

From Wasteland to Tourist Attraction: The Creation of Everglades National Park

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ABSTRACT

It took more than 50 years to change public perception of the Everglades from a wasteland that needed to be drained to a valuable natural resource that needed to be preserved as a National Park. The first attempts to stop the ongoing drainage of the Everglades started in the first two decades of the twentieth century. These early anti-drainage campaigns were led by progressive activist and journalist Frank Stoneman, Seminole activist Minnie Moore-Willson, and botanist John Kunkel Small. Their efforts failed. It was not until Ernest F. Coe moved to Miami in 1925 and established the Everglades National Park Association in 1928 that the movement to turn the Everglades into a national park made considerable progress. Coe first worked with fledgling U.S. National Park Service officials to get federal legislation passed in 1934 to establish an Everglades National Park. In parallel, he worked with Florida politicians, especially Governor and later U.S. Senator Spessard Holland, to get State support. While the National Park Service recognized the ecological significance of the Everglades, the State of Florida supported the Park's creation primarily as a tourist attraction. To establish the Park, Florida eventually agreed to donate hundreds of thousands of acres of state land in the Everglades to the Federal government plus two million dollars to buy additional private land. Despite numerous setbacks, Everglades National Park was dedicated by President Harry S. Truman in December 1947. It was America's first ecological park and the first to preserve a wetland.

Keywords: Ernest Coe, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Spessard Holland, Minnie Moore-Willson, John Kunkel Small, Frank Stoneman

INTRODUCTION

"Its [Everglades National Park's] creation heralded changes within the national park system and broader changes relating to how Americans perceived and interacted with

the natural world. Its creation challenged ideas about the identity of national parks and, more broadly, the identity of nature in America. The Everglades is a subtropical wetland, not a temperate forest or mountain landscape. There are no dramatic geological features or culturally significant monuments in the Everglades. ... Most importantly, this park was the first ecological park. It was not created [to] preserve geology, but to preserve an ecosystem and the biota of that ecosystem." (Wilhelm 2010).

Before I began to do research in the Everglades in the mid-1990s, I knew little about this wetland and Everglades National Park. Although I had not read the book, I knew of Marjory Stoneman Douglas' 1947 classic, *The Everglades: River of Grass*. I also knew that this book had increased the visibility of this unique subtropical wetland and had raised awareness among the public and political leaders about threats to its endangered flora and fauna. In response to the publication of *The Everglades: River of Grass*, I believed a grassroots movement had developed to preserve this wonderful wetland, leading to the creation of Everglades National Park. Douglas' book had made the Everglades arguably the best known and loved American wetland, i.e., the Great American Wetland (see Meindl 2000).

I was not the only one who believed this myth: "... Marjory Stoneman Douglas started the movement to save the Florida Everglades from development with her bestselling *The Everglades: River of Grass*, published in 1947." (See entry on Marjory Stoneman Douglas on the American Environmental Leaders Website). This account of how Everglades National Park became established makes no sense. This is clear from two facts: (1) Everglades National Park was formally dedicated in 1947, only months after the publication of Douglas' book, and (2) the federal legislation that authorized its creation was passed in 1934. This is not to suggest that Marjory Stoneman Douglas had nothing to do with the movement to establish Everglades National Park, but her reputation as a defender of the Everglades arose after the establishment of the Park (McCally 2004; Davis 2009). The actual story of how the Park came to be is more complicated and interesting than the Douglas myth.

Within the context of the history of wetland science, the creation of this Park is an important milestone. It marked a momentous change in how the public and politicians viewed wetlands in the United States. As illustrated in the long struggle to establish Everglades National Park, wetlands gradually went from wastelands that should be drained and converted to cropland or housing developments to a valued part of America's natural landscapes. However, it was not the unique flora and fauna of the Everglades that convinced politicians, especially in Florida, that establishing Everglades National Park was desirable. It would

require demonstrating that creating a National Park in the Everglades would be more economically and politically beneficial than continuing its drainage.

