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**Romantic Paradise to Tourist  
Destination: The 1868 Florida  
State Seal**

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William Bartram's eighteenth century Romantic descriptions of the Seminole Indian and Florida's landscape became the stock tropes for nineteenth and twentieth-century Florida guidebooks, postcards, and brochures. In his 1792 travel narrative, *Travels*, Bartram devotes much time to the discussion of the Seminoles and the Florida landscape. Reflecting the tradition of early Western prelapsarian mythology yet infused with the new, spiritualized nature of Romanticism like that imagined by Rousseau, Bartram saw in the Seminole a handsome free natural man of character and dignity uncorrupted by modern civilization.

Bartram describes, for example, a young Seminole as "the most perfect human figure I ever saw; of an amiable engaging countenance, air and temperament; free and familiar in conversation, yet retaining a becoming gracefulness and dignity" (255). Written approximately one hundred and forty years after Bartram, a pulp paper postcard featuring the doggerel of Ruth Raymond<sup>1</sup>, for example, is just one of many Florida tourist ephemera that illustrates the lasting influence of Romantic rhetoric like Bartram's.

*Here where the Indian  
roamed, bold and free  
hunted the red deer  
and built his tepee,  
sought mid the maids  
of his tribe for a bride,  
choosing the brightest  
to dwell by his side.  
Florida's legends are  
mystic and rare,*

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<sup>1</sup> The verse is quoted from an undated fold-out postcard published by Genuine Curteich-Chicago -- "C.T. Art-Colortone." The postcard was located at the Richter Library of the University of Miami Special Collections.

*Florida's History,  
romantic and fair.*

In her construction of Florida as Romantic paradise, Raymond, like Bartram, depicts the Seminole Indian as noble savage. However Raymond goes farther, superimposing a Western Plains Indian stereotype onto her image of the Seminole, a group who never lived in tepees. In fact, by the mid-twentieth century, the approximate time period the postcard was printed, many Seminoles had adopted a modified western dress and lived in western style homes rather than the traditional Seminole palmetto thatch roofed *chickee*. Raymond, like Bartram, was more interested in promoting Florida as Romantic paradise than historically accurate. For as Robert Berkhofer contends in *The White Man's Indian*, "people dwelling in nature according to nature, existing free of history's burdens and the social complexity ...offered hope to mankind at the same time that they constituted a powerful counter example to

existing European Civilization" (72).

Historically, the Romanticism embodied in Bartram's Florida and his Noble Savage marks a cultural and rhetorical shift in the representation of Florida. During the early settlement of Florida, the pragmatic concerns of imperialism and colonization contributed to the Spanish, French, and British images of Florida. For example, we can see the preoccupations with crop production, availability of land, and hostility or usefulness of the natives evident in the early images of Florida and its Indians. When the battle over ownership of Florida had been won by the United States and the Seminole Wars had subsided, Florida's Indians were freed from their conflicting roles as useful friend or deadly foe. In her text *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden*, Gaile McGregor asserts that by "the middle of the eighteenth century such an enormous volume of travel literature, histories, and semi-scientific reports was published in

related areas that by 1850 the Indian had lost most of his threatening aura of strangeness” (77). Entrenched in popular imagination, liberated from political concerns, and shaped by the individualist and emotive impulses of Romanticism, the Noble Savage in his sublime landscape became the perfect nineteenth century icon for Florida as leisure destination: a beautifully sublime, rejuvenating escape from the social constraints of everyday urban life. The tourists, like the representation of the Seminole Indian, could enjoy the splendor of a natural setting untouched by technology and industrialization.

### **The Beginning of Tourism in Florida**

Tourism as an industry did not really see its modest beginnings in Florida until the region became a territory of the United States in 1821 and a state in 1845. Florida historian Rembert W. Patrick asserts that it was during the territorial and early statehood periods that small numbers of

visitors/tourists started to replace the earlier adventurers and journalists who came to Florida. Patrick further argues that printed journals such as Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Reminiscences*, amongst other publications by lesser-known visiting authors, “were responsible for an ever-increasing number of visitors who sought the warmth and sunshine of Florida before the Civil War” (ix). As early as 1869, according to Patrick, over 25,000 travelers were reported to have visited Florida; less reliable sources boasted even twice that number (xiii).

