Florida is often left out of the national narrative about conservation efforts, but as this article demonstrates, the state and its women were in the thick of things. Many women worked through their clubs—social and otherwise—to advocate for protection of longleaf pine forests.

FLORIDA'S "MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPERS"

AND THEIR ADVOCACY FOR LONGLEAF PINE

Two centuries ago, more than half of Florida was covered in forests of tall, majestic pines. From its northern borders with Georgia and Alabama to the upper shore of Lake Okeechobee, the state was home to massive stands of longleaf pine, a slow-growing tree that can reach fifty to sixty feet in height and five hundred years in age. Walking through a longleaf forest is akin to visiting an outdoor cathedral: the thick-barked trees shoot heavenward, breezes play a high-pitched hymn through the thin, spiky leaves, and the clean, piney scent is nature's incense. Early visitors to the nation's Southeast thought the sixty million acres of longleaf forests growing there would last forever. Pioneers marveled at the trees' size and height while alternately complaining about their monotony and the difficulty of traveling through them.[1]

These trees became settlers' homes, fences, and in some cases their livelihood as demand for turpentine and wood products increased with development and improved transportation such as railroads made getting lumber to market easier. Longleaf pines grew with other pine and tree species on an additional 30 million acres—all resources that supplied a growing nation whose citizens, for a while, were firmly convinced that the plenty of American forests would never end. For them, trees provided not only shelter but also commodities that brought personal wealth.[2]

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, it was clear that this was the delusion of a populace that had placed its faith in the "myth of superabundance"— a term first used in 1963 by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall to describe Americans' belief that our resources were inexhaustible. It was an assumption that had made wise management of the land and provident husbandry superfluous.[3] Forests across Florida as well as the nation were disappearing with little thought to replenishing them for future generations. Joining in the budding conservation movement, many Florida women worked to address this enormous problem. They sounded alarms, educated the public, and pushed industry and government to improve forestry attitudes and practices. They did this because they loved the beauty of trees as well as the birds and wildlife in them, but also because they saw the natural resource as vital to national economic health and independence.

BY LESLIE KEMP POOLE

STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA, FLORIDA MEMORY, FW00036

This heavily logged longleaf forest in Florida in the early twentieth century shows the typical cycle of use. The chevron-shaped cuts in some stumps indicate the trees were tapped for naval stores. Once they stopped producing resin, the trees were logged.

"The time has arrived when the people of Florida must awake to the fact that beautiful forests of timbered land, pine trees and cypress swamps must be conserved if the picturesque landscapes of Florida count for anything in the welfare of the state," Veola Ezell of Leesburg warned members of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FFWC) in a 1923 article that predicted a nationwide wood famine. She added: "Forests prevent cold winds from devastating orange groves and temper the cold waves from the north and the northwest." It was a particularly Floridian appeal.[4]

FLORIDA AND THE LONGLEAF PINE

By 1880, with the commercial stands of white pines once plentiful in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota nearly gone, timber speculators bought up Douglas-fir lands in the Pacific Northwest and swarmed the South, snatching up lands containing longleaf pine and other commercial species.

Longleaf forests had made up 80 percent of the pine forest covering the southern coastal plain in the colonial era.[5] Valued for naval stores and its durability in construction, longleaf was fast disappearing by the late nineteenth century. A U.S. Forest Service survey completed in 1936 estimated about 6 million acres of forest remained of the original 60 million acres of pure longleaf pine forests.[6] By 1996, only 2.95 million acres of the estimated 90 million acres at the time of European settlement remained in the Southeast, and almost all the old-growth areas were gone. This 98 percent decline made the loss "among the most severe of any ecosystem on earth," according to historian Lawrence S. Earley.[7]

"Need, greed, and mismanagement" were the culprits, Earley writes. "People cut the forest, burned it to farm and make spaces to live, exploited its resources, and changed the natural processes that had evolved with it and maintained it." The guilty included farmers, turpentine extractors, lumber and paper companies, foresters, and others who "made their livings from the forest and tried to shape it for their own ends." Loggers treated forests as inexhaustible mines "from which [they] extracted the trees and left the land" for another use, then moved on to the next forest without replanting the areas they had denuded. Those watching the resulting devastation advocated new forestry principles that called for treating trees as a crop, which meant that they needed

to be grown, harvested, and regenerated—an "enlightened" idea compared with previous practices.[8]

