to emigrate may still be looked down on by historians today, but this approach fails to recognize his ultimately correct belief that the United States would be unwilling to allow the Seminoles to practice the ways of their ancestors.

A final Glass Bottom Boat that claims to be named after an Indigenous leader from the nineteenth century is the “Chief Yahalochee.” At this time, it is unclear whom this Glass Bottom Boat refers to, as no primary or secondary academic sources refer to any Native leader known by the name Yahalochee. Glass Bottom Boat captain Robbie Morin stated that the name translated

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<sup>301</sup> Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 250.

<sup>302</sup>. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 99-100.

<sup>303</sup> Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 250-251.

to ‘Crazy Turtle,’ but was unable to provide any further information regarding whom the boat was named after.<sup>304</sup> Further work to identify the origin of this Glass Bottom Boat’s name is needed.

### **Conclusion:**

Throughout the nineteenth century, the leadership of the Seminole people shaped the course of history for both Florida and the United States overall. Neamathla, Osceola, Micanopy, and Charley Emathla all led dynamic and complex lives in times of conflict. These leaders among Florida’s Native population wielded considerable numbers of followers and at times even impacted the thoughts of Americans. Leadership served as a key to the survival of Indigenous people in Florida throughout the nineteenth century. Neamathla, Osceola, Micanopy, and Charley Emathla’s history is an undeniable aspect of Silver Springs, but Silver Springs has failed to present updated interpretations of the history they present. When tourist sites like Silver Springs choose to highlight the history of the space they inhabit, they have a responsibility to provide that history with accuracy. Park operators, including Captain Robbie Morin, believe the boat names act to honor these historic leaders. Currently, Silver Springs fails to provide the historical context of the boats’ namesakes. Regardless of intent, the use of these historical names without context fails to fully honor the individuals being utilized at the park and presents an incomplete history to park visitors.

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<sup>304</sup> Morin, Zoom interview, 28 March 2023.



### Chapter III:

#### TWENTIETH-CENTURY NATIVE HISTORY AT SILVER SPRINGS

“I think [my family] went to Silver Springs all the way until [the tourist village] closed, it was probably around the 1960s.”

–Mary Jene Koenes,

Great granddaughter of Charley and Lee Cypress.<sup>305</sup>

While a large portion of the Indigenous history presented at Silver Springs is rooted in the nineteenth century, some portions also connect to the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, Indigenous history is characterized by militarily resisting American encroachment and removal. During the early to mid-twentieth century, Seminole history centers on cultural and economic survival. As in the nineteenth century, Seminole leadership played an important role in the history of their communities during the twentieth century. Silver Springs references the lives of Charley Cypress and Betty Mae Tiger Jumper, two Seminole leaders that played key roles in Seminole history. Similar to the use of nineteenth-century history, to fully comprehend the misuse of twentieth-century, Native American history requires critical analysis of the Native leader that Silver Springs references to contrast their portrayal with historical reality.

The modern form of the Seminole identity did not exist in the nineteenth century. Andrew Frank explains that a nineteenth-century Seminole nation was invented by nineteenth-century Euro-Americans.<sup>306</sup> Frank affirms, “White Americans popularized the term “Seminole” in the nineteenth century, and then extended it to define all of the Native American inhabitants in

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<sup>305</sup> Mary Jene Koenes, Telephone interview by B. Cordell Moats, 23 May 2023.

<sup>306</sup> Andrew K. Frank, “Creating a Seminole Enemy: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Conquest of Florida,” *Florida International University Law Review* 9 (2014): 277-278.

Florida.”<sup>307</sup> New industries and interactions contributed to the development of a unique ‘Seminole’ identity. A clear distinction between the Seminoles of the twentieth century and the Indigenous people of the nineteenth century can be seen in the cultural and economic adjustments they made during the Great Depression and the New Deal. Harry A. Kersey Jr. finds in a journal article that, “the lure of New Deal programs stimulated the process of bringing a scattered and fragmented Seminole population together on their land—a process that fostered a new tribal unity, and culminated in 1957 with the formation of the Seminole Tribe of Florida as a federally-acknowledged polity.”<sup>308</sup>

### **Charley Cypress**

Charley Cypress was born sometime in the late nineteenth century and played an important role in both Seminole history and Silver Springs history. Silver Springs has operated a Glass Bottom Boat named “Chief Charley Cypress” since 1966. Along with the other boats constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, the “Chief Charley Cypress” was refurbished between 2013 and 2014. The “Chief Charley Cypress” is uniquely named from the rest of the Glass Bottom Boats, as it is the only boat named after someone directly connected to the tourist site’s history.

Information regarding the lives of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indigenous people in Florida, including Cypress’s early life, remains very limited, and what source materials do exist proves difficult to locate. In 1953, anthropologist Wilfred Neill explained that “Charley was born at Point-of-Cypress in the Devil’s Garden before the Mikasuki were pushed into Big Cypress Swamp. . . .The date of his birth is uncertain, but it could not have been many years after

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<sup>307</sup> Frank, “Creating a Seminole Enemy,” 278. The Seminole Tribe of Florida do not make up the entire population of Native people in Florida. Other groups include the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, which has also been federally recognized. However, Silver Springs does not utilize the history of these other groups, therefore this paper focuses primarily on the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

<sup>308</sup> Harry A. Kersey Jr., “The Florida Seminoles in the Depression and New Deal, 1933-1942: An Indian Perspective,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65 (2) (Oct. 1986): 194.

the removal of Billy Bowlegs in 1858.”<sup>309</sup> Census reports indicate that Cypress was born sometime around 1870.<sup>310</sup> In a newspaper article published in 1958, Cypress claimed to be one hundred and four years old.<sup>311</sup> At the time of his death in 1960, it is clear that Charley Cypress lived for nearly, if not longer than, a century.<sup>312</sup> The period from the end of the Civil War to the start of the 1960s is central to the history of the Seminole people of Florida. The life of Charley Cypress provides highlights of the changes Seminoles experienced from the end of the Seminole Wars to the reorganization into the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

No Euro-American records regarding Cypress’ childhood or early life exist. The earliest that Cypress appears in any historical documents dates to 1910. These are found in records from the travels of A. W. (Anthony Weston) Dimock and his adult son Julian. The Dimocks traveled around the Everglades and visited with many Native Americans while A. W. worked as a conservation journalist.<sup>313</sup> In 1910, Cypress lived at the camp of Little Billie Conapatchie in the Big Cypress Swamp. Julian Dimock brought a camera with him on the expedition and collected multiple photographs of Cypress and his family.<sup>314</sup> Julian’s photographs provide a look at both Cypress and early Seminole culture in the twentieth century.

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<sup>309</sup> Wilfred T. Neill, “Dugouts of the Mikasuki Seminole,” *The Florida Anthropologist* 6 (3) (September, 1953): 77.

<sup>310</sup> Records vary birth years between 1875 and 1898. United States Census Records, Year: 1930; Census Place: *Deep Lake, Collier, Florida*; Page: 44; Enumeration District: 0003; FHL microfilm: 2340043

<sup>311</sup> Stan Johnson, “Seminoles Declare First Dividend: Stockholders Slice Up a Melon,” *The Miami Herald*, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1958, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Archives <https://semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/archive/6C962015-8910-4CE8-B7FB-403001723134>.