The Everglades is one of the best-studied wetlands in the world, and numerous books describe its geologic origin, climate, flora, and fauna, ecology, hydrology, drainage, etc. including Davis and Ogden (1994), McCally (1999), Levin (2003), Carter (2004), Grunwald (2005), Lodge (2005), and Ogden (2008). Historians have also written extensively about the creation of Everglades National Park and its ecological, economic, and political significance, especially C. F. Meindl (1998, 2000) and Chris Wilhelm (2010, 2012, 2016). What follows, except when noted otherwise, is based on the work of Chris Wilhelm.

THE EVERGLADES

The Everglades is a wetland complex in southern Florida that historically covered most southern and southwestern parts of the Florida Peninsula. It is part of a large watershed (Figure 1) that begins south of Orlando with the Kissimmee chain of lakes that are connected to the Kissimmee River. The Kissimmee River flows south into Lake Okeechobee, a large but shallow lake. During the wet season (summer), water flows out of Lake Okeechobee along its southern shore. This water slowly flows southward through the Everglades, a wetland 60 miles (97 km) wide and over 100 miles (160 km) long, and eventually discharges through mangrove and coastal prairie into Florida Bay or the Gulf of Mexico. Its vegetation is a mosaic of sawgrass marshes intermingled with sloughs, cypress swamps, and tree islands in freshwater areas. The latter are found at the highest elevations. Brackish and saltwater plant communities are found along its southern and western boundaries.

Even before the Civil War, settlers in south Florida who wanted to develop plantations made proposals to drain the Everglades. No serious drainage, however, was attempted until 1882. Expanded dredging between 1905 and 1910 transformed large areas of the Everglades from wetland to farmland. Drainage canals continued to be dug throughout the first half of the 20th century. In 1947 in response to disastrous flooding, Congress created the Central and Southern Florida Project, which resulted in the construction of 1,400 miles (2,300 km) of canals and levees plus associated water control structures. By the 1970s, about 50 percent of the original Everglades south of Lake Okeechobee had been drained and converted into farmland or urban areas. Drainage and road construction, especially of the Tamiami Trail in the 1920s, significantly altered flow patterns in the Everglades, with water shunted to the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico from Lake Okeechobee and to the Atlantic Ocean through a series of canals south of Lake Okeechobee (Figure 2).

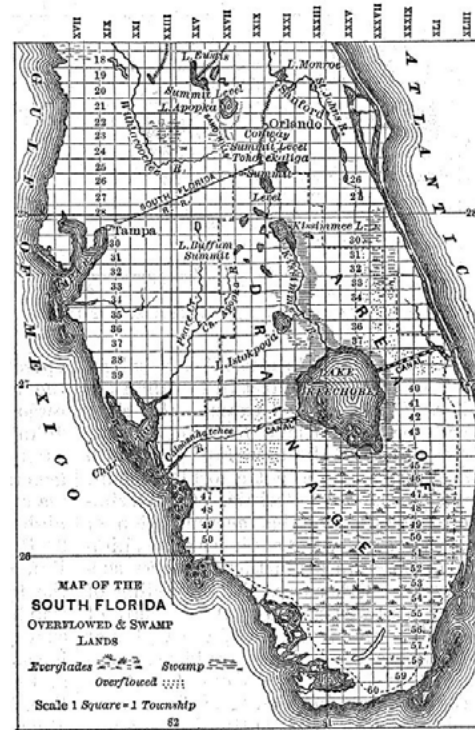


Figure 1. Overflow and swamp lands in South Florida. (Source: Will Wallace Harney. 1884. Drainage of the Everglades. Harper's New Monthly Magazine, p. 599).

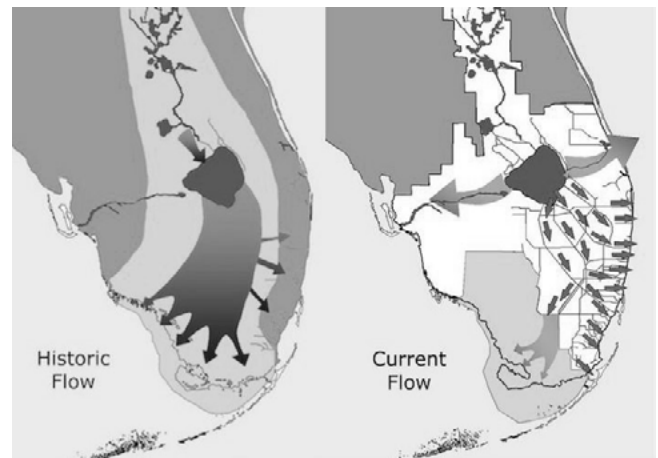


Figure 2. Original (historic) and post-drainage (current) water flow patterns in the Everglades watershed (courtesy of Everglades National Park/NPS).