In 1860, Florida's longleaf forests were just beginning to open up for commercial exploitation, providing naval stores and lumber that amounted to big business for in-state and out-of-state companies. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, huge tracts of public timberland throughout the South were sold to largely nonsouthern lumber companies, benefiting "northern owners, processors, and speculators" who quickly exploited the trees for naval stores before logging the timber.[9] Still, until 1890, Florida lagged far behind the Carolinas in production of turpentine, tar pitch, and other commodities derived from longleaf pines. But in the following decade, the percentage output by value jumped from 2.4 to 31.8 percent, which put the state behind only Georgia; by 1910, Florida commanded 53.7 percent of the market and had doubled Georgia's output. As demand rose, the process of collecting resin "became more reckless and trees were ruined permanently."[10] It was not until 1910 that a new system of collecting the resin gained widespread use, one that did not kill the tree within a decade of the first cuts being made to release the liquid gold.[11]

Close behind the turpentiners came the lumbermen. Once a tree was done producing resin for naval stores, it was cut for its strong, rot-resistant lumber. The two industries soon became intertwined and slowly worked their way toward and then into Florida, harvesting timber at a furious rate. When the industries reached Florida, they took off fast. In 1869, the state produced 158 million board feet of lumber. Two decades later, when Florida trailed only Georgia in naval stores production and had ten naval stores plants, its 135 sawmills were producing 248 million board feet of products annually and continuing to increase output. The state's lumber production peaked in 1909 at 1.25 billion board feet turned out by 471 mills, levels that coincided with the peak production in the naval stores industry.[12]

Lumbering matched turpentining in its wastefulness. In Florida, as in other southern states, timber often was floated by river to sawmills or to railroad spurs, but often logs were left rotting on riverbanks or sunken on river bottoms.[13] Where majestic longleaf forests once stood, loggers left behind three-foot-high stumps, and railroad logging and skidders tore up the land.

This visible wreckage, a by-product of the nation's rapid industrialization and urbanization, awakened many Americans in the late 1800s to the idea of conserving natural resources. During the Theodore Roosevelt administration, from 1901 to 1909, the president and U.S. Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot worked together to set aside more forested land, developing a national policy that gained public support. By the time Roosevelt left office, the country had preserved 150.8 million acres in 159 national forests. By the mid-twentieth century, what had been an industry of exploitation had evolved into one that embraced long-term planning and sustained-yield forest management.[14] These managed forests, however, would not resemble the biodiverse woods of the past. They were planted and replanted with specific species desired for their quick growth and commercial value. It was an improvement over past practices, but still with an eye toward nature as a commodity.

Conservationists led or influenced by Pinchot and the Forest Service, and forester Austin Cary in the South, soon advocated for wise, scientific, efficient use of resources so that they would be available for future generations. That meant replanting acres that in the past were logged over and left barren or smoldering from fires. The conservation movement reached its peak in the reform-minded Progressive Era of the early twentieth century, embraced by scientists, politicians, professionals, and importantly, women.[15]

"MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING"

Many upper- and middle-class white women during this era turned their attention to issues outside their homes, using their moral authority as wives and mothers to pursue community improvement—activities labeled "municipal housekeeping" by contemporary observers and historians. "The idea that women as the center of home life were responsible for the moral tone of a community did not vanish, but increasingly it was said that such responsibility did not end with the four walls of a home, but extended to the neighborhood, the town, the city," notes historian Anne Firor Scott.[16] Despite the fact that in most states, including Florida, they could not vote until 1920, women exerted influence in several arenas, including child welfare, temperance, and saving trees. Historian Adam Rome asserts that these women were "indispensable in every environmental cause in the United States, and they often justified their activism as an extension of traditionally feminine responsibilities."[17]

Women's groups across America, including the all-white national General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), supported this new conservation model. Pinchot, whose mother served as chair of the DAR's special Committee on Conservation, declared that the DAR, a "federated and organized" society of women, "spells only another name for the highest form of conservation, that of vital force and intellectual energy." Like their sisters in the Audubon movement, whose cause was saving America's birds, GFWC members were particularly active in organizing campaigns to save the nation's forests.[18]