<sup>312</sup> State of Florida. *Florida Death Index, 1877-1998*. Florida: Florida Department of Health, Office of Vital Records, 1998.

<sup>313</sup> Jerald T. Milanich and Nina J. Root, *Hidden Seminoles: Julian Dimock’s Historic Florida Photographs*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 1-2; and A. W. Dimock, “Studying the Savage Seminoles in the Everglades of Florida: Trip of Exploration and Research Among Indian Tribe Which Retains Many of its Ancient Customs and Rites” *The Washington Post*, (February 20 1916): MT1 and MT5.

<sup>314</sup> Milanich and Root, *Hidden Seminoles*, 140-41, 144, 147, 148, and 135; and A. W. Dimock, “Studying the Savage Seminoles in the Everglades of Florida: Trip of Exploration and Research Among Indian Tribe Which Retains Many of its Ancient Customs and Rites” *The Washington Post*, (February 20 1916): MT1 and MT5.

References to Cypress from the 1930s and 1940s indicate that he was recognized as a part of the Seminole leadership in the Big Cypress region. In *The Seminoles of Florida*, James Covington finds, “In 1934 James L. Glenn, the financial clerk, reported that there were three Tribal Councils among the various bands of the Seminole Tribe. . . . members of the Big Cypress council were Cuffney Tiger, the medicine man, plus Whitney Cypress, Charley Cypress, and Billie Motlow.”<sup>315</sup> By 1940, a realignment had shifted the leadership structures, but Cypress was still listed as a council member among one of the Mikasuki bands of Seminoles.<sup>316</sup>

While many sources refer to Cypress as a ‘chief,’ Cypress’ great-granddaughter, Mary Jene Koenes, reflects that he was not ever actually recognized this way.<sup>317</sup> She declared, “He was an elder and was influential but not a chief.”<sup>318</sup> As an elder, Cypress was often consulted and involved in important decisions. In 1935, Cypress was among the Seminole members that requested a grant of 200,000 acres of land in the Everglades, which became the Big Cypress reservation.<sup>319</sup> Cypress was also consulted during tribal organization efforts when the Seminoles were targeted with termination. Cypress and others in his age group engaged in these discussions as their opinions were highly respected.<sup>320</sup>

Beginning around 1935, Cypress began to live part-time at the tourist village located in Silver Springs. As explained in Chapter 1, Seminole tourist villages inhabit a complicated portion of Seminole history, acting as an opportunity for Native people to make an income, while also being criticized as exploitative and disease-ridden. In the 1930s, around the time the Silver

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<sup>315</sup> James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 258.

<sup>316</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 258.

<sup>317</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May, 2023; and Handbill, 1999.1.6, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. <https://semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/archive/46FDE02D-594F-4121-B670-462295482923>.

<sup>318</sup> Mary Jene Koenes, Telephone interview by B. Cordell Moats, 23 May, 2023.

<sup>319</sup> Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and Patsy West, *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 72-73.

<sup>320</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May 2023.

Springs village began operation of their tourist village, the pay for living in a tourist village averaged around six dollars per week per family, and food was provided.<sup>321</sup> Regarding how Native participants at the Silver Springs Village felt about the business, Mary Jene Koenes stated that her family and others that lived at the Silver Springs camp saw it as a form of employment.<sup>322</sup> Tourist villages also helped build and maintain connections between Indigenous people. This is exemplified by Mary Jene Koenes' report that her parents met while living in the Silver Springs village sometime around 1948.<sup>323</sup>

Cypress lived at Silver Springs part-time for nearly thirty years. During this time, he, like many Seminoles, used tourist villages as a way to earn money while preserving some traditional culture.<sup>324</sup> Cypress and his wife, Lee Billie, served as headman and matriarch of the Silver Springs village for several years. *A Seminole Tribune* article reports, "In these leadership roles, Lee and Charley paved the way for widespread participation by Seminoles in this valuable economic scheme."<sup>325</sup> Anthropologist Wilfred Neill personally knew Cypress during the time he lived at Silver Springs and wrote in 1953 that "Charley still adheres to an old style of dress and ornamentation. He has never donned shoes or trousers, although on cool days he is not averse to wearing several vests over the blouse of his one-piece dress."<sup>326</sup> Silver Springs promotional materials played into generic definitions of native leaders expected by the American public by

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<sup>321</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 191.

<sup>322</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May 2023.

<sup>323</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May 2023.

<sup>324</sup> Kersey, Jr., *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal*, 41.

<sup>325</sup> Rachel Morgan, "Tribal Archaeologists Record The Lee Billie And Charlie Cypress Camp," *The Seminole Tribune*, April 2, 2018. <https://seminoletribune.org/lee-billie-charlie-cypress-camp/>.

<sup>326</sup> Wilfred T. Neill, "Dugouts of the Mikasuki Seminole," 78.

referring to “Chief Charley Cypress” as the headman and medicine man of the village and suggesting that he was a leader at the site.<sup>327</sup>

The Big Cypress Reservation, Cypress’ other part-time home, also served as a place to preserve many traditional aspects of Seminole culture.<sup>328</sup> As recorded by the Dimocks in the 1910s, Cypress lived within the Big Cypress Swamp for some time before the formation of a federal reservation in the area.<sup>329</sup> A presidential executive order in 1911 created the first portion of the modern reservation.<sup>330</sup> In 1953, Cypress acted among the representatives that requested further reservation land be established in the region, arguing that he wanted land due to a lack of open hunting grounds.<sup>331</sup> Living in Big Cypress, Cypress experienced the cultural changes researcher Merwyn Garbarino explores in her study, “The people [of the Big Cypress Reservation] are making their own life-style, taking what seems valuable to them both from the dominate society and from their own traditional ways. And, most important, they are making the selection for themselves.”<sup>332</sup>



Figure 11: Charley Cypress - Big Cypress Reservation, Florida. Image available from the Florida Memory Project of the State Library and Archives of Florida.

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<sup>327</sup> Handbill, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Archives. While it is clear that Charley Cypress played a leadership role at the Silver Springs tourist village, management of the village was handled by leaders from Silver Springs. Ross Allen, who also ran a Reptile Institute at Silver Springs, was directly involved in the management of the village facility.

<sup>328</sup> Merwyn S. Garbarino, *Big Cypress: A Changing Seminole Community* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, inc., 1972), 2-3.

<sup>329</sup> Milanich and Root, *Hidden Seminoles*, 140-41, 144, 147, 148, and 135; and A. W. Dimock, “Studying the Savage Seminoles in the Everglades of Florida: Trip of Exploration and Research Among Indian Tribe Which Retains Many of its Ancient Customs and Rites” *The Washington Post*, (February 20 1916): MT1 and MT5.

<sup>330</sup> Garbarino, *Big Cypress*, 13.

<sup>331</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 208; and Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and Patsy West, *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 72-73.