Throughout the Seminole and Civil Wars, however, Florida tourism’s use of the Seminole in iconography promoting the state effectively ceased<sup>2</sup> only to re-emerge shortly

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<sup>2</sup> Of course the Noble Savage was not the only way in which the Seminoles were portrayed. But as an icon promoting the region, this is how they most often appear. The image of the Seminole as Noble Savage is notably absent in the literature and images created during both the Seminole and Civil wars. USF Special Collections curator Paul Camp stated, in a May 19, 2009 oral interview, that in the eyes of Americans during the first half of the 1800s, using the Seminole to promote Florida would be like putting the image of a Nazi War criminal on a German tourist advertisement shortly after

after the Civil War. According to Patrick, the internecine American conflict brought thousands of northern military men into the state, many of whom would return and establish farms or other businesses. Patrick also contends that the soldiers' letters home, describing Florida's mild climate and beauty, did much to increase interest in the state. The growing fascination with Florida worked in tandem with a new industrial boom economy that provided many people with enough time and money to travel and helped create the state's burgeoning tourist industry during the late nineteenth century. However, it would not be until after WWI that middle and working class Americans would

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WWII. The contemporary Seminole is also often portrayed as a degraded version of the historic Seminole in Florida guidebooks and travel narratives. The most offensive example of this may be found in F.R. Swift's 1903 *Florida Fancies*. In the book, Swift tells a tale of procuring a Seminole (whom he named Thirty Cents) as a guide for a gator hunt by giving the "chief" a jug of "jig water." After the poor boy gets thrown over the canoe and eaten by the big gator, the "chief Spotted Face" is appeased with yet another jug of "jig water" and few bottles. He quotes the Seminole as saying "Boy big fool to monkey with big gator" (84).

come to Florida in any great numbers (Patrick ix-xiii).

### **The Romantic Image in Florida Tourism**

After the Civil War and into the twentieth century, prelapsarian and Romantic iconography established by writers from Florida's European past, such as Bartram, continued to be used to promote the region as earthly paradise. As Elliott Mackle Jr. contends, "the principal elements of the Florida image were collected, combined, promoted, and made part of the American myth in a comparatively brief period, the thirty-five years between the end of the Civil War and beginning of this century" (2). Modern variations of this kind of Florida iconography crept into the new state history books, maps, travel brochures, media articles and real estate ads that helped fuel the growing tourist industry even today. The 2014 edition of *Visit Florida*, the official tourism magazine published by the State of Florida, for example, illustrates a

contemporary instance of the staying power of the Romantic prelapsarian imagery so common in early Florida boosterism. The article "The 5 Paths to Paradise" provides an interesting spin on the longstanding trope. Under the article's subheading "Natural Wonder," several Florida beaches are advertised. Flagler Beach, for example, is described in familiar nineteenth-century picturesque language, as the "cinnamon-hued shores of the Atlantic, nestled between Daytona Beach and St. Augustine" (Tjaden 18). The beach is more powerfully constructed as a pre-Fall landscape, however, in a rhetorical move similar to anti-technology Luddite movement that captured Romantic imaginations in the nineteenth century. The article suggests that Flagler Beach embodies a prelapsarian time and that its rejuvenating powers lie in the beach's relatively untouched natural state. Like a sandy twenty-first century Garden of Eden, Flagler Beach somehow escapes the modern sins of real estate development and computer

technology. The article contends that Flagler is "unblemished by high-rises, chain hotels and restaurants, it boasts a retro feel and offers a glorious array of low-tech pleasures" (Tjaden 18).

The paradisiacal image of Florida still present today may have entered into the American popular imagination during the first thirty-five years after the Civil War as Mackle asserts. But, the principal elements framing Florida as a Golden Age and Edenic landscape were collected from a body of literary and visual imagery stemming back over three hundred years. Accounts of Florida had almost always been propagandistic and rooted in myth, fantasy, and wish fulfillment more than verisimilitude, but in the hands of tourism promoters, images of Florida often took on an additional quality of simulacrum. These more self-conscious images of Florida were no longer primarily constructed with the enthusiasm of those trying to define and promote their exploits and newly acquired

lands with existing cultural narratives. Instead, they were often primarily created to attract the relatively new leisure class American traveler. By the mid-nineteenth century, Romantic and Transcendentalist views of paradise as a sublime and picturesque natural landscape had become an essential part of the visual paradigm of many upper and middle class Americans. Patricia Jansen argues in reference to tourism at Niagara Falls, for example, that “the importance of the sublime as an element in both elite and popular culture was well established by the late eighteenth century...The craze for sublime experience entailed a new appreciation of natural phenomena” (8). The quest for the sublime in Florida is most obviously revealed in the image of the landscape and Indian.