Women were horrified by the aesthetic toll of clearcut logging and its collateral damage—erosion, watershed pollution, and forest fires. Not bound by the constraints of business ties, they took action intended to conserve resources for future generations. Their purpose was "to preserve ideals that are higher than business," declared the leader of the DAR at the 1910 National Conservation Congress.[19] They rallied in all-female groups, expecting that the power of their congregate numbers would gain public and political attention and force change. Lydia Phillips Williams, of the Minnesota clubwomen's federation and the GFWC forestry chair from 1904 to 1906, organized members to seek the repeal of a timber act that threatened the Chippewa Forest Reserve. They traveled to Washington to threaten their congressmen, saying they had a state membership of "between six and seven thousand" who represented an equal number of husbands and "a few thousand sons who will possibly vote as their fathers vote." These nonvoting women used their male relatives' franchise to exert ballot pressure on male representatives—an interesting electoral twist. The GFWC also supported and coordinated efforts to create national forests in the southern Appalachians and New Hampshire and backed the passage of the federal Weeks Bill to protect stream watersheds. In 1910, some 283 clubs sent their representatives letters and petitions to press for forestry reforms.[20]

The GFWC created a forestry committee in 1902, as did many state and local women's groups, to educate its members and the public about better forestry practices. The federation invited professionally trained foresters to address meetings and appealed to state governments to create forestry departments, set aside forest reserves, create parks, and force better lumbering practices.[21]

STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA, FLORIDA MEMORY, RC04250

On the Oklawaha River in 1901, rivermen moved cypress logs cut in the swamps of central Florida and rafted them downriver to mills. The two front sections of the rafts pivoted to make navigating the winding river easier. The Oklawaha flows northward into the St. Johns River, both of which were used for transporting lumber to market in Jacksonville.

Local women's clubs often took the initiative to save forests, an effort that could lead to working both with and against members of the opposite sex. Sometimes it meant raising money to help purchase forest areas.[22]

Perhaps nowhere is the different approach to conservation taken by women more apparent than in a 1908 article for *Forestry and Irrigation*, written by Lydia Adams-Williams, a conservation writer and GFWC forestry chair. She argued that women's "integrity, resourcefulness, genius, and capacity for endurance" accomplished great work. And to Adams-Williams, conservation clearly was women's work. She said it fell to her sex to rally public sentiment to save natural resources: women were naturally interested in issues related to home, family, and future generations while male ventures tended to focus on economics, causing the destruction found across the country. Men, she wrote, were too busy "building railroads, construction [sic] ships, engineering great projects, and exploiting vast commercial and financial enterprises, to take the time necessary to consider the problems which concern the welfare of the home and the future." She noted that the GFWC, with a membership of 800,000, had long worked to preserve forests. "It is conceded that the almost universal sentiment in favor of preserving forests is due to the interest taken in the subject by the women's clubs and the work done for them."[23]

Initially, women were welcomed to the forestry movement by the American Forestry Association (AFA), which included them at its annual meetings and published their articles and poems in its journal. The GFWC was invited to submit reports on its forestry activities in 1906. But the door closed to women in the 1910s when the AFA decided to focus on professionalizing forestry—a field in which few women had credentials and were viewed as "unprofessional" because they concerned themselves more with the "beauty of forests than the resource value of trees," writes Rome.[24] However, Florida's women were welcomed by state forestry leaders, largely because some of them were politically powerful and adept women.

LEADING WOMEN OF FLORIDA FORESTRY

Like many others around the country, Florida women were alarmed by the state's disappearing forests. One of the earliest advocates for good forestry practices was Ellen Call Long, a Tallahassee author and daughter of a Florida governor. In a paper written for the 1888 American Forestry Conference, Long described the riches of the state's forests, including longleaf pine and red cedar; from the latter "millions of pencils annually are manufactured" at cedar sawmills, particularly in the Cedar Keys of Florida's west coast. Well before fire ecology was widely recognized, Long noted that forest fires may be destroyers in some areas but "there is good reason for believing that the annual burning of the wooded regions of the south is the prime cause and preserver" of the "grand" longleaf pine forests. Without fire, there might instead have been "a jungle" of hardwood and deciduous trees, she wrote.[25] In the next century scientists would confirm the importance of regular fires in maintaining healthy longleaf ecosystems.