<sup>332</sup> Garbarino, *Big Cypress*, 5-6

Cypress most notably upheld the traditional construction of dugout canoes. Canoe making was among Cypress' most well-known skills. Historians such as James Covington later reference Cypress as "the last of the old-time canoe makers."<sup>333</sup> The production of dugout canoes was a work of utilitarian art. Art historian Dorothy Downs discusses this aspect in her book, *Art of the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians*, where she asserts, "Great pride was also taken in decorating canoes, which were often painted in bright colors and covered with bold designs that identified the families that owned them."<sup>334</sup> The outside of canoes was painted with patterns and shapes, while stripes were used to decorate the inside.<sup>335</sup> Mary Jene Koenes recalled her family's involvement in Cypress' canoe-making efforts, stating " My great grandfather would go find a tree to make a canoe. We would move out there so he could eat. We would stay out there 'till the rainy season came while he made the canoe."<sup>336</sup> Charley Cypress's efforts to preserve the culture of his people through the continued use of traditional craftsmanship set an example for many other Indigenous people in Florida.

Cypress' impact has been under recent analysis by the Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, who began investigating the former camp of Cypress and his wife, Lee Billie, to determine if the site was eligible to be included on the Tribal Register of Historic Places. A newspaper article on the study states that criteria for eligibility include that the site is important because of connections to a person or group that made major contributions to Seminole history. The article finds that under this criterion, Charley and Lee Billie Cypress

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<sup>333</sup> Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 208.

<sup>334</sup> Dorothy Downs, *Art of the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 245.

<sup>335</sup> Downs, *Art of the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians*, 245.

<sup>336</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May, 2023.

qualify based on their contributions as headman and matriarch of the Silver Springs Seminole Village and their efforts to preserve traditional practices.<sup>337</sup>

### **Betty Mae Tiger Jumper**

Betty Mae Tiger Jumper, also known as Pa-Ta-Kee, served as the first female chairperson of the Tribal Council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. This position is often referred to as Chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.<sup>338</sup> At Silver Springs, the newest addition to the Glass Bottom Boat fleet is the “Chief Potackee Betty Mae Tiger Jumper.” Constructed in 2020 by St. Johns Ship Builders, this new addition to Silver Springs is a one-of-a-kind, ADA-accessible Glass Bottom Boat. The “Chief Potackee Betty Mae Tiger Jumper” is 37 ft. long, only a foot and a half longer than the rest of the fleet. It is also substantially taller than the other Glass Bottom Boats. Powered by two lithium-ion batteries instead of the eight lead-acid batteries of its sister ships, the new boat weighs two thousand pounds lighter.<sup>339</sup> Tiger Jumper’s son, Moses Jumper Jr., was a part of the dedication ceremony and maiden voyage of this newest Glass Bottom Boat when it was launched in 2021.<sup>340</sup>

Tiger Jumper was born on April 27, 1923. Her father was a French trapper and sugarcane cutter, being half White and half Native placed her in a precarious situation with other Natives. Unlike other historical Native American leaders from Florida, Tiger Jumper had the unique opportunity to leave her own written record because of the period she lived in and the education

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<sup>337</sup> Rachel Morgan, “Tribal Archaeologists Record The Lee Billie And Charlie Cypress Camp.”

<sup>338</sup> Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and Patsy West, *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 156-157, and 160.

<sup>339</sup> Danielle Johnson, “All aboard! Silver Springs State Park welcomes first wheelchair-accessible glass-bottom boat,” *Ocala Star-Banner (FL)*, August 26, 2021, NewsBank: Access World News. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/184A0E58D60705D8>; and Robbie Morin, Glass Bottom Boat Captain, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 28 March 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>340</sup> Johnson, “All aboard!”



she received. Her autobiography, *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper* co-authored with Patsy West, provides a special look into the Seminoles in the 20th century.

In 1928, when Betty Mae Tiger Jumper was five years old, she moved with her family to the Dania Reservation. She recalled that “We arrived at a two-room house that was built along with ten little houses. . . It was really small for two families to stay in. . . eventually some of the families built chickees to live in.”<sup>341</sup> Tiger Jumper stated in her autobiography that her early childhood had been very lonely, “Life was not easy for my brother, Howard, and me as we faced discrimination from the other full-blood reservation children.”<sup>342</sup> Tiger Jumper faced further isolation in childhood because she was raised in a Christian-converted family. Between being a Christian and half-White, Tiger Jumper and her brother dealt with a large amount of discrimination from other Seminoles.<sup>343</sup>

Living on the reservation during her childhood exposed Tiger Jumper to Western education earlier than many of her peers. She recalled the small school on the reservation she first attended, “My brother and I, along with cousins and other children attended the small one-room reservation school when we felt like it. The Indians believed that we had no need to attend school. It was the white man’s way, not the Indians’.”<sup>344</sup> The U. S. agents at the Dania Reservation never successfully operated the day school mostly because of the lack of support from the Indigenous people with whom they worked.<sup>345</sup> Some early accounts of Tiger Jumper originate from her time attending the reservation school, including documents written by a volunteer summer teacher, Mary Lou Sanderson, who recounted Tiger Jumper’s early leadership

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<sup>341</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 45.

<sup>342</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 54.

<sup>343</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 39.

<sup>344</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 64.

<sup>345</sup> Harry A. Kersey Jr. “Federal Schools and Acculturation among the Florida Seminoles, 1927-1954,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 59 (2) (Oct. 1980): 168.

qualities in her description of her students, “Betty Mae Tiger, 13 [actually 12], is the natural leader of the group. She is full of life and in five minutes can think up more things to do than most children can in twenty.”<sup>346</sup>

By 1937, Tiger Jumper decided that despite the reservation school’s closure due to lack of attendance, she wanted a school education. She wanted an education like the friends she had made during a visit to Oklahoma. Unfortunately, the schools in neighboring areas closed their doors to Native Americans.<sup>347</sup> Tiger Jumper eventually agreed to attend a school in North Carolina, the Cherokee Indian Boarding School.<sup>348</sup> She stated, “It was very hard for me to go against the old customs of the older people of my tribe; many, many times have our first three students been scolded and ignored for having anything to do with the white man’s education, and the Christian religion. Sometimes I almost thought I could not go on.”<sup>349</sup>

Education at schools such as the Cherokee Indian Boarding School, established in 1880, was used as a tool to assimilate Natives into White society by promoting nationalistic affection toward the United States.<sup>350</sup> Most of the students Tiger Jumper attended school with were Eastern Band Cherokee children. The recorded experiences of those attending the school have left a wide spectrum of reviews. Some students recalled the emotional and physical hardships, especially connected to attempts towards eradicating Cherokee cultural and lingual ties.<sup>351</sup> Other instances of Western indoctrination included requirements for girls to receive gender-specific training including housewifery, sewing, and other needlework.<sup>352</sup> Patsy West explains that Tiger

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<sup>346</sup> Mary Lou Sanderson in Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 66-67.

<sup>347</sup> Kersey, “Federal Schools and Acculturation among the Florida Seminoles,” 172.

<sup>348</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 107.

<sup>349</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 117.

<sup>350</sup> Gregory D. Smithers, “‘This is the Nation’s Heart-String’: Formal Education and the Cherokee Diaspora during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 30 (2) (Fall 2015): 29 and 42.

<sup>351</sup> Smithers, “This is the Nation’s Heart-String,” 43.

<sup>352</sup> Smithers, “This is the Nation’s Heart-String,” 44.