Possibly in response to popular demands for the sublime and picturesque that was common during the nineteenth century, promoters increasingly framed

Florida in the Romantic landscape tradition. As Daniel Boorstin asserts, in his *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, “tourists’ appetite for strangeness is best satisfied when the pictures in their own minds are easily verified” (Boorstin 39). Illustrating both Boorstin and Mackle’s points, the images of Florida in advertising often became ersatz amalgams of the sublime and picturesque as popularized by artists like Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, and George Caitlin.



**Figure 1.** Thomas Cole. *The Oxbow* (1836).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In Gloria K. Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition; Romanticism, Realism, and the Nineteenth-Century World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998) p. 20.



**Figure 2.** Asher B. Durand. *Kindred Spirits*. (1849).<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 3** George Catlin. *Mah-To-Toh-Pa* (1832-34).<sup>5</sup>

Standard visual tropes of Romantic oil painting all become stock

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<sup>4</sup> In Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002) p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> In Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002) p. 158.

characters in Florida tourism promotion: the lush pristine vegetation, filtered divine light, dramatic geological features, and dizzying panoramic views, all exemplified by Cole and Durand's sublime landscapes. In addition are the stoic pose, colorful palette, and detailed garb in Catlin's noble savage portraits. The influence of these images in Florida's tourism promotion marked the state as a nineteenth century paradise by verifying its visitors' appetites for Romantic and sublime landscapes. Florida-as-Paradise presented through any other lens would most likely have seemed less desirable to the educated Victorians who could afford to travel at leisure at that time.

Using John F. Kasson's argument presented in *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* to examine Florida's iconography confirms that the image of the state as a sublime or picturesque paradise may have certainly affirmed the expectations of the elite traveler, but to a later

audience, these same aesthetics reveal the cultural hegemony of the leisure class in the nineteenth century. What Kasson describes as the elite "official" culture is demonstrated in the Romantic iconography of nineteenth-century Florida tourist promotion. Kasson contends that Victorian elite tastes and values dominated American popular culture during the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Leisure class values, according to Kasson, filtered down to the masses (who would later visit Florida) via mass-produced periodicals and the agents of official culture such as museum curators and educators. Kasson writes,

Throughout most of the nineteenth century the genteel culture occupied a position as the "official" culture which deviant individuals and groups might defy but not as yet displace. Genteel reformers founded museums, art

galleries, libraries, symphonies, and other institutions which set the terms of formal cultural life and established the cultural tone that dominated public discussion.... As nineteenth-century cultural entrepreneurs sought to develop a vast new market, they popularized genteel values and conceptions of art. (4-5)

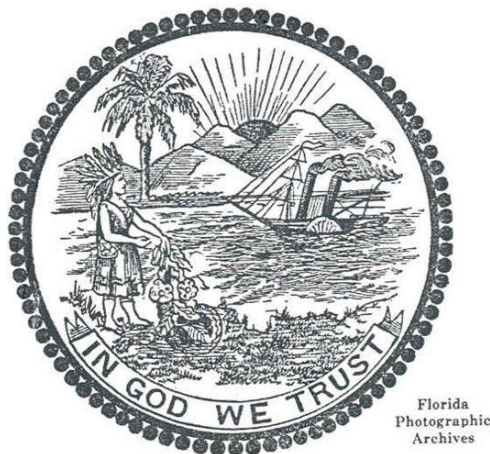
If Kasson is correct, the hegemony of genteel culture left promoters very little room to frame Florida as anything other than a paradise in the European Romantic or American Transcendentalist artistic tradition. We can see a spectacular example of this kind of representation in Florida's first state seal.

### **Genteel Culture and The Florida State Seal**

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<sup>6</sup> This in ironic opposition to the downward up flow of popular culture that exists in America today.