Long also suggested forestry practices that would directly benefit Florida women. Specifically, she advocated growing mulberry trees for the silkworm industry—something she had spent a year studying in Philadelphia at the Woman's Silk Culture Association of the United States. Income from these practices, she wrote, might financially help "housewives and their child-help, resulting in giving healthful intellectual employment to tender hands that cannot usefully employ themselves in the rougher farm work."[26]

The Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FFWC) also advocated for better logging practices by publishing articles about the value of forests. In 1905, the group's forestry committee issued a report quoting Roosevelt, who cautioned that if the "present rate of forest destruction is allowed to continue, a timber famine is obviously inevitable." Roosevelt warned that a lack of lumber resources could hinder U.S. industry, a common sentiment that appealed to both male and female sensibilities.[27]

STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA, FLORIDA MEMORY, RC09790

Born and raised in northern Florida, Ellen Long was an early promoter of the ecological benefits of fire in longleaf pine systems. This photo, taken in the 1880s, is contemporary to when she presented a paper on the subject.

The most powerful woman—perhaps the most powerful *person*—in Florida's forestry conservation movement was May Mann Jennings, a committed conservationist born into the political life. Her father was an astute businessman and politician; her husband served as Florida's governor from 1901 to 1905, a period of progressive politics during which his administration achieved a variety of innovative social and conservation legislation, including protection for birds and timber. After his gubernatorial term, Jennings, described as her husband's "intellectual equal" and as enthusiastic about politics, became increasingly active in club work, serving in a variety of leadership roles at local, state, and national levels. She also served in the Florida chamber of commerce and worked on forestry conservation initiatives, earning the nickname of "Mother of Florida Forestry." According to her biographer, by age 42, Jennings, newly elected as president of the state women's clubs, was "the most politically powerful woman in the state."[28]

Jennings's love of nature derived from her childhood in rural Florida, where she developed a kinship with the outdoors. As an adult, she and her family had large timber holdings and thus a personal interest in their management. Jennings often worked with her son Bryan in forestry matters. In 1919, she spoke before the Conference of Southern Foresters, arguing that Florida needed a department of natural resources to oversee forestry and conservation programs. As a result, she was appointed to a committee whose work eventually led to the creation of the Florida Forestry Association (FFA). Bryan was named vice president, and Jennings was named the group's "special consultant on legislation"—something particularly notable since it was one year before women's suffrage and a clear indication of her influence in government. The new group had many tasks: saving forests, preventing wildfires, setting up county forest fire protection associations, pushing the creation of a state forestry board, and publishing pamphlets to educate the public. The FFA's first president remembered Jennings as "a public spirited woman [who] realized the

loss occurring the way forests were being handled. She at the time …conceived the idea of getting together a group to develop it into the forest service and she really sparked the flame that developed into the FFA."[29]

Although the FFA's attempts to get a state forestry board failed initially, Jennings's hard work paid off with legislative approval in 1927: "I handled the Forestry law entirely myself except for several days work done at different times during the session by my son, who is the author of the law," she wrote later. "We are very proud of this big step in conservation for Florida." Jennings was lauded by news media and national forestry officials for this achievement, which merged with men's interests in promoting state growth and economics. A friend congratulated her, confessing, "I wish Florida had a half dozen of you."[30]

STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA, FLORIDA MEMORY, N027125

After she was widowed in 1920, May Mann Jennings headed the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs and was cofounder of the Florida League of Women Voters. She campaigned for women's suffrage, prohibition, better treatment of children and prisoners, education funding, historic preservation, Seminole Indian reservations, fence laws, and highway beautification.

OTHER FLORIDA CLUBWOMEN

Florida clubwomen enthusiastically joined Jennings in the campaign to save Florida's forests, producing pamphlets about fire prevention and tree planting to raise public awareness. Their interests also meshed with concerns about the state's dwindling bird populations, and protecting birds and wildlife added impetus to the movement to conserve trees. The women fought for forests, habitat, and wildlife, using a many-pronged approach to appeal to both sexes.

