

## Activism and Conservation: Historical and Contemporary Attitudes



Everglades - FL. History  
May Mann Jennings papers  
Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries,  
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00094632/00001/18>



The Everglades and Royal Palm State Park, Photos from the  
1920s and 1930s  
Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers  
Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00094632/00001/52>

### Grades: 9–12

#### Objectives:

Students will:

- Gain an understanding of how images help shape cultural perceptions of the landscape.
- Learn about May Mann Jennings and her impact on conservation through the establishment of the Royal Palm State Park.
- Understand the role of civic organizations in spearheading early conservation efforts.
- Compare historical and contemporary attitudes towards conservation and preservation.

#### Time and Resources:

- 2-3 forty-minute classes, depending on if students will be shown how to conduct research as part of the unit
- Computers with Internet access or print-outs of documents and photographs

### Sunshine State Standards (grades 9–12)

#### Language Arts:

- Literary Analysis, Standard 2: Nonfiction

The student identifies, analyzes, and applies knowledge of the elements of a variety of nonfiction, informational, and expository texts to demonstrate an understanding of the information presented.

- LA.910.2.2.3 & LA.1112.2.2.3 The student will organize information to show understanding or relationships among facts, ideas, and events (e.g., representing key points within text through charting, mapping, paraphrasing, summarizing, comparing, contrasting, or outlining)

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- LA.910.2.2.4 & LA.1112.2.2.4 The student will identify and analyze the characteristics of a variety of types of text (e.g., references, reports, technical manuals, articles, editorials, primary source historical documents, periodicals, job-related materials, practical/functional text)
- Writing Applications, Standard 3: Persuasive  
The student develops and demonstrates persuasive writing that is used for the purpose of influencing the reader.
  - LA.910.4.3.1 & LA.1112.4.3.1 The student will write essays that state a position or claim, present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support effective arguments and emotional appeals, and acknowledge and refute opposing arguments
- Information and Media Literacy, Standard 2: Research Process  
The student uses a systematic process for the collection, processing, and presentation of information.
  - LA.910.6.2.2 & LA.1112.6.2.2 The student will organize, synthesize, analyze, and evaluate the validity and reliability of information from multiple sources (including primary and secondary sources) to draw conclusions using a variety of techniques, and correctly use standardized citations
  - LA.910.6.2.3 & LA.1112.6.2.3 The student will write an informational report that integrates information and makes distinctions between the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas

### **Visual Arts:**

- Critical Thinking and Reflection, Enduring Understanding 3  
The processes of critiquing works of art lead to development of critical-thinking skills transferable to other contexts.
  - VA.912.C.3.3 Examine relationships among social, historical, literary, and/or other references to explain how they are assimilated into artworks
  - VA.912.C.3.4 Use analytical skills to examine issues in non-visual art contexts

### **Social Studies:**

- American History, Standard 1  
Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American history using primary and secondary sources.
  - SS.912.A.1.2 Utilize a variety of primary and secondary sources to identify author, historical significance, audience, and authenticity to understand a historical period.
- American History, Standard 3  
Analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in response to the Industrial Revolution.

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- SS.912.A.3.12 Compare how different nongovernmental organizations and progressives worked to shape public policy, restore economic opportunities, and correct injustices in American life.
- SS.912.A.3.13 Examine key events and peoples in Florida history as they relate to United States history.
- **Geography, Standard 3**  
Understand the relationships between the Earth's ecosystems and the populations that dwell within them
  - SS.912.G.3.3 Use geographic terms and tools to explain differing perspectives on the use of renewable and non-renewable resources in Florida, the United States, and the world.
- **Geography, Standard 5**  
Understand how human actions can impact the environment.
  - SS.912.G.5.4 Analyze case studies of how humans impact the diversity and productivity of ecosystems.
- **Civics and Government, Standard 2**  
Evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and determine methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.
  - SS.912.C.2.4 Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues that cause the government to balance the interests of individuals with the public good.

