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Doug Alderson. *Waters Less Traveled: Exploring Florida's Big Bend Coast.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. xiv + 135 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8130-2903-0.

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Time Travel on the Florida Gulf Coast: Where History, Nature and Local Culture Are Interwoven

If ever there were a book that fits the old axiom, "you can't judge a book by its cover," this is it. On the outside, Doug Alderson's *Waters Less Traveled* looks like the kind of book one might find at the local outdoor store–the story of how two people mapped out a kayak trail along the Florida Gulf Coast from the Aucilla River to the Suwannee River. While that is the basic narrative that holds the book together, there is much more to this little adventure. Alderson has produced an extremely readable interdisciplinary book that should be of interest to native Floridians longing for the good old days, newcomers and tourists who want to know more about the old Florida that is so rapidly disappearing, and students of Florida culture. In many ways, this book belongs in the genre of explorer/travel books written by Europeans who traveled the American continent during the eighteenth century.

With respect to Florida history, readers are treated to numerous tidbits–from the days Mastodons roamed the region to the lawlessness of the regions during the drug trafficking days of the 1970s. There are tales of Native Americans traveling in dugout canoes, early Spanish explores trying to survive in the bug, snake and alligator infested jungles of sixteenth-century Florida, Union gunboat attacks on the old Confederate salt works that once produced as much as 1,500 bushels of salt a day, and the turpentine camps where African American workers labored in slave-like conditions for less than $2 a day during the 1930s.

Alderson also provides an example of one of Florida's ongoing political controversies–the conflict between environmental pollution and economic interests. As he and his companion paddled past the Fenholloway River, once labeled the most polluted river in Florida, they were greeted by an odor that was similar to an overflowing sewer. The pollution was generated by a paper mill in Perry. Where some authors might have simply bemoaned the negative environmental impact of the mill and moved on, Alderson offers several different perspectives–those of the environmentalist, the company, the workers, and the community that has long depended upon the mill for its economic well being.

At several points, the book introduces the reader to some rather colorful local characters. My favorite was a fellow by the name of "Shitty Bill," a local who was born and raised on Jug Island in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Bill bought his house, which included its own crow's nest and twenty acres of land, for $20,000. "It's worth about eight million now, but I won't sell it," he said. "What is it to have a lot of money? You'd never find another place like this" (p. 40).

There was, however, one aspect of the book that was very annoying. Alderson failed to provide his readers with a map of the journey. Although I am a sixth generation Floridian, and have traveled throughout the Big Bend region for more than half a century, many of the points discussed in the book are recognizable only by the true locals. A map, even a basic one, would have added considerably to my enjoyment.

Ultimately, this book is a highly readable and very interesting addition to the University Press of Florida's ongoing Florida History and Culture series. Edited by Ray Arsenault and Gary Mormino, the series boasts more than thirty-five highly diverse volumes to its credit. *Waters Less Traveled* will certainly send readers back to the book shelves to learn more about several of the topics highlighted in Alderson's book.

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