ANTI-DRAINAGE CAMPAIGNERS

Opposition to drainage of the Everglades developed for three reasons (Wilhelm 2012): 1) the failure and expense to taxpayers of drainage projects (Frank Stoneman), 2) the need to obtain undrained land for the Seminoles to preserve their culture (Minnie Moore-Willson), and 3) the destruction of natural areas and resulting threats to plant and animal species (John Kunkel Small).

Progressives like Frank Stoneman and Minnie Moore-Willson led the initial opposition to drainage. Progressives sought political and social reforms that addressed problems caused by industrialization, urbanization, immigration,

and political corruption. Most progressives came from the middle class (lawyers, journalists, teachers, ministers, etc.). Progressives believed that the old ways of doing things were inefficient, unfair, and frequently corrupt; they favored prohibition, women's suffrage, unionization, and efficiency. Above all, the progressives valued professionalism and scientific expertise. Old ways of doing business were identified that needed modernizing by applying appropriate scientific, medical, or engineering solutions. The progressive era lasted about 20 years, from the mid-1890s to the start of World War I.

FRANK STONEMAN (1857-1941)

Frank Stoneman (Figure 3), Marjory Stoneman Douglas' father, migrated to Florida in the 1890s, eventually ending up in Miami. After moving to Miami, he helped establish a newspaper that became the Miami Herald. As its editor (1910-1941), he began criticizing attempts to drain the Everglades because they did not measure up to his progressive ideals. For him, publicly funded drainage projects

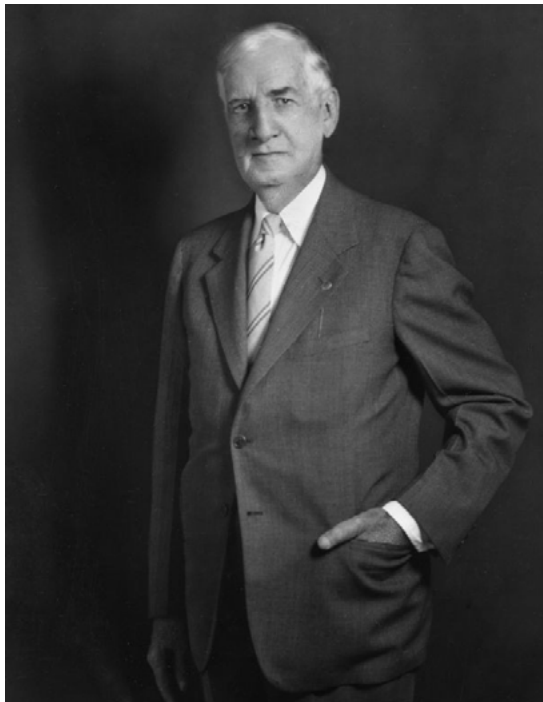


Figure 3. Frank Stoneman (courtesy of Florida Memory).

should be: 1) carefully planned by experts, 2) efficiently carried out, 3) cost-effectively managed, and 4) fiscally transparent. Like most progressives, Stoneman viewed the Everglades as a resource, as did most of his fellow Floridians in the early 20th Century. The Everglades was viewed as a wasteland, and progressive reformers like Stoneman advocated its drainage to convert it to productive farmland. However Stoneman differed from his fellow progressives because he viewed the Everglades as too large to drain efficiently. He also believed drainage projects were not

cost-effective, would result in drained land being owned by large companies, and the consequences of drainage had not been adequately studied. For years, he railed in his editorials in the Miami Herald against drainage projects supported by Florida Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward (1857-1910; governor 1905-1909) and other politicians (Meindl 1998, Wilhelm 2012).

