# Grown and Gone: A Photographic Study of Urban and Natural Middle Tennessee

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To Luke, for driving around Middle Tennessee to keep me company while giving me endless love and support

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To Jonathan Trundle, for all of your patience and advice over the course of this project, and the last 3 years

&

To all the people across Middle Tennessee who posed in front of my camera thinking I was taking video, for the reminder not to take life so seriously

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Abstract:

This creative project examines the urban development of Nashville, Tennessee, United States, the history of the National Park System and the Tennessee State Park system, the impact of urban and natural environments on mental and physical health, and the need to preserve natural environments for a healthy lifestyle.  The photographic study uses long exposure photography to capture movement in the Middle Tennessee State Parks and well-known Nashville neighborhoods to compare and contrast the two kinds of spaces. This project is to be self-published in a book format using blurb.com's *Bookwright* bookmaking software.

# I. Introduction

The Tennessee state flag is simple. The background is red, there is a blue circle with three white stars in the middle, and there are blue and white bars on the outside edge. The "tri-star" in the center of the flag represents the three grand divisions of the state: West, Middle, and East Tennessee (Martin). This symbol is incorporated into logos, set onto T-shirts, made into stickers and is expressed by many Tennesseans as a symbol of pride for the state. The three divisions of the state, so woven into local identity, are not just separated by cultures, but also by geographical landscape. West Tennessee is known for river-bottom flatlands, Middle Tennessee is considered the "hilly" basin area of the state, and East Tennessee is known country-wide for its Great Smoky Mountains. Each area of the state has its unique features; however, the most diverse may be Middle Tennessee. According to Martin, "Middle Tennessee is known for its rolling landscape; bluegrass country. Defined by the circuitous path of the Tennessee River, Middle Tennessee is ideal for raising livestock and dairy farming and is known for its fine horses and mules." Middle Tennessee is also home to Nashville, Murfreesboro, Franklin, Clarksville, and many other cities, towns, and villages of varying sizes. In addition to the hills and the agricultural land, Middle Tennessee simultaneously has rapidly-growing urban areas and 18 state parks as well as other well-loved natural areas. Unfortunately, as urban areas grow, they encroach on natural land, and make Middle Tennessee's preserved areas even more precious, not just for the environment, but also for the people who live there. Despite this urban growth by an increase in metro populations, humans seem drawn to natural spaces: creating green spaces in cities,

preserving great natural features in both national and state park systems, and by using landscapes to escape from the stress of everyday life.

## II. Nashville Development

***The Middle Basin***

*O, the glorious Middle Basin!*

*The rose in Nature's wreath!*

*With her purpling sky and her hills on high*

*And her blue grass underneath.*

*'Tis here our fathers built their homes;*

*'Tis here their sons are free.*

*For the fairest land*

*From God's own hand*

*Is the Basin of Tennessee*

*-Excerpt from The Middle Basin by John Trotwood Moore (Elliot)*

It is no secret to Middle Tennessee, or the rest of the country, that Nashville, Tennessee and the surrounding area is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. Anyone who lives there can tell you about how quickly and expansively their city, neighborhood, or county has grown in the last 15 years. New subdivisions are being constructed where there were once farms, the Nashville skyline seems to be getting taller and more crowded, and surrounding cities are mirroring that development.

It was not always this way. The settlers of Middle Tennessee found a very different ecosystem. "What the first settlers found to work in the Central Basin was rich agricultural land, where the Highland Rim buffered crops and livestock from the downrush [sic] of arctic air from Canada, while catching the surge of warm, moist air from the Gulf to the south" and high-quality agrarian land that had little need for largescale urban development to be profitable (Kreyling). Nashvillians knew the natural treasure that they had found. A Nashville history book from 1911 praises the quality of land in this area: "The soil of Davidson County is good and there are many fine farms … There are other counties around Davidson. In them all the soil is rich and the streams and hills and valleys are very beautiful" (Elliott). In fact, urban development would not just hurt the land, it would also hurt the economy of the area and the settlers. Between the railroads and the Cumberland and Harpeth Rivers that weave through Middle Tennessee eventually connecting to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, Nashville had multiple avenues to ship out goods, and it evolved into a landlocked port city. With its port city role, its agrarian-focused white population, and an enslaved black population that was not able to participate in the market as economic consumers, "Nashville lacked strong stimuli for urban growth. That

*Kreyling* Nashville's Public Square. (Photograph, 1855:Tennessee State Museum)

stimulus would only arrive with the federal forces from the North" during the Civil War (Kreyling). Urban growth in Nashville up to the point was not just unbeneficial, but also impossible. It was only able to shift its focus to urban growth after out-of-state influence brought to the city by Northern troops.