State seal adopted in 1868

**Figure 4.** Florida State Seal (1868).<sup>7</sup>

Genteel tastes and values influenced the official view of Florida in its first state seal adopted in 1868. The seal affirms Florida as a Romantic leisure paradise with formulaic iconography and “staged authenticity.”<sup>8</sup> A coconut palm connects the sky with the sea, sun rays jut out from behind a mountainous landscape, a floral garland spills out from a cornucopia-like basket, an Indian

<sup>7</sup> Florida Photographic Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Most recent scholarship on tourism examines the tourist’s desire to see and experience the authentic and the ways promoters and locals often stage authenticity for them. Cohen (1995), Desmond (1999), Enzensberger (1996), Jansen (1995), MacCannell (1973) Neumann (1999), Ryan (1997) are the authors that address these issues in the tourist experience.

maiden stands in the foreground at the altar of nature, and a modern steamship sails by bearing witness to nature. Most likely for the benefit of potential tourists or investors living in the north, the state seal of Florida presents the expected *dramatis personae* of paradise; the fecundity of the earth, mild climate, and prelapsarian man are represented by their signifying icons: tropical plant, reverberating sun, and Noble Savage. The image on the seal, however, is not just paradisiacal; it is a specific paradise that is sublime and picturesque in the Romantic landscape tradition.



**Figure 5.** Bierstadt, Albert. *The Rocky Mountains* (1863).<sup>9</sup>

Each element of the Florida State Seal embodies the Romantic and

<sup>9</sup> In Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002) p. 153.

Transcendentalist aesthetics and philosophies seen and read at the new world's fairs and museums, and in the increasingly available mass-produced publications popular at the time.<sup>10</sup> The presence of mountains in Florida (where the average elevation is a few 100 feet) along with its coinciding lone figure the flowing water the setting/rising sun, and towering tree are all the stuff of European Romantic and American Hudson River School painting.<sup>11</sup> Art historian Michael Lewis, for example, examines the basic elements of the Hudson River School Landscape; almost every feature he lists is also seen in the Florida State Seal. Lewis writes:

They reflected a formulaic composition: spacious view of wild and irregular mountain scenery in the

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<sup>10</sup> Boorstin argues that in the middle of the nineteenth century, as the graphic revolution was getting underway, the nature of travel changed dramatically (84). He notes that it was in the early nineteenth century when the word "tourist" started to be used (85).

<sup>11</sup> The coconut palm (rather than the Florida cabbage palm) and lay-holding female native in relation to the sublime volcano-like mountain peaks may also be indicative of the growing popularity, amongst wealthy, of the image of the Polynesian Islands as paradise and the Hula dancer as the ideal "primitive."

distance, often dominated by a gorge and a waterfall, and an anecdote of meticulously drafted tree in the foreground. A glow of sunlight unmistakably hints at the presence of God, while in the margins is some evidence of man in the form of a brooding spectator, a tree stump, or a curl of smoke from a distant cabin. And leaning against a tree might be a resting broad-axe, that ominous harbinger of settlement. (5)

The conventional elements composing the sublime and picturesque landscape of the 1868 Florida State Seal not only visually construct Florida as beautiful within the rigid aesthetics of nineteenth-century high culture, but also offer the promise of a Romantic spiritual renewal through nature to the visitors who have the leisure to linger at its shores. The awe-inspiring mountains, for example, not only resemble jagged rocks painted by the Hudson River School, they also echo the words of Transcendentalist poets. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "The good of going to the mountains is that

life is reconsidered" (qtd. in Jowdy 36). A life reconsidered amongst the mountains is one where the divine presence within the individual is made accessible in the presence of pristine Nature. In the all-encompassing beauty of a sublime landscape, using Emerson's words, the individual becomes "a transparent eye-ball," "nothing," and "all" as "the currents of the Universal being circulate through": he becomes "part or particle of God" (Lewis 4). As in the work of the Hudson River School, as discussed by Lewis, the rays emanating from the sinking or rising sun connote the Transcendental presence of the divine. The twilight sun in the seal is also reminiscent of the liminal spiritual state of becoming, a simultaneous birth and death embodied by the timeless mist, dawn, and twilight seen so often in Romantic painting. In the seal, the palm soars upward like a natural church steeple connecting earth and heaven. The conventional text "In God We Trust," underlining the

image, also reinforces its Transcendental message.