### **Brief Note About May Mann Jennings:**



Portrait of May Mann Jennings, not dated, ("May Mann Jennings" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091239/00001/2j>

May Mann Jennings (1872-1963) was a political activist and champion of beautification and conservation, among other causes. She was married to Governor William Sherman Jennings, who, while in office from 1901 to 1905, led efforts to drain and reclaim Everglades lands for economic development and continued these endeavors as part of the state's Internal Improvement Fund under Governor Napoleon B. Broward. Despite her husband's economic interests in clearing the natural ecosystem, Jennings worked to get a royal palm hammock in Paradise Key designated as a state park during her 1914 to 1917 tenure as the president of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FWCC). After the area was established as Royal Palm State Park in 1915 she continued work with the Federation to beautify and improve the park. This work conserved a small piece of the Everglades for public use and spearheaded a tourism drive to the area, which was not seen as a contrast to her husband's drainage and reclamation efforts. Rather, the park was something of a complement to other types of

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Everglades development undertaken at the time. Jennings was a powerful force in early twentieth-century conservation, an interest shared by many women's organizations. She worked through the 1920s and 30s to help the FWCC oversee the Royal Palm State Park and eventually went on to help with the establishment of the larger Everglades National Park. Jennings also worked on behalf of the FWCC to bring the Civilian Conservation Corps, formed in 1933 as part of FDR's New Deal Plan, to Florida in order help with conservation work on the state's parks.

Jennings' exhaustive work with the Women's Club conservation committee on the planning of all aspects of the Royal Palm State Park is evident in her correspondence, particularly of June and July, 1916. Her letters indicate numerous meetings to plan and resolve issues related to building a lodge to house overnight visitors, constructing a road through the park that would bypass some large and valuable trees, and the potential construction of a bird sanctuary and botanical garden. This correspondence showcases the dedication and zeal with which the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs approached the management of this protected area.

### Context:

In 1910, Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, wrote in *The Fight for Conservation* that "conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time" (p. 48). This utilitarian conservation viewpoint is reflected in popular attitudes toward conservation in the early twentieth century, which tended to focus on the wise use of land as a resource for economic and recreational gains rather than as a means to simply preserve untouched wilderness. Such attitudes were driven largely by industrialization practices that threatened to eliminate vast natural landscapes through what came to be seen as a wasteful use of natural resources. People began to fear that unique areas used for hunting, fishing, camping, bird watching, and other recreational pursuits would disappear completely if these areas were not managed. To some, this management equated to practicing a type of conservation in which nature was made better through careful human interventions—like supplying quality access roads, flood control, places for people to eat and lodge, cultivating gardens, and so forth. It was this faith in man's ability to use technology to control natural resources while simultaneously balancing a moral responsibility to protect spaces that inspired a spiritual connection that characterized the movement to create Royal Palm State Park.

The economic impact of creating a protected space within the vast area of the Everglades was not overlooked either. While railroads and other industries wanted to retain all of the Everglades land for development, Jennings was able to sell the idea of a park area as an economic boon for the state. Not only would the land belong to the people and enhance scientific discovery, it would draw nature lovers and other visitors to the park—an early form of what we might today call ecotourism. This type of tourism was a concept that was beginning to take hold as transportation infrastructures made people increasingly mobile and ready to explore the country's natural wonders.

### Vocabulary:

Preservation	Conservation	Everglades	Utilitarian conservation
Royal Palm State Park	May Mann Jennings	Primary source	Secondary source

## Activities:

**Study of Historical Attitudes:** To begin, ask students to think about their feelings towards a protected space such as the Everglades. Then ask them to think about how they feel about a non-protected space such as a local riverfront area, pond, or their backyard. Have students share their thoughts about how their attitudes might differ (or not) towards these landscapes and record responses on the board. Prompt students, if needed, to consider what would be acceptable levels of human intervention (roads, planting, wildlife removal, etc.) in each space. Next, ask them to define the difference between conservation and preservation (the latter can be broadly defined as wilderness free from human influence, or untouched nature). Allow them to supplement their answers with research from the Internet if time allows.

Next, present documents from the May Mann Jennings collection within the University of Florida Digital Collections (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/jmann>) in order to acquaint students with Jennings' activities and general attitudes towards conservation that were prevalent at the time.