One of the first spurts in Nashville's urban growth occurred ironically due to the introduction of natural spaces in the city. Because of high levels of gambling, prostitution, drinking, and unsanitary disposal of human waste, "in 1877 Dr. John Berrien Lindsley, the city's public health official, reported that Nashville had the highest death rate in the nation and the fifth highest in the world" (Kreyling). The drive to grow and develop the city was beginning, however, and real estate developers used cleaner, green spaces to their advantage. In his 1877 city health report, Lindsley says:

> Previously to 1860, all the country immediately adjoining Nashville was a natural park, equal to any of those artificial parks so celebrated in Europe, for beauty of trees and variety in surface. The fell hand of war changed all this. On three sides the city is surrounded by bleak hills. The owners of these extended tracts would do a good sanitary work and greatly improve their property by planting hardy trees, so as, in a few years, to convert these hill-sides into eligible building sites.

By introducing natural, less developed spaces into an unhealthy environment, developers would see the surrounding area grow and become populated, profitable, and healthier. About twenty years later, Nashville took inter-city natural preservation a step further and founded the Parks Board. The Board came up with "a plan for a citywide system of four parks of a minimum of fifty acres each, one for each quadrant of Nashville, as well as smaller neighborhood parks to be equally distributed throughout the

city" (Kreyling). Even back in the late 1890s and early 1900s, there was acknowledgement from Nashville and its government that the natural spaces surrounding the city were disappearing as the first round of major urban development expanded outward.

Fast forward to the 1960s, and suburban development in the surrounding Davidson County grew rapidly as cars became more readily available and desegregation influenced neighborhoods.

> People who migrated to the suburbs were exchanging decaying urban neighborhoods for a brand new house, a green lawn, and new schools and stores. 'Many white suburbanites also left the city out of an unspoken fear of blacks,' [Don] Doyle [an American Historian] points out, 'in effort to maintain social distance by creating more physical distance between the races at a time when the legal barriers of racial segregation were beginning to crumble' (Kreyling).

The suburban expansion grew Nashville's reach into natural and undeveloped surrounding areas. While the more affluent Nashvillian population moved their living spaces outward, inside the metro area, the city's tone began to shift from a run-down, urban living area, to a city more centralized around work and industry, since that became the reason that the middle class would come into the city at all.

*Capitol Hill, 1952, Metro Archives, Kreyling*

"Old landmarks were routinely imploded to make way for new skyscrapers, parking lots, and roads" (Kreyling). Sadly, unique elements inside the city started to face changes also as Nashville evolved. Nashvillians watched as the character of their city being replaced by a cookie-cutter shape of the southern urban city where families live outside the city, commute inside the city, and work in similar stores and office buildings. More recently, in the last twenty years, the city has combined this work-centered functionality with a new influx of downtown residents and an increase in urban living spaces. "Downtown Nashville's residential population has grown from 4,986 residents in 2009 to 13,000 in 2019, a 160% growth over ten years" (Nashville Downtown Partnership). The amount of people living in downtown Nashville has almost tripled in the last decade, bringing with it the culture, quirks, and livelihoods of a thriving and diverse population.

Many of us who have lived here over the past ten years could tell you that if there is one thing that Nashville and its surrounding area does not lack, it is character. Despite the shift away from unique character in the 20th century, the city now advertises all sizes of high class eating, luxury shopping, honky-tonks, historical music venues, world-class universities, and so much else.

> The reopening of the Ryman Auditorium and the Shelby Bridge, the rehabilitation of Second Avenue and Lower Broad, the transformation of the Broadway Post Office into the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, the construction of the Arena (now Gaylord Entertainment Center), the Coliseum, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and the downtown library—all these initiatives have brought people back to the streets and sidewalks of the city beyond the eight-to-five of office hours (Kreyling).

Nashville has reembraced some of its historical characteristics in addition to building new structures. Repurposed buildings take great pride in their historical significance; the Frist Art Museum (renamed from the Frist Center for the Visual Arts) hosts an architecture tour on Saturdays that examens the art deco architecture of the building structure itself.

The Post Office on Broadway (now the Frist Center for the Visual Arts) under construction. (Photograph, April 2, 1934: Marr and Holman Collection, The Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee State Library and Archives) *Kreyling*

"Nashville's continued economic strength, low unemployment and business-friendly environment has helped to attract business and corporate relocations. The city's thriving creative, entertainment and culinary scene has also been a driving force for the region's population growth, resulting in continued demand for housing" (Nashville Downtown Partnership). All of this has brought locals and tourists alike back towards the city center while supplementing its suburban growth with families and individuals who are looking for a more traditional living experience outside the city while being close to the metro area.