**Figure 6.** Friedrich. *Two Men Looking at the Moon* (1819-1820).<sup>12</sup>

Working in conjunction with the sublime landscape, the representation of the Seminole as a combination of Noble Savage and Indian Maiden<sup>13</sup> is crucial to the state seal's power as a means of promoting Florida to the nineteenth-century elite. As Wordsworth wrote:

. . .the everlasting stream  
and woods,  
Stretched and still stretching  
far and wide, exalt  
The roving Indian, on his  
desert sands. (qtd. in  
Fairchild 377)

<sup>12</sup> In Gloria K. Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition; Romanticism, Realism, and the Nineteenth-Century World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998) p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> The term Indian Maiden was used in the first descriptions of the seal written by the senate.

The Romantic landscape of the seal exalts and frames the Seminole woman as Noble Savage standing “part and particle of God” on the unspoiled sands of Florida’s shore. Like Le Moyne’s Venus-like Timucuan women, she signifies feminized nature, nurturing in her fecundity. Unlike Le Moyne’s *zaftig* nudes, however, the Indian Maiden’s slim, fully clothed Victorian body suggests more of a virginal fertile landscape than a crop producing cultivated one. Also appealing to an elite worn to *ennui*, the Indian Maiden’s purity within her sublime context implies the wholesomeness and redemptive innocence of nature. The Indian woman as earth goddess promises the experience of truth, enlightenment, or transcendence thought to be gained in communion with wild, pristine nature. As Desmond argues, in relation to the birth of tourism in Hawaii and the popularity of the image of the Hula girl, “the ideal image of the native merged amid the same social and political conditions that fostered

the birth of tourism as an organized industry: imperial expansion combined with bourgeois desires for contact with the rejuvenating ‘primitive’” (459). To those with less lofty desires, however, the picturesque quality of the Indian and her surrounding landscape offers the viewer pleasure and vacationing amongst the beauty and bounty of Florida as earthly paradise.

### **The Primitive and Modern in the Florida State Seal**

The inclusion of the technological steamboat most identifies the “primitive” in the Seminole and Florida. In the nineteenth century, the image of the steamboat was an icon of technological progress associated with modernity.<sup>14</sup> In the seal, the modernity of the steamboat both defines and is defined by the primitive Indian maiden. As Jane Desmond asserts, the ethnographic gaze “constructed modernity by picturing the

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<sup>14</sup> The steamboat as an icon for Florida’s modernity is similar to Mallarmé’s image of the airplane or Rousseau’s (the painter) use of the Eiffel Tower and hot air balloon.

primitive as its defining other” (460). The boat is shown on the right sailing toward the Indian standing left. The forward motion of the steamboat, suggested by the trailing smoke and its forward thrusting pointed bow, in contrast to the wooden pose of the Indian implies that she will be left behind, frozen in the ship’s past. The unconventional leftward motion (versus the more traditional left to right composition technique), however, may also be read as the primitive and modern meeting in the middle. Visually constructed by the leftward motion of boat, the Indian literally and figuratively comes before the modern. But as the motion of the boat suggests, the maiden is soon to be left behind. Also connoting the Indian’s connection with the primitive past in distinction to the forward march of progress, she stands planted like the palm on the immovable ancient earth in juxtaposition to the boat, which rides the ever-changing immutable leftward flowing water. Flowers spill from the Indian’s hands whereas smoke bellows from

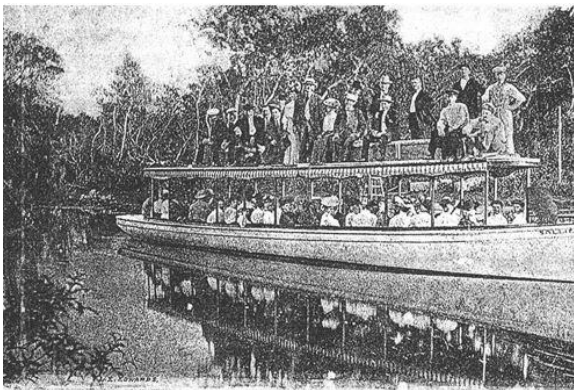
the boat’s stacks. The Indian Maiden’s lack of tools and relationship to the earth and vegetation highlight the interconnection with and dependency upon nature associated with the primitive Noble Savage. At the same time, the juxtaposed speeding steamboat signifies nature-defying technology created by modern civilization. Nevertheless, the iconic Indian Maiden’s conventional beauty and aquiline grace attest that she represents all that is good and gentle in nature and the primitive. Once again, the Seminole is recreated in the Noble Savage image.