"It is idle to talk of game and bird protection if the forests are to be destroyed," wrote Maud Neff Whitman, FFWC conservation chair, noting in 1922 that some states had begun saving swamps and forests for wildlife. "Without forests in a land having no mountains or sheltered haunts for wild life there can be no birds or game."[31] Whitman, of Orlando, railed about devastation caused by lumber interests and forest fires and called on women to change things, using reasoning that combined conservation and economic messages:

> *It is useless to expect the average man financially interested in timber to heed any altruistic appeal. He is not concerned with the beauties of Nature, is indifferent to an appeal to sentiment but is quick to listen to sound financial argument. If he can be shown that his business and his children's business will come to financial loss unless it can be assured a continuous supply of timber he will at least give some attention to the conservation question.*[32]

Whitman used a conservation message designed to appeal to male and female sensibilities—economics and sports for men, beauty for women. Florida's female activists were demonstrating that they grasped all the issues pertinent to both women and men and were ready and able to address them in their efforts to protect forests and wildlife.

As conservation issues involving the natural world gained credence, women became politically adept in their activism and often were courted by industry groups. By the 1920s, AFA, reversing its stance of a decade earlier, sought women's clubs' cooperation in the movement to conserve forests and prevent fires; clubwomen were urged to present programs on the topic, work with forestry commissions about state needs, press for school instruction on the issue, and write new club literature.

Articles regularly featured in the FFWC publication *The Florida Bulletin* (later renamed *The Florida Clubwoman*) demonstrated a sensibility about the state's agriculture, forestry, and economics as well as an appeal to aesthetics. America's entry into World War II meant adding patriotism to that list. Susan Floyd Fort Jeffreys viewed the state's pinelands as supply weapons in the country's defense. "As I look at a Florida forest of planted slash pine I feel that here are trained soldiers, soldiers in God's own living green. These planted pines are great factors in our defense program. These trees are patriots and ready to aid us when needed," she wrote in 1948, noting that Florida had 38 million acres of land, of which 23 million acres was forested. She bemoaned forest fires that she reported caused $8 million in damage the previous year, of which 1 percent was caused by lightning—the rest, she said, were manmade. "Let us

give thought to the beauty and the healing balm of the forests. This would be a dreary and cheerless land without forests. While we are battling for economic stability let us with our minds and hearts and souls battle for beauty. Let's keep Florida green."[33] It was an argument appealing to patriotism, male and female alike, while also invoking the largely female aesthetic appeal.

Wartime did produce concerns about the toll it took on the nation's forests. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *The Yearling*, used her literary talents to publicize the value of and threats to timberlands. Rawlings had long been writing about the hardscrabble life of residents in rural north Florida, home to some of the state's largest forest stands. Rawlings was not a clubwoman or conservation-minded activist, but her works were filled with lush descriptions of the area's wildlife and landscapes. In 1942, at the behest of the Forest Service, Rawlings wrote "Trees for Tomorrow" for *Colliers*, a national magazine. In the article she objected to the clearcutting of longleaf forests, justified as needed for the war effort. Her response: "We are fighting today for many valuable things. We must fight also at this critical moment to preserve the God-given forests without which we should be helpless atoms on a sterile earth."[34]

Rawlings declined to write additional articles about the timber industry but wrote to her husband Norton Baskin, then serving abroad, that "if I could be of help in such a critical matter perhaps I ought to. My literature is painfully likely not to be deathless, but I might go down in history as the gal who saved the nation's trees!" Historian Florence M. Turcotte notes that Rawlings signed the letter as "Maple-tree Maggie." Years later she again wrote to Baskin about Florida's disappearing forests: "I have been remotely aware of what was happening (even the floods are caused by the denuding of high forests), but I never thought of associating it with over-population, or the wars that follow." As Turcotte notes, Rawlings was "seeing the big picture."[35]

STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA, FLORIDA MEMORY, RC07662

In 1942, Marjorie Rawlings published "Trees for Tomorrow" in Colliers *magazine. The Forest Service asked her to write the anti-clearcutting piece because she often used Florida's forests for the setting of her short stories and novels.*