Jumper's experience avoided many issues of acculturation because learning more about Western culture was a personal goal while attending the boarding school.<sup>353</sup>

After eight years, Tiger Jumper graduated from the Cherokee Indian Boarding School, recalling her graduation, she stated "On graduation night, as I was walking up to get my diploma in my white dress, I knew that it would always be one of the happiest moments of my life. My tears fell as I had fulfilled one of my dreams and my mother was there to share it with me. She had come all the way from Florida on the bus."<sup>354</sup> Following her first graduation, Tiger Jumper decided to continue her education by attending nursing school so she could fulfill the badly needed medical needs among Florida Seminoles.<sup>355</sup> Tiger Jumper attended the Kiowa Teaching Hospital in Oklahoma and then finished her field training in Shawnee, Oklahoma.<sup>356</sup>

Tiger Jumper's time as a nurse was crucial to her leadership role among the Seminoles. She first worked at the Jackson Memorial Hospital for a year, where she often assisted and interpreted for Native patients, and their doctors and other nurses.<sup>357</sup> While the labor she performed as a nurse impacted the lives of many Native people, her work as an interpreter extended beyond her medical career. Tiger Jumper stated, "Whenever I was asked to go, I went. Sometimes I was asked to go to court when people were in other kinds of trouble. For seventeen years, from 1947 to 1964, I served my people this way."<sup>358</sup>

Interpreting for her people proved to be invaluable in 1953 when the Seminoles were targeted by the Federal government under the U. S. Indian policy of Termination. Historian Stirling Evans reports that the "Termination Experiment" began in 1953 and characterized the

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<sup>353</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 113.

<sup>354</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 118.

<sup>355</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 119.

<sup>356</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 121.

<sup>357</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 121.

<sup>358</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 130.

Eisenhower administration's policy towards Native Americans.<sup>359</sup> West remarks, "The big picture was that the government saw termination of Indian tribes as a way to cut Bureau of Indian Affairs' expenses following World War Two."<sup>360</sup> By 'terminating' the federal recognition of Native communities, federal support programs were cut, state tax exemptions ended, and state legislative and judicial authority was imposed on these communities.<sup>361</sup> Tiger Jumper and her husband, Moses Jumper, helped their community by explaining what termination meant, as well as the effects it would have and why they had to fight against it by formally organizing together.<sup>362</sup> There were some debates within the community regarding how to respond to termination, but eventually, those against termination gathered enough support to request that the federal government not terminate their status.<sup>363</sup>

Following the threats of termination, Seminoles in Florida established an organized tribal government, which began operating in 1957.<sup>364</sup> The new system was organized under two governing bodies: the tribal council oversaw the social and general welfare of the tribe, while the board of directors handled the business affairs of the tribe. The chairman of the Tribal Council, often called the Chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, served as the head of the council and Vice President of the Board of Directors. The President of the Board of Directors served as head of the board and as vice chairman of the Tribal Council.<sup>365</sup> In 1967, Howard Tiger, Tiger Jumper's younger brother, suggested that she run for the chairman position.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Stirling Evans, *American Indians in American History, 1870-2001: A Companion Reader* (Westport: Praeger, 2002): 109.

<sup>360</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 138.

<sup>361</sup> Evans, *American Indians in American History*, 110.

<sup>362</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 139.

<sup>363</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 140-141.

<sup>364</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 140; and Patricia Riles Wickman, *Warriors Without War: Seminole Leadership in the Late Twentieth Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011): 48.

<sup>365</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 156-157.

<sup>366</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 160.



Figure 12: Betty Mae as Seminole Chief on the cover of the *Sunshine Magazine*, found in Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and Patsy West, *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 98

Tiger Jumper had gained previous experience as a member of the board of directors from 1959 to 1963, and the time she already spent advocating for the tribe built early support for her election.<sup>367</sup> At the age of forty-four, Betty Mae Tiger Jumper was elected to the Chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida on campaign promises to “improve health, education, employment, welfare, law and order and housing conditions.”<sup>368</sup> In the four years that Tiger Jumper spent as chairman, the Seminole Tribe of Florida received some of their first federal grants and expanded their treasury from thirty-five dollars to half a million. As the Seminole chairman, Tiger Jumper was also a founding member of the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) organization in 1979. The USET included the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Mississippi Choctaws, the Eastern Band of Cherokees, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida Indians and by the 1980s was on the way to becoming a voice for all federally recognized tribes east of the Mississippi River.<sup>369</sup>

The last major contribution Betty Mae Tiger Jumper set in motion for the Seminole Tribe of Florida was the establishment of tribal newspapers. In 1961, *The Seminole Indian News* marked Tiger Jumper’s first attempt at building a newspaper for her tribe.<sup>370</sup> This venture was

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<sup>367</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 158-159.

<sup>368</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 160.

<sup>369</sup> Wickman, *Warriors Without War*, 108.

<sup>370</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 150.

cofounded with Alice Osceola, a Miccosukee member of the tribe. Tiger Jumper wanted to begin a newspaper that served both the reservation communities as well as those that lived off-reservation.<sup>371</sup> Unfortunately, *The Seminole Indian News* was unsuccessful, shutting down after their fourth issue as Tiger Jumper suffered some health issues and Alice Osceola was unable to continue the publication on her own.<sup>372</sup>

In 1983, Tiger Jumper joined the efforts of another Seminole newspaper, the *Alligator Times*.<sup>373</sup> In October of 1983, the press was rebranded under the name *Seminole Tribune*.<sup>374</sup> When Tiger Jumper joined the *Seminole Tribune*, they had a two-person staff. In January 1984, she became the newspaper's editor-in-chief. Patricia Wickman states that "with [Tiger Jumper's] leadership and council support, the paper grew over the years from a simple black-and-white newsletter. . . to a full-sized, full-color newspaper."<sup>375</sup> the *Seminole Tribune* is one of the best Native American newspapers in the country and has won multiple awards from the Native American Journalism Association.<sup>376</sup> The modern state of the Seminole Tribe of Florida was shaped by the life of Chief Pa-Ta-Kee, Betty Mae Tiger Jumper. Her commitment to education and the general welfare of the Seminole people throughout the twentieth century proved to be instrumental in the continuance of the Florida Seminoles in the modern world.

### **Conclusion:**

Charley Cypress and Betty Mae Tiger Jumper were twentieth-century Seminole leaders that led dynamic and complex lives similar to their nineteenth-century ancestors. While early records regarding this period are clouded by a lack of sources, it is clear that twentieth-century

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<sup>371</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 151.

<sup>372</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 155.

<sup>373</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 169.

<sup>374</sup> Wickman, *Warriors Without War*, 135.

<sup>375</sup> Wickman, *Warriors Without War*, 135.

<sup>376</sup> Tiger Jumper and West, *A Seminole Legend*, 169.