Besides acting as defining counterpoints, the juxtaposition of the Noble Savage and the modern steamboat<sup>15</sup> also creates a powerful ambiguity that could have been very effective in promoting Florida to the nineteenth-century leisure class traveler. The presence of both steamboat and Noble

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<sup>15</sup> The steamboat is often credited for opening the interior of Florida to both the tourist and settler.

Savage presents Florida as a place possessing modern convenience as well as primitive fascination. Like many Americans today, the nineteenth-century leisure class tourist often looked for conveniences to soften the discomforts of travel. Especially when contrasted to the active labor required to navigate the muddy environs of Bartram's canoe, the machine power of the steamboat allowed Victorian travelers in stiff formal dress to be passive spectators enjoying the view of Florida's flora and fauna from the relative comfort and safety of the boat.<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 7.** *Miami River on the Tour Boat Sallie (1910).*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ironically, it was also popular at the time for gentlemen to shoot at alligators and other wild game from the deck of the boat for sport.

<sup>17</sup> Author's personal collection.

Illustrating the leisure associated with the steamboat at the time, Rambler, for example, wrote in an 1875 *Guide to Florida*:

The vessels are provided with an excellent table and careful attendance, such comforts as it is impossible to procure on any other route.... The class of passengers availing themselves of these steamers are invariably pleasant and agreeable companions – tourists from all parts of the United States, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati.... (68)

Rambler's comments imply as well that leisure class tourists are insulated from locals or the less fortunate travelers who could not afford the luxury of a steamboat ticket. Boorstin argues that easier modes of travel, such as the steamboat shown in the 1868 Florida State Seal, are what changed the active earlier traveler into a passive tourist. Boorstin writes, "Formerly travel required long planning, large expense, and great investments of time. It involved risks to health or even to

life. The traveler was active. Now he became passive. Instead of an athletic exercise, travel became a spectator sport" (84). Ironically, it was the wealthy who could afford "large expense" and the leisure time for "long planning" and "investments of time" to risk "health or even life" who first began the trend, which Boorstin (in perhaps an elitist way) contends, was the degradation of travel that began in mid-nineteenth century and resulted in the tourist "pseudo-events" of the twentieth century (77-117).

The steamboat is not the only element in the Florida State Seal that reflects nineteenth-century modern life and the preoccupations held by many leisure class travelers. Using many of the same conventions that had marked the earlier Renaissance and Enlightenment Noble Savage, the Seminole "Indian Maiden" is idealized and drawn with European facial features and Greco-Romanesque costume. However, unlike the early images of the Seminole as Noble Savage, the

body of the maiden distinctively illustrates the aesthetics and values of the Victorian leisure class.<sup>18</sup> The physical capital<sup>19</sup> shown in the Indian Maiden's body is mostly aesthetic and social. Like the wealthy traveler (specifically the Victorian woman), the Indian's passive body, no longer used for work, is soft and smooth. The brawny musculature and callous body gained through physical labor are notably absent in the long-limbed delicate frame of the Indian maiden. The Seminole leisurely stands poised, not even straining to lift her floral garland. The working class bodies of living Seminole and Cracker women as well as the scrubby flat un-manicured wild lands of Florida are left out of the picture frame, not to

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<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that Mark Neumann, in his book *On the Rim: Looking of the Grand Canyon*, argues along these lines when he points out the way Canyon promoters used the fact that at the turn of the century "fit bodies and tanned skin marked members of a leisure class who engaged in sports and outdoor life; pale skin was a sign of a confined life spent in factories" to promote the Grand Canyon vacation (30). In this instance, the physical capital of tan skin's promise of returning social and cultural capital turns into economic capital for both the tourist and the promoter.

<sup>19</sup> This is Pierre Bourdieu's term.

be seen prominently until the nineteenth-century leisure class travelers gave way to the tin can tourists of the twentieth century.