Suggested documents include:

- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091235/00001> : Miami Metropolis newspaper article, dated October 27, 1916 (Newspaper articles regarding William S. Jennings: 1901, 1916 folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)  
  
Newspaper article containing scandalous accusations about Jennings' husband, Governor William S. Jennings' dispersal of state land to private companies—compare his Everglades drainage and development work with her conservation efforts.
- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091183/00001> : Document granting Royal Palm State Park to the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (chapter 6949, No. 143), dated June 15, 1915 ("Correspondence: 1919 February" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)  
  
Legislative announcement granting Royal Palm State Park to the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs for care and management.
- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091167/00001/12x> : Note to Jennings from the Florida State Livestock Association, not dated ("Correspondence: 1918 January" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)  
  
Note from the Florida State Livestock Association to Jennings agreeing that pelicans are not really a large nuisance and indicating that the matter of controlling these birds came up in a legislative session but was dropped—the note indicates that pelicans eat less fish than many other animals and that usually they eat non-desirable types anyway. Present this as an issue arising through concerns from fishermen who claimed during the World War food shortages that pelicans were stealing their profits and relate this to early twentieth-century attitudes about conservation and resource use.
- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091151/00001/146> : Letter from May Mann Jennings to E. A. McIlhenny, dated July 19, 1916 ("Correspondence: 1916 June-July" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)

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Letter from Jennings to a man willing to donate birds to the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs for the establishment of a bird sanctuary—letter mentions construction of a large pen to house the birds and the creation of an artificial lake for feeding.

- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091151/00001/180> : Letter from Mrs. Kirk Munroe to May Mann Jennings, dated July 24, 1916 ("Correspondence: 1916 June-July" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)

Letter to Jennings from a member of the Coconut Grove Audubon Society emphatically stating that caging birds to create a sanctuary is a terrible idea.

- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091151/00001/188> : Letter from May Mann Jennings to Mrs. Kirk Munroe, dated July 27, 1916 ("Correspondence: 1916 June-July" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)  
Response letter from Jennings to Mrs. Munroe from the Coconut Grove Audubon Society explaining that bird cages were only a temporary step to establish the bird populations.

- <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00091151/00001/78j> : Letter from Agnes Stewart Loveland to May Mann Jennings, dated July 9, 1916 ("Correspondence: 1916 June-July" folder, May Mann Jennings Papers)

Letter to Jennings from conservation and building committee member Agnes Stewart Loveland voicing a number of park construction concerns, including that, "the trails are lovely for the nature student, but the Royal Palm Hotel and Palm Beach people are fond of seeing things from the car (not usually dressed for tramping), and we wish to please them all, do we not?"

As you talk about early twentieth-century attitudes about conservation using the primary source documents from the Jennings collection, ask students to think about how such attitudes relate to their own perceptions. Have the students divide into groups of three and discuss this issue, including what has changed over time. Ask them to consider how they feel about resource use and national parks. Have each group debate conservation and preservation initiatives both inside and outside of these areas. Make sure to encourage students to look at multiple viewpoints, including preservation vs. access, conservation, tourism, economics, and sustainability. After a few minutes of small group discussion have a spokesperson share the group's ideas with the class.

To wrap up, ask students to select a document that was discussed in class and spend a few minutes writing a journal reflection.

**Analysis and Critique—Imaging the Everglades:** Photographers have diverse reasons for creating images of the land. Some seek to capture beauty and pristine spaces while others seek to document the touches of human presence that are often found. Their motivations range from documentary to political to spiritual. Both Clyde Butcher and Marion Belanger photograph the Everglades, but their viewpoints are much different. Butcher consciously omits any human presence, preferring to capture a spiritual view of untouched nature, while Belanger does not; she photographs the Everglades as a whole, often picturing where nature



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and human activity collide, such as in the 2002 photograph *Airboat Scar*, *Everglades National Park*.

Photographs from the May Mann Jennings collection showcase views of Royal Palm State Park that could be considered documentary in nature while Jeff Ripple's Everglades color photographs are saturated to a point that they often appear hyper-real. Show an image from Jennings and one from Ripple and ask students if they think photographs such as Ripple's are designed to improve upon nature through the use of filters and editing. If they say that photography can improve our view of nature, ask them to consider how their opinion differs from that of Everglades reclamation engineers who also believed they were improving nature. Each of the four photographers mentioned is also concerned with conservation, though their approaches to appealing to viewers vary widely—showing what could be lost vs. what is already damaged, for instance.

Have students examine works found in these four collections and critique the images in relation to one another, comparing and contrasting the creators' viewpoints regarding the Everglades. They should consider the following questions in their responses:

- What relationship does the image creator seem to have with the Everglades?
- What does each particular view of the Everglades mean? How are viewers meant to respond to the images?
- How does one reconcile these diverse views of the same place?
- How do the images inform one another? Is one view more "truthful" than another other?