MINNIE MOORE-WILLSON (1859-1937)

Minnie Moore-Willson (Figure 4) was a Seminole rights activist who fought against the drainage of the Everglades because she believed it would further destroy the Seminole's traditional culture. She first came to Kissimmee, Florida, during the winter in the late 19th Century. There she met members of a local Seminole group and became interested in their plight, especially their lack of any kind of homeland or reservation.

Florida's Seminoles are mostly descendent of the Creek people who had lived in southern Georgia and Alabama. Creeks who refused to be relocated in the early 19th Century to Indian Territory west of Mississippi, moved south into Florida to avoid deportation. Over the years, the Seminoles assimilated enslaved people and other native peoples. White settlers forced them further south in Florida and eventually into the Everglades because of the Seminole Wars (1817-18, 1835-42, and 1855-58).

Moore-Willson believed that the culture of the Seminoles was the product of their relationships with the Everglades and feared that further white settlement would lead to the destruction of the Seminoles. She saw the Everglades as an unchanging landscape that only Seminoles could understand and occupy in harmony with its plants and animals. In other words, for her, the Seminoles were noble savages who were a part of nature (Wilhelm 2012; Joshi 2014). Moore-Willson (1910) authored an influential book, *The Seminoles of Florida*, first published in 1896. In her numerous writings and talks, Moore-Willson overlooked many of the realities of Seminole history, including how long they had lived in the Everglades and their role in the plume trade (Joshi 2014). Although much of the information in her book was unreliable, it did help to promote the Seminole cause for a reservation in the Everglades.

Moore-Willson also worked with the Florida Audubon Society to protect the Everglades' wading and other birds. She argued that the Seminoles and the birds would live harmoniously in an Everglades reservation. Another important organization to which she belonged was the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FFWC). During the progressive era, the FFWC began to flex its political muscle by becoming involved in many political, social, conservation, and economic issues, including Seminole rights and conservation of natural areas. In 1916, the Royal Palm State Park was created because of a campaign by the FFWC (Vance



Figure 4. Minnie Moore-Willson (courtesy of University of Miami Libraries).

1976; Davis 2009). It was the first protected area in the Everglades and later would become part of Everglades National Park. Moore-Willson's efforts through the Audubon Society, FFWC, and other organizations to apply pressure on Florida politicians to stop drainage of the Everglades and to create a reservation for the Seminoles resulted in legislation by the State of Florida in 1917 to establish a Seminole reservation in the southwestern part of the Everglades. Moore-Willson advocated for this reservation to be an undrained section of the Everglades. Other supporters of this reservation, including FFWC leaders, wanted it to be drained land suitable for farming.

JOHN KUNKEL SMALL (1869-1938)

By the early 20th Century, naturalists and biologists working in south Florida had begun to worry about the Everglades' destruction and other natural areas because of the decline of many plant and animal species. The botanist Charles Torrey Simpson (1846-1932) in his 1920 book, *In Lower Florida Wilds*, lamented the decline of wild areas in south Florida due to the destruction of forests and drainage of wetlands. Harold H. Bailey (1878-1962), an ornithologist, in his 1925 book, *The Birds of Florida*, mentions that the drainage of the Everglades was harming some bird species. However, outside of scientific circles, the concerns of these and other scientists were not widely known. These scientists argued that the Everglades' fauna and flora had intrinsic scientific value and, consequently, that the Everglades needed to be protected from drainage. However, they made no effort to raise public awareness of the negative impacts of drainage on the unique flora and fauna of the Everglades (Wilhelm 2012). This situation changed in 1929.

