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***Losing It All To Sprawl: How Progress Ate My Cracker Landscape***  
**by Bill Belleville**

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in Europe almost always were considered socially superior to things American. Murphree combines similar remarks made over three centuries about Indians to illustrate unchanging attitudes, but he does not deal with the changing attitudes and behaviors of the Europeans making the observations. The early explorers left a European world where religion ordered daily life and international relations. Three centuries later, Reason and the modern state had replaced religion's role in shaping European perspectives on both sides of the Atlantic. For the early Spanish in Florida, religion was the defining element. Heretics were worse than heathens, making wrongheaded Europeans worse than uninformed Indians. Europeans' methods in Florida changed as well. "Conquistadoring" ended with Juan Pardo's 1568 expedition into the southeastern interior.

We must ask if the Europeans' constructed views of Indians differed much from their constructed views of "others." Yes, Europeans demeaned the skin color and the indolence of Indians, but Europeans employed the same language toward other Europeans. An anonymous British spy of the 1740s described the Spanish in Florida to be "of swarthy complexion," adding that the women were "very brown." Lack of industry brought disapproval toward any group. Murphree quotes French official Villantray de la Sauvole, who noted in his journal that the Indians of the Louisiana-Florida region were easily manipulated because "they are very lazy" (77). South Carolina governor Nathaniel Johnson in 1719 called the Spanish in Florida "very lazy, raw fellows." His successor, Sir Francis Nicholson, complained that his own Carolinian soldiers were "inactive and morose and lazy and mutinous." Did the negative remarks arise because Indians and soldiers were not "improvers," not changing the land for profit?

Murphree takes a fresh and interesting approach, but the discussion is not full enough for his conclusions to be convincing. The problem may be the short length of the book at 158 pages. More information about the most important published works is needed for the reader to assess the works' influence and understand their audience. Who, in fact, had access to the publications and who read them? It is unclear just who is doing the racializing: high officials in Europe making imperial decisions, Europeans traveling through Florida, residents in Florida? This is an important distinction if current identities indeed remain little changed after five centuries as Murphree claims on his book's first page.

SUSAN RICHBOURG PARKER  
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*Losing It All To Sprawl: How Progress Ate My Cracker Landscape.* By Bill Belleville. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. xx, 199 pp. Foreword, acknowledgments, preface, introduction, photographs, bibliography. \$24.95, cloth).

In this eloquent elegy to a disappearing time and place, award-winning author Bill Belleville tells the very personal story of how creeping development eventually forced him to move from what had been a rural Florida homestead. The reason *Losing It All To Sprawl: How Progress Ate My Cracker Landscape* resonates so loudly is that it is really the story of Florida's last century—the tale of all-consuming, cancerous development, misuse of natural resources, the end of neighborliness, and the “grief of loss” that accompanies the recognition of what the state was and is becoming.

Whether a person has been in Florida for four months or four generations, the impact of sprawl and its attendant furies of infrastructure overload, cookie-cutter development, loss of native lands, and water abuse are evident on a daily basis. It is a complex issue, but Belleville reaches the heart of it by sharing his narrative of passion and pain, interwoven with hard facts, history, and literature that illustrate this problematic, changing landscape.

In 1990, Belleville fell in love with a Cracker-style home on a dirt road in what was then the rural outskirts of Sanford. Others may have quickly dismissed the thought of living in a house without air-conditioning where the wooden floor sagged from the work of termites and the sheet metal roof reverberated in rainstorms. But Belleville saw that the 1928 heart cypress home was built in wise accommodation to the Florida environment—large windows for circulation, elevated on blocks for air and water flow, wide gables and overhangs to reduce sunlight, and rooms configured to deal with seasonal changes.

“The place made wonderful sense—in fact, it had a very real vernacular wisdom literally built into it,” he writes, noting the house was built to withstand Florida weather “far better than the more modern hermetically sealed block and stucco ranch homes that require thick insulation and a constant running of the central air or heat to make them inhabitable” (13).

It immediately felt like home, just as novelist Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings sensed when she moved in 1928 to a similar cottage in Cross Creek outside Gainesville. Belleville often quotes her eloquent prose to express the sense of place he finds in his home—an affinity that too many Floridians lack, he sadly decides. As residents lose their connectedness to the land and to each other, growth becomes a “maelstrom.” (xx).

With a naturalist's curiosity and a journalist's nose, Belleville investigates his landscape, meeting neighbors and talking with people who once lived in the house. He worries about the wildlife and homeless people that inhabit nearby woods and is disheartened when the acreage is leveled for a new development. Soon he also will be pushed out of his home, the victim of sprawl that has already consumed rural acreage and replaced it with a mall, big-box stores, and chain restaurants. In the meantime, he uses this chronological account to detail the steady hum of growth that is music to the ears of Florida's pro-growth leaders, cheering news media, and out-of-state developers who promise to be “good neighbors” but will never be neighbors at all. The conflicting message offered by promoters has long been, “We're a beautiful

place. Come on down and help us build it out,” Belleville notes, characterizing it as “delusional and vaguely hallucinogenic” (37).

In his ruminations, Belleville tells the story of the geological formation of the land, describes the long-disappeared native Indians who once populated the area, and recounts how early white entrepreneurs brought big schemes and created an agricultural boom that has since given way to bedroom communities and strip malls. Belleville shows that sprawl creates hidden problems and costs for everyone. State attempts to manage growth are laudable, but have been manipulated by politicians who didn’t see the forest for the trees.

When things get bad enough, this modern-day Thoreau escapes to nearby state forests, preserves, and rivers for long hikes and kayak paddles in relatively untouched habitat. He finds that there is still much to discover in the 25 percent of land that has been preserved by the state, including endangered species, rare plants, and that elusive peace of mind. When the sound of wind reverberates through an untouched cypress-lined lake, Belleville finds that his “hope for wild Florida places . . . is rekindled once again” (113).

In this book of love and loss, Belleville makes the subject of sprawl, long detailed by journalists and historians, a personal story of loss and a cautionary tale for anyone living in the state.

LESLIE KEMP POOLE  
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*Florida on Film: The Essential Guide to Sunshine State Cinema & Locations.* By Susan Doll and David Morrow. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007. xiv, 394 pp. Acknowledgments, introduction, B&W photographs, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper).

“Florida on Film” is the title of a college course I have taught for fifteen years, and I look forward to literature on the subject. In 1983, Richard Nelson opened the scholarly gates with his two-volume study *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry, 1898-1980*. Nelson examined chronologically the entrepreneurs, studios, stars, and films through historical and mass communications perspectives from the first newsreels to the rise of television in the post–World War II era. In 1992, James Ponti helped promote the study of cinema and the rise of the industry in Orlando with *Hollywood East: Florida’s Fabulous Flicks*. Ponti applied the knowledge and training he received at the University of Southern California’s film school in witty and sharp synopses of a number of films.

Susan Doll, a professor of film at Oakton Community College, and David Morrow, an editor of reference works, draw on both of these approaches. They divide