The image of the Seminole Indian constructed within the seal not only illustrates the nineteenth-century leisure class body, but she also signifies a Victorian feminine ideal—beautiful, passive, virginal, and refined. Her body is simultaneously an object of beauty and a standard of morality. The maiden's beauty is embodied in her poise and grace. Dignified, head tilted slightly upward, curved arms out, the Indian woman stands before the sublime twilight as decorative as the coconut palm behind her. Her interconnection with the sublime in nature and stoic demeanor connote her virtue. Rather than being framed as a potential natural resource and symbol of divine providence, the Seminole is presented as a noble primitive woman who welcomes tourists visiting Florida's shores.

The leisure class physique and sublime surroundings of the seal's female figure may have answered the tastes and preoccupations of some elite travelers visiting Florida at the time, but it is her Western Plains costume that marks her as an Indian. Throughout the nineteenth century, pan-Indian elements increasingly became an integral component in the commodification of Seminoles as scenic tourist attractions. In the 1868 seal, the Seminole woman as Noble Savage falsely wears a Plains Indian headdress.<sup>20</sup> As Le Moyne's Botticelli-like Timucuan women demonstrate, the Florida natives' costumes and facial features had been misrepresented before. However, nineteenth-century tourists' expectations, unlike those of the travelers before them, were often shaped by the new mass-culture.

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<sup>20</sup> In the later version of the seal, she wears the stereotypical Indian princess buckskin fringe dress. The seal goes through a variety of changes. It is not until 1985, however, that the Seminole's costume is changed to a historically accurate Seminole dress. Also in 1985, the native sable palm replaces the coconut palm; hibiscus flowers and palmettos replace the stylized exotic foliage. The steamboat is also changed to be more historically accurate.



By mid-century, Western Plains Indians, often constructed as Noble Savages, had been popularized by artists, novelists, and photographers fascinated by the last frontier of the American West. Thus, Plains Indian costumes gradually became the visual markers of "Indianness"<sup>21</sup> in popular culture. Accordingly, on the Florida seal, the headdress functions to generically mark the Seminole as "Indian." Ironically, this passive, tourist-constructed Seminole Indian woman wears a headdress, which is a war bonnet usually worn only by men during battle. Despite the incongruities, her image may have satisfied potential visitors who expected an authentic Indian to look like those seen in photographs or described by popular Western writers like James Fennimore Cooper.

It can be argued that the Victorian need to be productive even in leisure may have also contributed

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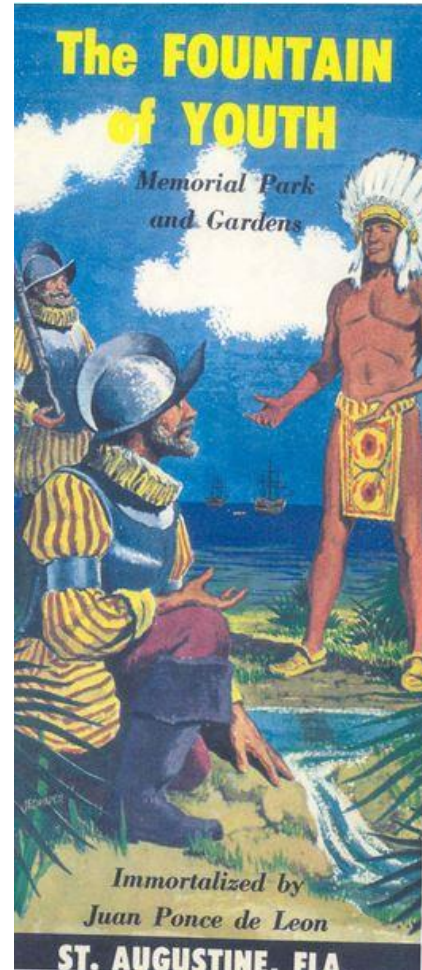
<sup>21</sup> The nineteenth-century markers of "Indianness" work in much the same way that "Italianness" is constructed in the advertisement analyzed by Barthes' in *Image Music Text* (48).

to the frequent use of pan-Indian elements in images of Seminoles in Florida promotion.<sup>22</sup> Kasson argues, for example, that many American Victorians believed that "all activities both in work and in leisure should be ultimately constructive" (4). Cultural critic Mark Neumann asserts also that emphasis on work and morality shaped the way the American elite traveled (30-31). The pan-Indian elements shown in the seal may have satisfied the American penchant toward work in two ways. First, the pan-Indian markers of Indianness helped to construct the Seminole as Noble Savage in the popular Western Plains image. To many, this Romantic image in turn functioned as an icon for positive moral effects believed to be gained from time spent in Nature. Second, the iconic Indian on the seal also offered the educational opportunity to witness and learn the customs of the vanishing

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<sup>22</sup> I believe this need to be productive even in leisure is still very much alive today. For example, child's play must also develop motor skills, and Mozart is listened to improve abstract reasoning rather than pleasure.