John Kunkel Small (1869 -1938) (Figure 5) was a botanist who worked, starting in 1898, for his entire professional career at the New York Botanical Garden. He did his undergraduate work in botany at Franklin and Marshall College, from which he graduated in 1892. He did his postgraduate work at Columbia University. In 1903, his doctoral dissertation was published as the *Flora of the Southeastern United States*. Small was an early botanical explorer of Florida, which he first visited in 1901 and many more times in the next three decades. He published several technical manuals on Florida's flora. His 1929 book, *From Eden to Sahara: Florida's Tragedy*, based on his extensive travels around the state, was his most influential contribution to efforts to conserve wild South Florida. It has numerous photographs documenting the decline and destruction of south Florida's diverse landscapes by the rapidly expanding human population. As he put it: "The pecuniary greed of the native-born and the immigrant is so great that few appear to be able or willing to see the handwriting on the—map (with apologies to the Prophet Daniel). Not only are Fauna and Flora threatened with extermination, but in many places the very soil which is necessary to their production



Figure 5. John Kunkel Small (standing on left) and the "weed mobile" in South Florida (courtesy of Florida Memory).

and maintenance is being drained and burned and re-burned until nothing but inert mineral matter is left." (Small 1929, p. 7)

Small's short book ends with the following somber assessment of Florida's future: "Here is a unique El Dorado, ... As much as possible of this natural history museum should be preserved, not only for its beauty, but also for its educational value, for it is within easy reach of the majority of the population of the United States. Many localities whose natural features, now destroyed, are not duplicated elsewhere, could easily have been made state or federal reservations, if the public officials had had the proper interest and foresight in such matters. In Florida, aside from Royal

Palm State Park and Turtle Mound, there are no reservations for the preservation of the natural features, except those maintained by a few interested individuals, and a partly developed national forest. Steps for protection of selected areas should be taken at once by the state and federal governments. It is not yet too late to act.” (Small 1929, p. 114). Although it did not focus solely on the Everglades, Small’s book did much to further efforts to try to preserve it. However, although he was in favor of creating a national park to preserve the Everglades, like his fellow scientists, he did not actively campaign to save the Everglades or establish a park.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

It was not the drainage failures that had infuriated Frank Stoneman, the need to protect the Seminoles from white encroachment as argued by Moore-Willson, or the scientific importance of its biota as emphasized by Small and other biologists that finally persuaded Florida politicians to support the establishment of Everglades National Park. An innovative approach was required, and another newcomer to Florida, Ernest F. Coe (1866- 1951), developed it.

Ernest F. Coe (Figure 6) was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1866 and attended Yale University from 1885 to 1887 to become a landscape architect. He moved to Miami in 1925 when he was 60 years old. Like most northerners, Coe went to south Florida to make money from an ongoing land boom. Unfortunately for him, the 1920s boom ended a year after he arrived. However, Coe was an avid outdoorsman who quickly began to explore the Everglades. He was appalled by the continued slaughter of wading birds and the uncontrolled collection of native orchids. As a result, he quickly became convinced that the Everglades could only be saved if it was made into a national park. Coe single-mindedly and almost singlehandedly set out to make this happen.

In 1928, Coe and other local conservation activists founded the Tropical Everglades National Park Association (soon simplified to the Everglades National Park Association). The world-renowned plant explorer, Dr. David Fairchild, the former head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Exploration, was the Association's first president and Coe its executive secretary. The Association had many locally notable members, including Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Nevertheless, the Association was a one-man show.

Coe realized that the Association would need to work with the federal government, especially the National Park Service, which would own and run the new park, and Florida's congressional delegation as well as the government of Florida, which owned most of the remaining undrained Everglades.



Figure 6. Ernest F. Coe (right) at the dedication of Everglades National Park (courtesy of Florida Memory).

In 1928 Ernest Coe wrote on behalf of the Association to Stephen T. Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, a proposal for a national park in the lower Everglades. Mather was already in favor of the establishment of such a park. After a follow-up meeting, legislation to create Everglades National Park was introduced by Florida Senator Duncan B. Fletcher in December 1928, and in 1929, the U.S. Congress authorized a study into the feasibility of a national park in South Florida. A committee sent to investigate reported back favorably to Congress. However, congressional legislation to establish the Park was not passed until 1934. The Act stipulated that the land for the new park be acquired through public or private donations. The Act also stipulated that Everglades National Park was to be "... wilderness, [where] no development ... or plan for the entertainment of visitors shall be undertaken which will interfere with the preservation intact of the unique flora and fauna of the essential primitive natural conditions now prevailing in this area." (As quoted in Wilhelm 2010). Coe had won half the battle. Coe knew that to convince Florida politicians that an Everglades Park would be advantageous for the state, he had to overturn negative perceptions of the Everglades, which was seen as an unproductive wasteland full of poisonous snakes and mosquitoes. Coe used the ecological arguments about the Everglades' unique and diverse biota developed by Bailey, Simpson, Small, and others. He emphasized the tropical character of much of its biota. While these arguments were effective with the National Park Service, they were not with most Floridians who remained unconvinced that South Florida needed a national

