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## Sown in the Stars: Planting by the Signs

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in 1916, the Chamber of Commerce raised funds to build a huge, electrified sign. The purpose of the sign was to demonstrate the city's patriotism with the bold and unambiguous slogan, "OUR COUNTRY FIRST, THEN GREENVILLE."

The subject of Southern Progressivism is a bit of a sticky wicket, but Tollison Hartness includes a masterful historiography of the topic through the lens of the lived experience of the residents of Greenville, many of whom viewed the siting of Camp Sevier opportunistically. Local businessmen were eager for the influx of thousands of soldiers and the dollars that would follow. White women hoped that their contributions to the war effort would translate into broader support for suffrage. The war also provided African Americans a narrow opening to improve their lot.

African Americans in Greenville demonstrated their patriotism through actions such as purchasing Liberty Bonds, assisting the Colored Auxiliary of the Red Cross, and supporting segregated Black soldiers. Local African American men enlisted in the military and served honorably. Such actions improved conditions for the Black community in Greenville, but such gains were often short-lived. There would be no fundamental reordering of society in the Piedmont following the war's end. Some African Americans, weary of discrimination, segregation, and race-based violence, became part of the Great Migration. They left to seek better pay, improved work conditions, and more freedom in Northern cities because, as Tollison Hartness states eloquently, they were "pushed by anguish and pulled by ambition" (p. 109).

White women who were already active in social clubs, charities, and Civil War remembrance endeavors redirected their energies toward supporting the soldiers and their accompanying family members. They did this as individuals and through organizations such as their local chapters of the Red Cross, Women's State Council on Defense, and the Young Women's Christian Association. The mass movement of men to training sites and then to fight overseas created a vacuum that women filled. Some opened their homes to boarders; others found employment outside of the home. But the political and economic gains they experienced did not last. After the war, men returned to the workplace and most women assumed their traditional roles. When the war end-

ed, there was little traction on the issue of suffrage because of fears that giving women the vote would lead to federal interference in elections and a weakening of white supremacy. As a telling indicator of how deeply held those fears were, South Carolina did not ratify the 19th Amendment until 1969.

Following the war's end, Greenville's population continued to surge. Some of the men that trained at Camp Sevier decided to return to Greenville and establish roots there. Municipal services increased and infrastructure development projects continued. The city and surrounding area continued to reap the economic impact of Camp Sevier. The shadow of the war remained into the 1930s with soldier reunions and memorials to fallen servicemen. The shadow of the Civil War also remained because these ceremonies honored Confederate war veterans and glommed on the language of the "Lost Cause" in their tributes to the war dead. Tollison Hartness details other developments during the postwar years, including the influenza pandemic of 1919.

Throughout the book, she illustrates how the people of Greenville embraced the federal government, economic growth, and a truly American identity—except when doing so posed a threat to the existing social order. *"Our Country First, then Greenville"* is an important book because it helps answer the riddle of Southern Progressivism, which is: When was a Southern Progressive not progressive? The answer: Whenever the color line was at stake.

This book is highly recommended for academic libraries and public libraries with South Carolina and Piedmont region history collections.

Kristine Stilwell, University of North Georgia

### ***Sown in the Stars: Planting by the Signs***

Sarah L. Hall  
Lexington: University  
Press of Kentucky,  
2023  
ISBN: 9780813197043  
150 p. \$34.95 (Hbk)

Set in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Berea Col-



lege is a small private liberal arts college in Kentucky where the author teaches plant science in the Department of Agricultural and Natural Resources. During her sabbatical in 2018-2019, Dr. Sarah Hall created a project that combined her interests in Appalachian plants and people with the agricultural practice of planting by the signs, and in the process, she published this book.

Although there are numerous how-to guides available on this topic, Dr. Hall found few personal stories or background information on planting by the signs. This book fills that gap. For her project, Dr. Hall interviewed and collected stories from 22 participants, and in her dedication, she recognized the “countless folks in Kentucky and beyond who are keeping this rich tradition alive and well.” She found interviewees by word of mouth via her colleagues at Berea and by reaching out to Growth Appalachia, a Berea initiative, and to those at the Pine Mountain and Hindman Settlement Schools.

Although not a tome, the book’s five main chapters provide a brief but comprehensive overview of the world of growing plants based on the phases of the moon and signs of the zodiac and includes a chapter on other activities such as farmwork, the weather, and fishing. Starting off with the aptly named chapter “The Basics,” Dr. Hall neatly summarizes the similarities and differences between astrology and astronomy. Both “seek to make sense of the stars, the planets, the sun, and the moon...and use what is known about the present to predict the future” (p. 11). In the case of astrology, these celestial bodies could also be used to predict human behavior – and it was the Babylonians who first did this in the second millennium B.C.E. Astronomy came about later in the first millennium B.C.E. with the Sumerians of Mesopotamia.

From these two disciplines came the practice of planting by the signs. It made use of the “almanac man” or “zodiac man,” diagrams where the constellations of the zodiac were assigned to specific parts of the body. It also relied on the moon cycles (i.e., waxing and waning of the moon) and its influence and position relative to the earth. For example, some practitioners believed if they planted beans in the Feet sign (Pisces), the beans would grow at the “feet” of the plant. However, if they planted beans in the Head sign (Aries), the beans would sprout right on top.