Indigenous leaders helped their people survive challenging times. The development of Indigenous roles in tourism at sites including Silver Springs helped keep Native cultural practices alive while adapting to new economic practices. Educational efforts and reorganization in the mid to late twentieth century into the Seminole Tribe of Florida, strengthened the voice of Indigenous people in Florida into the twenty-first century. Silver Springs again has tied itself into the public presentation of this period of Native American history by showcasing Indigenous leaders that had played major roles in the twentieth century. The acknowledgment of figures from several historical eras has the potential to showcase the expansive indigenous presence in the region's history. Sadly, Silver Springs has inadvertently presented narrow understandings of who Cypress and Tiger Jumper were in Seminole history by calling Cypress "chief" and only recognizing Tiger Jumper's role as the chairperson of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

## Chapter IV:

### WESTERN CULTURE AND THE PRESENTATION OF NATIVE HISTORY

“From the dusty ranges of Oregon to the mountains of North Carolina to the pastoral feel of southern Ohio, images of Indians permeated the regional tourist environments.”

–Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity:*

*Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History.*<sup>377</sup>

While the use of Native American representations at Silver Springs has played a clear role in the history of the tourist site, the trends to use Native history and culture in tourism are not exclusive to Silver Springs. As historian Katrina Phillips finds, the use of Native imagery and history in tourism is a national phenomenon.<sup>378</sup> Two important questions arise out of the national phenomenon to use Native Americans in tourism: *how* has tourism presented concepts of Native culture and history, and *why* has it become a prevalent trend? Guest expectations of Native Americans have played an important role in the way Silver Springs and other tourist sites have presented Native Americans. Visitors’ expectations of Native Americans have been shaped by centuries of Western interpretations and misinterpretations of Indigenous cultures. While it is important to understand Native culture and history to identify how Natives have been used in tourism, *why* Natives are utilized in tourism is deeply rooted in Western culture through concepts of cultural imperialism and salvage tourism.

Today, Silver Springs is important in presenting Native American history because it is not an Indigenous tourist site. Indigenous tourism, and the larger field of ethnic minority tourism, are often branded as socioeconomic growth and opportunities for ethnic minority groups through

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<sup>377</sup> Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 185.

<sup>378</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 185.



maintaining traditional culture while promoting business development<sup>379</sup> Indigenous tourism is characterized by Indigenous people playing a role in the tourist attractions and is centered on Indigenous communities.<sup>380</sup> While Silver Springs was once tied into a standard form of Indigenous tourism through the operation of a Seminole tourist village, today the park is not typically considered an Indigenous tourist site.

The presentation of Native Americans at tourist locations such as Silver Springs was, and continues to be, shaped by White expectations of what Natives look and act like. Historian Robert Berkhofer refers to these expectations in his research, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. Berkhofer explains that “Since the original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere neither called themselves by a single term nor understood themselves as a collectivity, the idea and the image of the Indian must be a White conception.”<sup>381</sup> Berkhofer believes one major cause that led Europeans to generalize the diversity of people in the Americas was a development of a European identity. The use of one term to refer to all the inhabitants in North America validated the use of collective terms towards other continents, including Europe.<sup>382</sup>

The result of identifying Native cultures and peoples under the catch-all term ‘Indian’ has failed to recognize the diversity of Native Americans, both in the past and in the present day.<sup>383</sup> Similarly, nineteenth-century Euro-Americans chose to apply the term “Seminole” to all of the Native residents of Florida. By applying their definition of what a “Seminole” was, White

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<sup>379</sup> Joanhong Zhao and Johan R. Edelheim, “‘Ethnic Minority Tourism’ and ‘Indigenous Tourism’: The Critical Distinction,” *Tourism, Culture & Communication* 23 (2023): 2.

<sup>380</sup> Zhao and Edelheim, “Ethnic Minority Tourism and Indigenous Tourism,” 5.

<sup>381</sup> Robert F Berkhofer, Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A Knopf inc., 1978), 3.

<sup>382</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 23-24.

<sup>383</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 3.

society was able to discredit Native land claims and justify military actions against Natives in Florida.<sup>384</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, the Western concept of “the White man’s Indian,” the imagined image of Native people held by a large portion of Euro-Americans, has been accepted as an authentic representation of Native Americans.<sup>385</sup> Despite mainstream acceptance, “the White man’s Indian” has not gone unchallenged. Historian Fergus Bordewich comments in *Killing the White Man’s Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century*, that throughout the early 1990s, “a revolution was underway in Indian Country. . . . In almost every respect it was challenging the worn-out theology of Indians as losers and victims and was transforming tribes into powers to be reckoned with for a long time to come.”<sup>386</sup> However, despite the advancements and changes Bordewich covers, little of these changes have challenged the perception of mainstream America. The innovations at the end of the twentieth century went “largely unrecorded by the national media and unnoticed by a public that still sees Indians mainly through the mythic veil of mingled racism and romance.”<sup>387</sup>

A major factor that reinforced the concept of “the White man’s Indian” has been the portrayal of Native Americans in film. Native presentations in film play a role in how tourist sites such as Silver Springs depict Indigenous people because they have reinforced the expectations that Western society has developed for itself.<sup>388</sup> In *Celluloid Indians: Native*

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<sup>384</sup> Andrew Frank, “Creating a Seminole Enemy: Ethnic and Racial Diversity in the Conquest of Florida,” *Florida International University Law Review*, 9 (Spring 2014), 284.

<sup>385</sup> Fergus M. Bordewich, *Killing the White Man’s Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the end of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1996), 33.

<sup>386</sup> Bordewich, *Killing the White Man’s Indian*, 10-11.

<sup>387</sup> Bordewich, *Killing the White Man’s Indian*, 10-11.

<sup>388</sup> Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, “Introduction: The Study of Hollywood’s Indian, Still on a Scholarly Frontier?” in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, eds., *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998, reprinted in 2003), 2.

*Americans and Film*, art historian Jacquelyn Kilpatrick emphasizes that “the history and cultures of Native Americans have been miscommunicated in films, and the distortions have been accepted as truth, with sometimes disastrous results.”<sup>389</sup> The miscommunication of Native history and culture has resulted in the reinforcement of the stereotypical Western concept of “the White man’s Indian.” Kilpatrick connects trends for film that misrepresent Native Americans to earlier trends in literature, specifically in the work of James Fenimore Cooper such as *The Last of the Mohicans*.<sup>390</sup> These works of literature established stereotypical extremes in the portrayals of Native Americans that film audiences have come to expect.<sup>391</sup>

Native American history presented in the tourism efforts at Silver Springs is also tied to a process of cultural imperialism. Historians Carter Meyer and Diana Royer explain that imperialism of Native American cultures has seen “Non-Indians, enamored of the perceived strengths of Native cultures, have appropriated and distorted elements of these cultures for their own purposes, more often than not ignoring the impact of the process on the Indians themselves.”<sup>392</sup> Euro-American attempts to connect to Native culture and history are not recent development. While most prevalent throughout the twentieth century, the cultural imperialism of Native Americans can be found in nearly all parts of American history.<sup>393</sup>

Historian Philip Deloria cites the work of British writer D. H. Lawrence to explain that American identity is intrinsically connected to Native American culture and history. According

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<sup>389</sup> Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), xv.

<sup>390</sup> Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 2.

<sup>391</sup> Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 2; and John E. O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian: An Institutional Approach,” in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor eds., *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998, reprint ed. 2003), 33.

<sup>392</sup> Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, “Introduction,” in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001), xi.