Indian, as shown in popular Western Plains ethnography, and tell friends about what the family learned while on vacation.<sup>23</sup> As Desmond contends, “Emergent cultural tourism provided the wealthy vacationer with a dose of anthropological contact with selected ‘primitives’” (463). Ironically, historical authenticity was often staged for tourists by strategic placement of the war bonnet, totem pole, or peace pipe upon the image of a generic Indian: the Seminole as Noble Savage/Plains Indian warrior.



**Figure 8.** *The Fountain of Youth* (Undated brochure).<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, interest in Florida and its Seminoles continued to increase. Toward the later part of the century, Northern industrialists brought the capital needed to develop the accommodations and transportation systems that made Florida even more accessible to its

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<sup>23</sup> Berkhofer, as well as many other Native American scholars, contend that by the nineteenth century whites often portrayed Indians as a vanishing race.

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<sup>24</sup> Richter Library at the University of Miami.

elite visitors. With their new railway and luxury hotel systems, Henry Plant and Henry Flagler helped complete Florida's transformation from an exotic place for pioneers and invalids to an epicurean paradise for the wealthy and famous. Just shortly after Flagler arrived in St. Augustine, he declared, "someone with sufficient means ought to provide accommodation for that class of people who are not sick, but who come here to enjoy the climate, have plenty of money, but could find no satisfactory way of spending it" (Graham 97). Yet, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth and the steamer to rail and car, the leisure class Victorian travelers Flagler sought were outnumbered by a new wave of middle class tourists; in its wake, Florida tourism and promotion changed. Oils and etchings of Florida painted in the Romantic grand style and reproduced so often in nineteenth-century Florida promotion eventually lost favor to vividly colored picture postcards and

ubiquitous photographs, just as the Romantic travel narratives of Bartram and Emerson had been replaced by practical and vernacular tourist guidebooks.

Nevertheless, Florida re-made in the Romantic image continued in the new popular forms of Florida tourism and promotion throughout the twentieth century to the present. The fact that Florida is "the top travel destination in the world," according State of Florida government statistics, attests in part to the power of the history and rhetoric of Florida promotion exemplified in images such as the 1868 Florida State Seal. Excluding the exception of the University of Florida's Seminole mascot and sports logo,<sup>25</sup> the stereotypical images of the Seminole Indian of Florida iconography's yesteryear have rightly lost favor as the country becomes more sensitive to racist representations. The image

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<sup>25</sup> According to the *New York Times*, the Seminole Tribe of Florida endorses the FSU logo. The historically business savvy Seminole Tribe received scholarships and reduced tuition for its members in exchange.

of Florida's landscape as a tropical rejuvenating paradise, however, continues today even without its Romantic Noble Savage icon at center stage.

A wise Florida tourist should remain a skeptical one, however, for the beaches "unblemished by high-rises, chain hotels and restaurants" are virtually nonexistent in Florida today despite what guidebooks may still proclaim. And Silver Springs, Florida's oldest tourist attraction, attests to the damage tourism and its inevitable development has had on Florida's environment. Greatly admired for its crystalline waters and beauty by Bartram and Emerson (as well many other Victorian traveler writers), Silver Springs, for example, is no longer the world's largest first magnitude spring; the spring, according a recent study conducted by Dr. Richard Knight at the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, is at risk of drying up completely within the next twenty years because of the increased demand

for water made on the Florida aquifer as the state's population and commercial industry has increased exponentially during the last fifty years (Knight 35). In effort to restore the environmentally sensitive area, the State of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection recently took over the management of Silver Springs and is in the process of returning the park to its more natural state. But the damage of recycling Romantic notions of natural beauty has left its mark on Florida. Florida is neither the Hudson Valley nor the American Plains. The promotion schemes from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries that construct Florida as a land untouched by time have not served Florida well because they have not been about Florida at all. Rather the image of Florida as an ideal, unchanging prelapsarian jungle is really about the hopes and dreams of the men and women who sought to sell her.

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