park. However, when speaking to audiences of politicians, businessmen, and landowners, Coe emphasized the economic benefits to Florida of creating a national park. The prospect of attracting tourists to South Florida sold the park to Florida's politicians and business community. In short, Coe's clinching argument was that a park would generate more revenue for the state government and South Florida's business community than draining more of the Everglades.

In 1929, the Florida legislature authorized the Tropical Everglades National Park Commission to take over the responsibilities of Coe's Everglades National Park Association. The Commission had the power to acquire land by purchase, gift, bequest, or condemnation. Ernest Coe was the Commission's executive chair. However, it took until 1947 to acquire the land and settle on the initial boundaries of the new park. One of the principal reasons for this delay was the discovery of oil in the Everglades (see next section). In 1946, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$2 million to purchase private lands in the Everglades. These land acquisitions, along with the donation by the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs of Royal Palm State Park, finally allowed the Park to become a reality, and on December 6, 1947 President Harry S. Truman dedicated Everglades National Park (Wilhelm 2012). At this dedication ceremony, Ernest Coe was recognized as the "Daddy" of the Everglades.

SPESSARD HOLLAND (1892 – 1971)

Spessard Holland (Figure 7) was the Governor of Florida from 1941 to 1945 and a U.S. senator from 1946 to 1971. For a brief overview of his life and political career, see Stone (2002). He was the key political figure in the fight to establish Everglades National Park. Holland was a Florida-born conservative who was pro-segregation, supported states' rights, and favored limiting the federal government's power. Nevertheless, he supported the creation of an enormous national park in Florida. Holland supported the park's establishment for three reasons (Wilhelm 2016). First, there would be economic benefits from creating an Everglades park from increased tourism. He believed that the creation of Everglades National Park would begin to reorient the state's overall economy toward tourism. Second, he understood that environmental issues, including an appreciation of the Everglades' diverse and exotic flora and fauna, were becoming increasingly important to voters. Third, establishing a national park would help transform Florida's identity. The establishment of Everglades National Park would demonstrate that Florida was no longer a backwater state.

Ernest Coe influenced Holland. Although Coe had made substantive progress toward the creation of Everglades National Park, by 1937, he had alienated many of his allies and angered Florida Governor Frederick P. Cone (governor 1937-1941), who opposed the Park. To be sure



Figure 7. Governor Spessard Holland (courtesy of Florida Memory).

that Florida's next governor understood the benefits of establishing the Park, Coe increased his propaganda efforts during the 1940 gubernatorial election campaign. Coe focused his publicity campaign on the Park's economic benefits. He noted that the federal government would spend millions of dollars on developing the Park and claimed it would attract more than 500,000 tourists annually. In addition, he pointed out that tourists would have to travel the entire length of the state to reach the park, and gasoline taxes alone would raise \$1 million a year for the state. As a candidate, Holland announced his support for the park (Wilhelm 2016).

One unforeseen reason for landowners in the Everglades to oppose the establishment of the Park was the discovery of oil in 1943. Local landowners naturally wanted to profit from oil drilling in the Everglades, and they began to argue that oil, not tourism, would bring future economic growth to South Florida. They also insisted that the federal government was violating their property rights. To prevent the park's establishment, landowners created organizations to pressure Florida politicians to oppose the land purchase in the Everglades. As governor, Holland had worked to establish the Everglades National Park, but he did not want to ban oil exploration. He believed that no commercial oil fields would be found, and he continued to believe that the economic benefits of a national park would exceed any benefits from oil. However, he also needed to respect the rights of property owners and the oil companies. To deal with the oil issue, Hollands reluctantly supported the estab-

ishment of an Everglades National Wildlife Refuge. This interim refuge would protect the biota while permitting oil exploration to continue. In 1944, Congress authorized the establishment of a national wildlife refuge in the Everglades. The refuge's establishment came with a deadline for exploratory drilling to demonstrate that oil was present. Despite the excitement raised by initial exploratory drilling, no further oil discoveries had been made by 1947. The last obstacle to the establishment of Everglades National Park was gone (Figure 8).