Forest fires that blackened wooded areas and destroyed wildlife habitat were another concern for the state's women. The fires were destructive and ugly, they proclaimed in their efforts to stem the blazes. They parroted the popular notion, promoted by the U.S. Forest Service and many foresters despite the growing body of research to the contrary, that fire should be excluded from longleaf forests.[36] Unknown to them was the fact that many of Florida's habitats, including longleaf pine, needed fire to be healthy—something Ellen Call Long had observed in the previous century. Thunderstorms and lightning are regular summer events in the state, and many native trees have adapted to the fires that clear the forest floor of debris and shrubs, allowing the growth of grasses and germination of pine seeds. With its thick bark, the longleaf easily survives fires. However, without regular burns, plant detritus builds up and fuels high-temperature fires that can be catastrophic to trees and their ecosystems. As Earley notes, "fire in longleaf pine forests is like rain in a rain forest." Although regular, low-intensity forest fires in Florida are positive events, before fire ecology became widely understood in the mid-twentieth century, women saw them as evil and unsightly. And as Jeffreys asserted, they believed humans were the primary cause of them.[37]

One mostly female group that involved itself in fire prevention was the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs (FFGC). Founded in 1924 with a mission of protecting the state's trees, shrubs, flowers, and birds, five years later it counted 2,180 members, many of whom were also women's club members and community activists. Like the FFWC, the garden club members supported the FFA, even giving the forestry group its membership list to help it raise funds. At its 1932 annual meeting, the FFGC adopted a resolution supporting the FFA's educational work in hopes "that the prevention of woods fire shall become State-wide." The resolution explains their reasons: "The wide-spread practice of woods burning in Florida is denuding our woodlands and killing baby trees by the millions, and…the shelter and food for wild game and bird life is being destroyed by wild-fire, resulting from the common practice of

COURTESY OF CLAY HENDERSON

A longleaf pine forest in Goethe State Forest in central Florida. Much of the land for the 53,587-acre forest was purchased from a private owner in 1992, and is managed for timber production, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and ecological restoration.

light-burnings, and…wild flowers and plant life are being driven from our woods and fields thereby destroying the natural beauty of our state."[38]

Concern about wildfires became more urgent during the New Deal and the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which made a herculean though misplaced effort to remove fire from the land. In 1935 the FFGC adopted a new resolution that pledged a stronger focus on forestry conservation. It stated that Florida had an average of 15,000 fires annually, giving it the largest "burned over area" of any state and resulting in a destruction of scenic beauty and wasting our material resources to a ruinous extent." The group urged its member clubs to work for fire prevention and control while also stimulating public awareness through "schools, press, radio, speeches, exhibits, and all other ways possible."[39]

Public awareness also was a national concern. With statistics showing that 90 percent of forest fires were caused by people, the U.S. Forest Service and a group of advertising executives organized a national campaign in 1942 to increase understanding of the issue. Florida garden club members, already concerned about the effects of wildfires, embraced what became the Smokey Bear campaign in 1944, sponsoring annual poster contests for child artists who illustrated Smokey and his message about stopping human-caused fires. These contests continue today.[40]

The long-term effect of Smokey Bear was mixed. Early notes, "It was a spectacularly successful public relations program, but one that undermined public education about the necessity of prescribed fire for decades to come." The year before Smokey's debut, after a protracted debate lasting several decades, the Forest Service finally recognized the ecological role of fire in longleaf reproduction and health and approved allowing prescribed burns in longleaf forests. But for the general public, the confusion continued. Today the Florida Division of Forestry views fire as both a friend and a foe to the state's forests. Prescribed burns, carefully applied to clear dead wood and excess brush, are administered periodically to keep forests healthy; wildfires from lightning and arson that can threaten homes and large tracts of timber pose a different challenge to the state. It is a delicate balance for state officials and residents still.[41]

Attitudes about Florida forestry—and fire—evolved significantly during the past century in response to increasing scientific knowledge and better management practices. When Florida's women first began worrying about and advocating for better use of the state's trees, they were calling for conservation of resources to counter sheer exploitation of natural resources. With a greater understanding of ecology and the ongoing pressure of Florida's population growth, today the challenge for federal, state, and private entities is to protect and maintain healthy forests while meeting human needs. Women, through individual action and in clubs, have helped frame this debate for decades—first arguing for aesthetics and then for healthy ecosystems. Their work was critical in teaching a developing state to love and value its vast woodlands—of which only a remnant exists today. □

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