Following “The Basics,” Dr. Hall introduces readers to her interviewees, many of whom were taught the signs by their parents, neighbors, or friends. For Gary and Goldie Easton of Gallatin County and Clyde Charles of Lee County, the tradition was passed on from their parents. Today, the Eastons also use *The Old Farmer’s Almanac* and as well as a weekly column, “Planting by the Signs” (*Gallatin County News*), written by a fellow interviewee, Phil Case of Franklin County. Mr. Charles’ mother, on the other hand, used the *Farmer’s Almanac*, and their family grew a little of everything, from corn and sorghum to beans, blackberries, and potatoes—lots of sweet and Irish potatoes. Mr. Church himself still grows those potatoes today, making sure to plant them during the first quarter of the moon and digging them up in the waning of the moon.

Jane Post’s interest in the signs began with her first farming attempts in her family’s Pennsylvania garden when she was 15 and discovered the *Foxfire* books (1972-2004). These books contained stories of Appalachian customs and crafts and centered the Appalachian philosophy of simple living. Later, she attended Berea College and met some old-timers who practiced the signs. Meanwhile, Susanna Lein’s journey started when she moved from Iowa to Guatemala and learned about the moon signs from her Mayan neighbors. She brought those lessons, among others, with her when she moved to Kentucky. There she practiced permaculture on her subsistence and market farm, Salamander Springs Farm, and followed the *Stella Natura* biodynamic calendar. This calendar was based on the *Maria Thun Biodynamic Almanac* whereby constellations were aligned with different plant parts—that is, the root, leaf, flower, or fruit. Other almanacs and calendars that are mentioned include *Baer’s Agricultural Almanac & Gardener’s Guide*, *Llewellyn’s Moon Sign Book*, *Ramon’s Brownie Calendar*, and *The Weather Vane Calendar*.

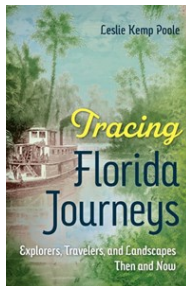
Near the close of her book, Dr. Hall provides this advice: be patient, because there are a lot of variables—and therefore planning—that go into planting by the signs. Stick with one calendar, because different calendars may differ by one to two days depending on the given zodiac signs. Lastly, she recommends reading *Sown in the Stars*, getting your own calendar and trying it out for yourself. For her own endeavors for her book,

she received the 2023 Henry Clay Public Service Award, named after the Kentucky statesman Henry Clay (1777-1852).

*Sown in the Stars* fills a gap in the current literature and would comfortably fit, like an old beloved friend, in any academic or public library with a collection on local agricultural and farming practices. The book provides a reminder that those “old ways” have not been forgotten. For those interested in planting by the signs, Dr. Hall provides a shortlist of recommended books. For those interested in her interviews, the recordings are archived in Berea’s Special Collections & Archives under *Planting by the Signs in Kentucky, Oral History Collection, 2018-2019*.

Linh Uong, University of North Georgia

***Tracing Florida Journeys: Explorers, Travelers, and Landscapes Then and Now***



Leslie Kemp Poole  
Gainesville: University Press of  
Florida, 2024  
ISBN: 9780813080475  
266 p. \$28.00 (Pbk)

*Tracing Florida Journeys* ties together the past and the present using carefully researched historical documentation, interviews with experts and advocates across the state, and the author’s own personal narrative, giving readers a colorful and expansive understanding of the history of Florida. It is part travel agent and part in-depth historical marker—pointing to the necessity for an ongoing discussion about the impact our collective past, present, and future have on the places we work, call home, and long to travel to in search of curiosity and exploration.

Presented in chronological order, Leslie Kemp Poole’s readers go on a journey beginning with Hernando de Soto (1539-1540) and ending with Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (1931). Poole portrays nine notable individuals and outlines two formative periods in Florida history—a period dubbed “Travelers in the Panhandle” (1765-1891) and the famed 1892 Ingraham Everglades Expedition. Poole writes about people and places in her engaging work and weaves together a rich tapestry of Florida’s history. A historian with a rich back-

ground in environmental history, it is no surprise that Leslie Kemp Poole frequently pushes the reader to contemplate the modern-day environmental effects these people and events have had on the state, whether on land use, water resources, or tourism, as a few important examples.

Florida’s history, beginning well before official statehood in 1845, is complicated and inextricably linked to the Indigenous people living in the territory as the early explorers from Spain and other European nations arrived. Poole offers her readers a snapshot of this complexity and of how the experiences and decisions of those individuals and nations set the stage for how Florida would evolve as a place to be conquered and settled by countless outsiders and seen by those outside the region as a fantastical place that seemed almost mythical. This conflict develops mainly through her discussions and examples of travel writers who described Florida in these terms. This myth-making ultimately caused great confusion when visitors found the climate and environment inhospitable due to its unbearable heat and unwelcoming critters.

Poole’s work is especially compelling because she tells a person’s story and gives the reader crucial historical context for the period in which that person lived, making essential connections between the individual and what was happening around them. In the chapter covering Zora Neale Hurston and her work collecting the underrepresented stories of the Black community living and working in Florida, the reader also gets an informative description of the history of forestry and mill towns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Poole understands that it is insufficient to outline quotes from Hurston’s reflections or those she interviewed. However, providing background information on the companies they worked for and their role in Florida’s economic and environmental history carefully shows us the interconnectedness of humanity.

*Tracing Florida Journeys* is an excellent example of natural and public history. Poole makes a solid argument for understanding the history of a place and why it must matter to residents, visitors, investors, and government officials alike. She routinely engages with the reader in such a way as to encourage a continual commitment to prioritizing the resources that help to sustain a way of life that values both the people and