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS (1890-1998)

“For many Americans, Marjory Stoneman Douglas and her 1947 book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*, defined the environment of inland southern Florida and marked her as the environmentalist who dedicated her career to its preservation. Although the impact of her book ... has indeed been profound, its author did not fully immerse herself in the environmental problems of the Everglades until she reached the advanced age of seventy-nine, following stints as a newspaperwoman, a short story writer, and a book author” (McCally 2004).

Marjory Stoneman Douglass (Figure 9) was born in Minneapolis in 1890. When she was three, her father, Frank Stoneman, moved the family to Providence, RI. In 1895, Marjory and her mother left Providence to live in Massachusetts. She graduated from Wellesley College in 1912. After her mother's death, she married Kenneth Douglas, who was thirty years older. It was an unhappy marriage. In 1915, she left Douglas and moved to Miami to be with her father, the *Miami Herald's* editor. He hired her as the editor of the *Herald's* social page. Like her father, Douglas was a progressive activist and soon became involved in many progressive causes, including women's suffrage, child welfare, and public health (Sierra 2006; Davis 2009). She put aside her newspaper career during World War I to help with the war effort. She returned to the *Miami Herald* as an assistant editor, literary critic, and columnist in 1920 (Davis 2009).

Douglas became increasingly interested in the concept of regionalism developed by the southern sociologist Howard Odum, the father of the ecologists Eugene Odum and Howard T. Odum. Regionalism stressed, “the need of each place to retain its distinct character by making the best of local cultural patterns and natural surroundings while mitigating the “utilitarian drabness” that often characterized the urban environment” (Davis 2001). Douglas saw South Florida as a unique region in America because of its tropical climate, wetland-dominated landscapes, and indigenous flora and wildlife. Regionalism informed her early views about how South Florida should develop. For example, she envisioned the development of large-scale tropical agriculture based on the black muck of the Everglades. Because it would help to consolidate the region, she supported the

construction of the Tamiami Trail during the 1920s that cut across the southern Everglades to connect Miami to Fort Myers and Tampa. Regionalism did not mean preserving the Everglades (or other natural areas) but exploiting its tropical nature for the betterment and profit of South Floridians. In short, she held the same progressive views as her father and, like him, was not a preservationist (David 2001, 2009).



Figure 9. Marjory Stoneman Douglas (courtesy of Florida Memory).

Douglas left the *Miami Herald* in 1923 to become a professional writer. She published nearly fifty short stories between 1924 and 1943 (Davis 2001). Very few of her stories are set in the Everglades. Besides collections of her short stories, she published several books, including the novel *Road to the Sun* (Douglas 1957) and a short biography of David Fairchild *Adventures in a Green World* (Douglas 1973). Rinehart Publishers commissioned Douglas to write a book on South Florida for its successful *Rivers of America* series. The resulting book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*, would become her best-known book, making her a public figure. *River of Grass* describes the Everglades' human, geological, and ecological history. She stresses that the Everglades were not a stagnant swamp but a slow-flowing river unlike any other in the world.

In contrast to her newspaper columns, she now warned about agricultural expansion through expanded drainage,

wildlife destruction, and even saltwater intrusion due to the disruption of the hydrology of South Florida. Douglas finally had become a preservationist. Douglas readily admitted in later years that, because she had authored the book about the Everglades, she was unexpectedly thrust into the fore of environmental struggles in Florida (Davis 2001, 2009). In 1970 she became the first president of Friends of the Everglades and devoted the rest of her life to the protection of South Florida's natural resources.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas' autobiography, *Voice of the River* (Douglas with Rothchild), published in 1987, is a fascinating account of her life. For a definitive account of her life and work, see Davis (2009).