<sup>393</sup> Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

to these references, Lawrence felt that Americans have tended to identify themselves by what they were not.<sup>394</sup> Throughout American history, ‘American’ has meant, ‘not British,’ ‘not German,’ ‘not Communist,’ and separate from numerous other identities. Americans “had failed to produce a positive identity that stood on its own.”<sup>395</sup> Native Americans occupy a unique position in the search for an American identity as Natives have continuously been defined as an “other” by the same Americans that have also wished to possess their claims to North America.<sup>396</sup> A mix of desires for some aspects of Native identity and rejections of Native people themselves by Americans has developed both the fictional concept of “the White man’s Indian” and a desire to imperialize Native cultures.

The final concept important to Silver Springs and its usage of Native American culture and history is referred to as salvage tourism. Katrina Phillips explains in her research, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History*, that “Salvage tourism combines the theoretical framework of salvage ethnography with the practices and yearnings of heritage tourism.... Salvage tourism is explicitly tied up in trying to salvage American Indian cultures before Indians, in the mind of non-Natives die off, change, or degenerate from their ideals of a pristine Indian past.”<sup>397</sup> Salvage ethnography of the Seminoles includes Clay MacCauley’s *The Seminole Indians of Florida* and John R. Swanton’s *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*.<sup>398</sup> Salvage tourism is the endeavor of non-Natives to preserve their images of Native people. The practice of salvage tourism therefore

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<sup>394</sup> Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3.

<sup>395</sup> Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3.

<sup>396</sup> Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 25.

<sup>397</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 7. Phillips defines heritage tourism on page 7 as “the experience of traveling to places and taking part in activities that aim to represent the stories and the people of the past,” Phillips’ research does not distinguish between historical tourism and heritage tourism.

<sup>398</sup> Clay MacCauley, *The Seminole Indians of Florida*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); John R. Swanton *Early History of the Creek Indians & Their Neighbors*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

directly works to preserve “the White man’s Indian,” the stereotyped and misinterpreted images of Native people that Western culture has come to believe is, or at least was, a reality.<sup>399</sup>

Silver Springs as a site of salvage tourism relates to Phillips’ statement that “salvage tourism’s use of the imagined, ideal Indian allowed tourist audiences to envision themselves not as tourists but as part of a romanticized past, a past driven by the dream of innocence.”<sup>400</sup> The operation of Silver Springs as a tourist attraction is centered around a romanticization of the past. The continuous operation of the Glass Bottom Boats since the late nineteenth century allows passengers to feel as if they are participating in a historic activity when they embark on a boat tour. Today, the Glass Bottom Boats recall the tourism of the late nineteenth century, however, tourism from this time originated from how tourists “Trying to find solace in the past. . . sought a simpler, more pastoral time – a time that never existed as they imagined it. Rather they were longing for an imagined past that served to create and define a shared experience and a shared identity.”<sup>401</sup> The romanticizing of the past brings a level of comfort to guests that make the experience enjoyable and leads to a loss of authenticity.

The loss of authenticity to increase guest comfort becomes very problematic when coupled with guests’ desire for accuracy in historical tourism. This places the operators of historical tourist sites in a difficult situation to present genuine history while maintaining guest comfort. Regarding Native American history, authenticity has been complicated by the concept of “the White man’s Indian” and salvage ethnography. Salvage ethnography developed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, “Convinced that American Indian languages, rituals, songs, and dances—not to mention the Indians themselves—would soon

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<sup>399</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 11; and Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, xiii.

<sup>400</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 186.

<sup>401</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 8.

disappear, ethnographers. . . rushed to salvage what they assumed was left of pristine Indian cultures before they vanished.”<sup>402</sup> The salvage ethnography practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has preserved the images of “the White man’s Indian” and has led the public to believe that this simplified version of Native cultures was authentic.<sup>403</sup>

Native American presentations at Silver Springs lean into salvage tourism instead of historical tourism as they reinforce “the White man’s Indian” in their presentations of Native history. Salvage tourism serves as a confirmation of Berkhofer’s prediction that “In light of the history of White Indian imagery, it seems certain that the term and the ideas of Indian otherness will continue into the future.”<sup>404</sup> The use of salvage tourism at Silver Springs is most likely not intended to reinforce flawed versions of Native American history and culture but has been the result of prioritizing guest expectations and what guests believe to be an authentic version of Native people.<sup>405</sup>

Historically, Silver Springs has utilized Native Americans through a multitude of different presentations. The Seminole tourist village, the most notable previous presentation of Native Americans, and Wild Waters’ Osceola’s Revenge waterslide no longer operate, and since closing they have both been dismantled. The operation of the Seminole tourist village from the 1930s to the 1960s made Silver Springs a destination for Indigenous tourism, however, the exposition of Native culture was still presented to meet the expectations of guests during this time.

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<sup>402</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 11.

<sup>403</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 11.

<sup>404</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 196.

<sup>405</sup> Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity*, 11; O’Connor, “The White Man’s Indian,” 30; and Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 196.

The Seminole tourist village at Silver Springs was marketed to White guests. An analysis of the advertisement flyer shown in Figure 13 showcases how the marketing and presentation of the village were centered on guest expectations of Native people and culture. This flyer calls the village “America’s strangest community,” and states that guests “will be very interested and amazed in seeing these primitive people, who will impress you with their peculiar customs, habits, traditions, and their Indian art work.”<sup>406</sup> Where the flyer details the artwork displayed at the tourist village it includes totem pole carving alongside basket weaving, bead working, and dugout canoe construction.<sup>407</sup> Totem pole carving is a clear indicator that the Seminole village conformed to audience expectations, as this artform was not traditional to Florida’s Indigenous

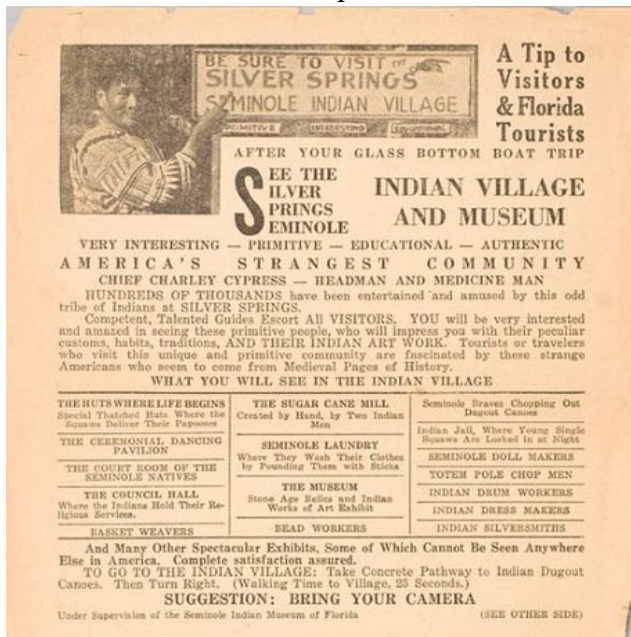


Figure 13: Flyer for Seminole tourist village at Silver Springs. Handbill, 1999.1.6, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation.

people, but was adopted at tourist village sites to give the village decor that guests easily recognized from what they believed was “Indian culture.”<sup>408</sup>

Furthermore, the audience’s expectations for a Native village to be overseen by a male “chief” were fulfilled by how Silver Springs exhibited Charley Cypress, even referring to him as “Chief Charley Cypress” in promotional material.<sup>409</sup>

Mr. Scott Mitchell, Director of the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center,

<sup>406</sup> Handbill, 1999.1.6, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation. <https://semtribe.pastperfectonline.com/archive/46FDE02D-594F-4121-B670-462295482923>.