### Image Resources:

- *May Mann Jennings Collection*: The Everglades & Royal Palm State Park: Photos from the 1920s and 1930s  
Website: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00094632>
- *Marion Belanger*:  
Website: [http://www.marionbelanger.com/Site\\_3/Everglades.html](http://www.marionbelanger.com/Site_3/Everglades.html)  
Print: *Everglades: Outside and Within*, published in 2009 by University of Georgia Press, ISBN: 1930066848
- *Clyde Butcher*:  
Website: <http://www.clydebutcher.com/online-gallery.cfm?holdcategory=8&subcat=1>  
Print: *Big Cypress Swamp: The Western Everglades*, published in 2009 by Window of the Eye, Inc.; *Florida Landscape*, published in 2005 by University Press of Florida, ISBN: 0813028256
- *Jeff Ripple*:  
Website: <http://jeffripple.com/collections/30158>  
Print: *Florida: The Natural Wonders*, published in 2002 by Voyageur Press, ISBN: 0896583244

**Images and impacts—Politics of imaging the land:** Once students have critiqued imagery related to the Everglades and discussed how attitudes toward conservation have changed they should be ready to embark on independent research.

If necessary, conduct a session reviewing the differences between primary and secondary sources. Use documents from the America's Swamp digital library to illustrate the former and compare these to the website Conservation, Preservation, and Environmental Activism—A Survey of the Historical Literature. Demonstrate how attitudes about early twentieth-century conservation can be understood by reading documents created by people that lived at that time. Contrast this with how a secondary source sheds light on the same topic by analyzing and interpreting primary sources in order to draw conclusions. Point out the benefits of using each type of resource when conducting research.

Internet Resources:

- America's Swamp: The Historical Everglades  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/swamp>
- Conservation, Preservation, and Environmental Activism—A Survey of the Historical Literature  
<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/nps-oah.htm>
- Bare Bones 101: A Basic Tutorial on Searching the Web from the University of South Carolina Beaufort library  
<http://www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/pages/bones/bones.shtml>

Provide a guided demonstration of how to conduct research using America's Swamp and other applicable Internet resources. If possible, spend time demonstrating effective searching within the library catalog as well. To find resources on teaching effective web searching, use the Bare Bones 101 tutorial.

Once students have learned or reviewed effective research strategies, they should choose from among the following prompts and conduct research to create an essay that explores the question fully. Each student should be able to locate at least ten sources on the selected topic.

Possible research questions:

- How have our cultural attitudes toward landscape and nature changed over time?
- How has photography played a role in shaping tourism? What have been the positive and negative effects?
- What role has photography played in the environmental movement? How does a photographer reconcile aesthetic issues and political/social imagery?
- Who has the power to construct the landscape and define what it means—civic groups, photographers, industries, municipalities, tourists, environmentalists, etc? How and why are one or more of these groups empowered?



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- Is there such a thing as a pristine or “virgin” landscape? What do these terms imply?
- How are attitudes different towards national or state parks vs. unlabeled wilderness? How has photography helped shaped attitudes towards these spaces?
- What role does landscape photography have in recording our social history? Is it possible to fully capture this in a still image, and what obligation, if any, does a photographer have to try?

### **Web Resources:**

- A Guide to the May Mann Jennings Papers: Brief biographical description and finding aid for the collection from Smathers Libraries  
<http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/pkyonge/JenningsMayMann.htm>
- The Everglades & Royal Palm State Park—Photos from the 1920s and 1930s: Online exhibition of photographs from the John Newhouse and May Mann Jennings collections  
<http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/pkyonge/glades/gladesmain.html>
- Reclaiming the Everglades: Brief Biography of May Mann Jennings from the Everglades Digital Library  
<http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/jenningsmm.htm>
- Conservation, Preservation, and Environmental Activism—A Survey of the Historical Literature: Excellent discussion of historical movements and literature by Adam Rome, Department of History at Pennsylvania State University  
<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/nps-oah.htm>
- The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850-1920: Library of Congress website with historical overviews and timelines of the movement by period; this website also links to related archival documents held by the LOC  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/conshome.html>
- *The Fight for Conservation*: 1910 book by Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the forest service; available in full, searchable text from Open Library.org  
<http://www.archive.org/stream/fightforconserva00pinc#>
- America's Swamp: The Historical Everglades  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/swamp>

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- Everglades Digital Library: Digital library project of the Everglades Information Network that provides access to a number of collections related to the Everglades

<http://www2.fiu.edu/~glades/>