POSTSCRIPT

In 1947, when Everglades National Park (Figure 8) was officially dedicated, the early activists who had opposed the drainage of the Everglades were all dead: Frank Stoneman died in 1941, Minnie Moore-Willson in 1937, and John Kunkel Small in 1938. However, Ernest Coe was still alive and attended the dedication, as did U.S. Senator Spessard Holland. Also present was the 57-year-old Marjory Stoneman Douglas. The Everglades National Park Commission (1947) published a detailed account of the dedication ceremony that included all the speeches.

Coe was the first distinguished guest introduced to the audience: "First I want you to meet a gentleman who has worked on this Park for many years. ... He has been called by some the "Daddy of the Everglades Park." Certainly, Mr. Coe has been identified with the Park for decades, and through his personal efforts and through his Association, he has brought it to the attention of many. And we are glad at this time to present to you "the grand old man of the Everglades National Park"—the Honorable Ernest F. Coe." Marjory Stoneman Douglas was the last of a lengthy list of distinguished guests to be introduced after Theodore Pratt, who had written a magazine article about Ernest Coe and the Park. She was identified as the author of the recent book, *The Everglades: River of Grass*.

Millard F. Caldwell, who succeeded Spessard Holland as governor of Florida, made two major points in his speech. First, "The State of Florida has contributed more toward the creation of this national park than any other State of the Nation has contributed toward the establishment of any other national park. We have given hundreds of thousands of acres of state-owned land and \$2,000,000 in cash to the Federal Government to assist in the park's creation." Second, "We are confident that the marvelous attractions of the area, together with the operating plans of the Park Service, will result in the bringing of a multitude of visitors to Florida and redound to the mutual benefit of the Nation and of the State." In other words, the State

of Florida had invested in a major tourist attraction and it hoped that its investment would pay off.

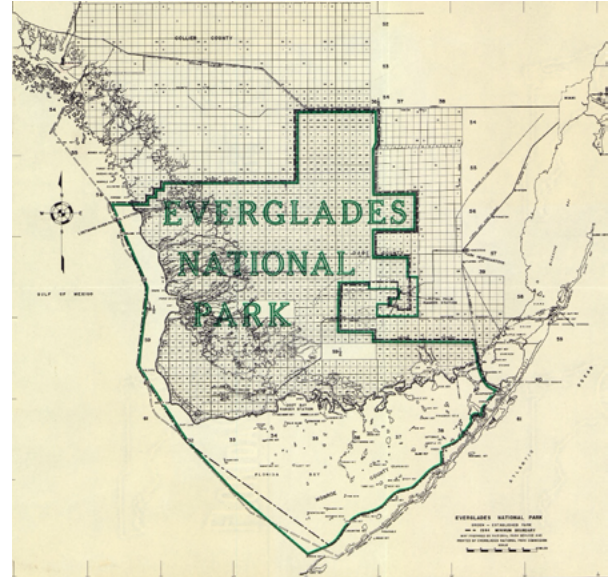


Figure 8. Everglades National Park (courtesy of Florida Memory). The solid dark line was the boundary at the time of the Park's establishment in 1947. The dashed line was the 1944 boundary of the interim national wildlife refuge.

Spessard Holland's talk emphasized the key role of two organizations in the long struggle to establish the Park, the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs for their work to preserve Royal Palm Hammock, and the Audubon Society for its efforts to protect the birds of the Everglades. Oddly, he does not mention Ernest Coe or the Everglades National Park Association.

President Truman noted, "Each national park possesses qualities distinctive enough to make its preservation a matter of concern to the nation. Certainly, this Everglades area has more than its share of features unique to these United States. Here are no lofty peaks seeking the sky, no mighty glaciers or rushing streams wearing away the uplifted land. Here is land, tranquil in its quiet beauty, serving not as the source of water but as the last receiver of it. To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country." An appreciation of the uniqueness and importance of the Everglades' biota that was first recognized by John Kunkel Small and other early Florida naturalists had finally been recognized as an adequate justification for establishing a whole new kind of national park to preserve the ecology of an area.

That a wetland became the first ecological park is astonishing, and it marks a historic change in the attitude of the American public toward wetlands. In 1947, a United States president, two U.S. Senators, and a state governor had come to praise a wetland that until recently had been considered wasteland.

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