<sup>407</sup> Handbill, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Archives.

<sup>408</sup> Dorothy Downs, *Art of the Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 250.

<sup>409</sup> Handbill, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Archives.

reports that Charly Cypress, and his wife Lee Billie Cypress, played the roles of patriarch and matriarch at the Silver Springs tourist village.<sup>410</sup> According to Mary Jene Koenes, Charley Cypress's great-granddaughter, Cypress was considered an elder, and had an influential role among the Seminole people, but referring to Cypress as a chief was not accurate to his position among the Seminoles.<sup>411</sup> The misuse of the term chief has continued to be an issue in the current operation of Silver Springs as most of the glass bottom boats include the title, even when the boat is named after figures that did not serve in a chief's role.

The name of the waterslide, Osceola's Revenge, alludes to Osceola's casting as a Native martyr following his deceitful capture and death in prison. Osceola's Revenge also plays into the stereotypical trope of Native people as prone to violence and savagery. Additionally, the reference to Osceola at Wild Waters was problematic when looking at the other references the water park utilized. The only other attraction at Wild Waters that was named after a figure was the Bunyan's Bend waterslide.<sup>412</sup> Based on the frontier motif of Silver Springs that included the Silver River Emporium souvenir shop, Bunyan's Bend was most likely a reference to the folkloric figure Paul Bunyan.<sup>413</sup> An unintended consequence of combining folkloric figures and

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<sup>410</sup> Scott Mitchell, Director of the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 10 April 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interviews, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>411</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May 2023.

<sup>412</sup> Andy Fillmore, "Wild Waters Last splash - The water park next to Silver Springs hosts its final customers," *Daily Commercial, The (Leesburg, FL)*, September 6, 2016: 3, *NewsBank: Access World News*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/15F3EC2F08385AD8>.

<sup>413</sup> Bruce Mozert, *Landscapers working around the wave pool at the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341031>; Bruce Mozert, *Silver Valley Emporium being constructed at the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341032>; and Bruce Mozert, *Slides shown during construction of the Wild Waters theme park in Silver Springs*, 1978-04-14, Bruce Mozert Collection, State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341026>.



historical figures in similar references is that it suggests to guests that these figures are the same, resulting in confusion between folklore and factual history.

In a 2004 article, Wendy King reported that Silver Springs utilized Native culture and history during the Glass Bottom Boat tours through the recounting of a tale regarding the Bridal Chamber spring. According to this legend, “the Bridal Chamber is named after the tale of the ill-fated love affair of Indian Prince Chulcotah and Winona. She hurled herself into the deepest point of the river in a moment of agonizing grief over her forbidden lover for the Prince.”<sup>414</sup> King also points out that this is not the only version of the Legend of the Bridal Chamber. The previous legend used in early advertisements such as a brochure from 1945, cites Aunt Silla, an African American woman that lived at Silver Springs up to her death a few years before the printing of the brochure.<sup>415</sup>

Silla’s account of the legend has no reference to Native Americans but mirrors the star-crossed lover’s story of King’s 2004 version. Silla’s version centers the story on class divisions, as the poor Bernice Mayo was deemed unfit to marry her love Claire Douglass, the son of a wealthy Ocala plantation owner and cotton baron Captain Harding Douglass.<sup>416</sup> King comments, “The changing Bridal Chamber legend is yet another example of how issues of race, class, and gender are often played out within Florida’s tourist spaces.”<sup>417</sup> It has yet to be confirmed if the

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<sup>414</sup> King, Wendy Adams. “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs: Tourism and the Politics of Vision.” *Americanana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* 3 (1) (spring 2004).

[https://americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring\\_2004/king.htm](https://americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2004/king.htm).

<sup>415</sup> See *Florida's Silver Springs from Paradise Park for Colored People, Brochure, ca. 1949*. 1949 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/333821>>, accessed 10 June 2023; and *See Silver Springs Brochure, ca. 1934*. 1934 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/341237>>, accessed 12 June 2023.

<sup>416</sup> See *Florida's Silver Springs from Paradise Park for Colored People, Brochure, ca. 1949*; *See Silver Springs Brochure, ca. 1934*; and Tim Hollis, *Glass Bottom Boats & Mermaid Tails: Florida's Tourist Springs*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2006) 12-13.

<sup>417</sup> King, “Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs.”

Native version of the Legend of the Bridal Chamber is still used on the Glass Bottom Boat attractions. According to King the change from Aunt Silla's tale to the Native legend was most likely a response to the development of more progressive attitudes towards African Americans and a desire to distance the story from stereotypes showcased by Aunt Silla's involvement as an "age-defying 'primitive' seer stereotype," in the previous legend.<sup>418</sup> Mr. Scott Mitchell stated that stories of "Indian princesses" and Silver Springs legends were all just to generate tourism.<sup>419</sup> The story's changes make it clear that the Native legend was fabricated for the interests of Western tourism, and has played a role in the usage of Native Americans at Silver Springs.

There are also three presentations of Native Americans at Silver Springs that can still be found at the site today. As previously discussed, most of the Glass Bottom Boats at the park are named after Native American leaders. The boat names are easily overlooked as an exhibition of Native Americans by many park guests.<sup>420</sup> Many of the current park operators at Silver Springs believe that the Glass Bottom Boat names act to honor these Native American leaders. When asked if there had been any efforts to change the names, current Glass Bottom Boat Captain Robbie Morin stated "No, not that I've heard of. To me that pays homage to them."<sup>421</sup>

Others connected to Silver Springs feel that the names at least did not have the initial intention to honor Native people. Scott Mitchell stated that "Once we got to the point where there was no open warfare going on, people in the United States immediately began to romanticize [Native Americans], and the names on the boats is really a holdover from that. I'm

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<sup>418</sup> King, "Through the Looking Glass of Silver Springs."

<sup>419</sup> Mitchell, Zoom interview, 10 April 2023.

<sup>420</sup> Robbie Morin, Glass Bottom Boat Captain, Zoom interview by B. Cordell Moats, 28 March 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>421</sup> Morin, Zoom interview, 28 March 2023.

not saying it's right or wrong, but I don't know if anyone had the idea to name the boats as a way to honor them."<sup>422</sup> The romanticizing of Native people that Mitchell refers to is a part of the cultural imperialism process. Mary Jene Koenes, as a descendant of one leader recognized on the Glass Bottom Boats, stated that she felt that naming the boats after Native Americans was "more for the tourist than the people."<sup>423</sup> Regardless of the intention, the use of Native American names on the Glass Bottom Boats, the Osceola statue in the park, and several other references to Native Americans used today and over the history of Silver Springs tether the park to the public presentation of Native American history.

The statue of Osceola, with its allusions to the most likely folkloric story of the leader stabbing a piece of paper during a peace meeting, raises previously discussed issues of portraying the historical Osceola to the public. One final current presentation of Native American imagery at Silver Springs is included on signage around the park detailing the history of the region. As seen in Figure 14, the historical sign at Silver Springs continues to present misinformation and partial truths as facts in their accounts of Native American history and Seminole history in particular.

Misinformation includes statements that inflate

Osceola's role in the Second Seminole War, while partial truths include statements such as the origin of the Seminole people as only a branch of the Creeks.



Figure 14: Silver Springs' First People, history sign at Silver Springs State Park, B. Cordell Moats, personal photograph, 23 December, 2022.

<sup>422</sup> Mitchell, Zoom interview, 10 April 2023.

<sup>423</sup> Koenes, interview, 23 May 2023.

Tourism, especially at sites such as Silver Springs, which uses Native American history but is not intended to be a Native American historical site, has failed to completely overcome established stereotypes, which are still set in park distortions of Seminole history.<sup>424</sup> These accounts include the reinforcement of folkloric stories regarding Osceola. As we have covered, Osceola held no “chief” titles or roles during his lifetime. Silver Springs continuously refers to Osceola as a chief, both through the possible reference to the leader on the Glass Bottom Boat Chief Yohola, and the inscription on the Osceola statue at the park, which states that he was the head war chief during the Second Seminole War.<sup>425</sup> The sign display regarding Native American history at Silver Springs does not refer to Osceola as a chief, instead, it recounts, “The resistance to relocation was led by Osceola, who emerged as a leader.”<sup>426</sup> However, the sign recounts the story of Osceola stabbing a treaty during a negotiation meeting at Fort King, the same story that the statue of Osceola alludes to as well.<sup>427</sup> Despite historians including John Mahon questioning the authenticity of this story and suggesting that it may have been fabricated after the Second Seminole War, Silver Springs presents these events as factual.<sup>428</sup> Another note often left unconsidered is that despite Osceola’s capture in 1837 and death in 1838, the Second Seminole War continued without Osceola’s leadership until 1842. The emphasis on Osceola has overshadowed a more complete understanding of the Seminoles in the nineteenth century and the Second Seminole War.

The central driving factor that has caused sites including Silver Springs to follow trends of cultural imperialism and the continued presence of “the White man’s Indian” has been

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<sup>424</sup> B. Cordell Moats, *Silver Springs’ First People History Sign*, personal photograph, 23 December, 2022.

<sup>425</sup> B. Cordell Moats, *Statue of Osceola at Silver Springs State Park*, personal photograph, 17 March, 2020.

<sup>426</sup> Moats, *Silver Springs’ First People History Sign*.

<sup>427</sup> Moats, *Silver Springs’ First People History Sign*.

<sup>428</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War: 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), 98.

commercial considerations. The same monetary objectives have also impacted the film industry, as historian John E. O'Connor explains, "in spite of a more or less subtle racial bias, Hollywood is presumably not filled with Indian-haters intent on using their power to put down the Natives."<sup>429</sup> Hollywood is not maliciously portraying Natives poorly as seen in how filmmakers are quick to change their portrayals when the market, calls for it.<sup>430</sup> Similarly, tourist sites such as Silver Springs do not purposely portray Native history inaccurately, however, they are giving into commercial considerations to fulfill guest expectations. Just as they did in the mid-twentieth century, guests at Silver Springs still want folklore, and while Glass Bottom Boat captains such as Robbie Morin try to ground the experience in facts, folklore grabs more attention from park guests.<sup>431</sup>

Recent trends in Western society have reimagined Native Americans as the original environmentalists and spiritually in tune with the living environment. This new positive version of "the White man's Indian" has led many Americans to associate themselves with Native Americans, instead of trying to separate themselves.<sup>432</sup> The commercialization of a spiritual "White man's Indian" has continued to reduce the diversity of Native cultures and individuals into one stagnant image.<sup>433</sup> Meyer and Royer explain that this new image of Native people has been built by Euro-American consumers, "in purchasing sacred items or paying to participate in a sweat-lodge ceremony, we are appropriating rituals that we had in part projected upon American Indian cultures through our beliefs about what those cultures embody or represent."<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> O'Connor, "The White Man's Indian," 30.

<sup>430</sup> O'Connor, "The White Man's Indian," 30.

<sup>431</sup> Leon Cheatom in Vickers and Wilson-Graham, *Remembering Paradise Park* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 15; and Morin, Zoom interview, 28 March 2023.

<sup>432</sup> Meyer and Royer, "Introduction," xii.

<sup>433</sup> Meyer and Royer, "Introduction," xiii.

<sup>434</sup> Meyer and Royer, "Introduction," xiv.

Silver Springs is most associated with ecological tourism, especially today, as the park is operated by the state and serves primarily as a nature preserve and outdoor recreation area. Trends to characterize Native Americans as environmentalists is another form of salvage tourism and have normalized Native presentations at ecological tourist sites such as Silver Springs. Uses of Native imagery and memory at Silver Springs are directly associated with the image of Native people as the first environmentalists, as well as older beliefs that Natives were an aspect of nature. These associations most likely influenced the construction and operation of the Seminole tourist village from the 1930s to the 1960s. While most of the Glass Bottom Boats at Silver Springs follow the naming structure of “Chief [historical Native name]” the inclusion of two exceptions contributes to an inadvertent trend to relegate Native people to part of the natural world, separate from human society.<sup>435</sup> The Heron and the Osprey, both built in 1965, operate as non-traditional Glass Bottom Boats.<sup>436</sup> These two boats have a different designs, with a soft top and open-air structure, and have been used for different attractions at Silver Springs. Currently, these two boats are operated for 90-minute tours, while the traditional style boats are utilized for 30-minute tours.<sup>437</sup> Similar to issues faced by the waterslide references at Wild Waters, the use of Native American and environmental elements in similar presentations at Silver Springs implies that Native people are a nonhuman presence in nature.<sup>438</sup>

Concepts of “the White man’s Indian,” cultural imperialism, and salvage tourism have led Silver Springs down a challenging path while dealing with the representation of Native American history and culture. The Indigenous people of Florida have played a dynamic and

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<sup>435</sup> Derek Bousé, “Culture as Nature: How Native American Cultural Antiquities Became Part of the Natural World,” *The Public Historian* 18 (4) (Autumn 1996) 77.

<sup>436</sup> Nicky Aiken, email message to B. Cordell Moats, 20 May 2023, Bryan Cordell Moats Research Interview, Silver Springs State Park, 2023, 56D1FF0B-80DE-9BB1-4E9C-723B78803733, Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, [https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital\\_objects/3124](https://archivesspace.valdosta.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/3124).

<sup>437</sup> Nicky Aiken, email message, 20 May 2023.

<sup>438</sup> Bousé, “Culture as Nature,” 77.

important role in the history of the region around Silver Springs and deserve to be recognized at the tourist site. However, this must be done with respect to Indigenous people and cultures, and avoid the tendencies produced by cultural imperialism to represent Native Americans with outdated tropes and stereotypes that make up the Western image of ‘the White man’s Indian.’ A focus on historical tourism, instead of reliance on salvage tourism, will increase the authenticity of Native representation at Silver Springs and similar tourist sites. To refocus the historical tourist elements of Silver Springs to achieve historical authenticity, instead of the authenticity of salvage ethnography, will require consultation with experts and the Native people that have historical connections to the region. Expectations may cause guests to question interpretations that challenge old stereotypes, but efforts to correct Native presentations may eventually challenge guests’ stereotypical expectations.

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