With all of this growth, recentralization, and celebration of the urban environment, comes noise. Nashville's noise could be characterized by heavy traffic in the streets, loud music from the bars, the sounds of students visiting coffee shops, the crowd inside Bridgestone Arena, or bachelorette parties cruising down Broadway. However, the noise in Nashville is not just aural. As Middle Tennesseans watch

construction and neon lights, feel social pressure grow, and see farms turned into strip malls, it becomes apparent that the noise produced by Nashville is often a feeling of chaos. There is an excitement to living in this chaos. It can also be dangerous. As real estate developers found out in the first stages of Nashville development, there is significant value that comes along with nature.

## III. Natural Spaces

Urbanization is exciting, but there are reasons outside of just environmental that it is harmful for citizens' health. "Urbanization affects mental health through the influence of increased stressors and factors such as overcrowded and polluted environment, high levels of violence, and reduced social support" (Srivastava). Despite a population increase in a proportionately smaller space comes a level of anonymity that will increase feelings of loneliness and decrease feelings of happiness, leading to a negative impact on mental health. An increase in cars, living spaces, and corporate offices means an increase in waste, emissions, and other pollutants, which will negatively impact one's physical health.

On the flipside, natural spaces and environments have been found to be linked to positive mental health benefits. According to research compiled by David Pearson and Tony Craig, "proximity to greenspace has been associated with lower levels of stress and reduced symptomology for depression and anxiety, while interacting with nature can improve cognition for children with attention deficits and individuals with depression." Being around nature can reduce negative mental health stress and harm caused by constant exposure to urban environments. It is not only helpful for adults who are under urban stress, but also helps children and their development. This is especially important as Nashville and Middle Tennessee suburbs grow in population and as inter-city urban living once again becomes more accessible to whole families, as well as professionals. "People exposed to urban environments are forced to use their attention to overcome the effects of constant stimulation (described as *hard fascination*), and this in turn over time

induces cognitive fatigue" (Pearson). With the mental stress, constant noise, and unceasing movement that comes with being in an urban environment, especially one that is flashy and geared towards tourists like Nashville, residents and workers have to work mental overtime just to get through the oversaturated stimulation. Pearson and Craig go on to say that, conversely, "natural environments benefit from the term *soft fascination*, which refers to scene content that automatically captures attention while simultaneously eliciting feelings of pleasure." When people see great natural features, there is often a rush of happiness and awe that is refreshing.

It is not hard to understand this enrapturement humans have with the natural environment when whole vacations are centered around coastlines, mountains, and great natural wonders. "Other important features of restorative environments identified by ART [Attentional Restoration Theory] include the experience of *being* away, in which a person feels a sense of escape from the stressful demands of daily life, and *extent*, in which a perception of vastness, and connectedness in an environment helps promote related experiences of 'being away'" (Pearson). While vacations and trips to other states are great opportunities to feel this 'being away' and 'extent,' often we do not even have to go that far to find these. By preserving local greenspaces in the form of state parks and natural areas, Middle Tennesseans are able to leave the new urban normal, even if just for a couple of hours, and visit a different kind of space that is quieter, fresher, and vast.

## IV. History of National and Tennessee State Parks

Despite the recent urbanization of Middle Tennessee and the United States as a whole, North America has a rich natural history to look back on, and a history of conservation and preservation to learn from. When one thinks of modern great displays of natural phenomena in the United States, the first thing that often comes to mind is the National Park System, which are not recent institutions. “The concept of a ‘national park’ is an American innovation that, in part, grew out of the conservation movement that began in the nineteenth century. When Yellowstone was designated a national park in 1872, it became the first such park in the world” (Library of Congress). The “national park” is an originally American way of protecting great geographical features throughout the country as a matter of national pride and responsibility. The conservation movement back then was similar to the ones we see today in that rapid urban growth made people inspired people to not take greenspaces for granted. “The burgeoning of American national parks reflected contemporary intellectual, social, and economic changes that to a growing appreciation for wilderness and wildlife, a desire to escape the increasingly urban places that resulted from industrialization, and the popularization of the automobile” (Library of Congress). Just like in Nashville, when the automobile was mainstreamed, people were able to spread out from cities more easily, whether for living or vacation. All of a sudden, unique natural features across the country became much more accessible. In addition to the popular use of cars, “it is no coincidence that the first national park was explored and established in the same decade that saw publication of a great variety of articles and books about nature and wilderness” (Library of Congress).

This pattern is seen again in modern day, when eco-awareness, climate change, and environmental responsibility is at the forefront of our media and dominates political and social conversation. An increase in social media usage today, especially media that is image-focused, like Instagram, inspires more people to visit places with high visual appeal, such as national parks. Back in the late 19th and early 20th century, "elegant voices, like that of naturalist John Muir, brought the grandeur of such lands to those who had never seen them. His prolific and widely published writings stressed how such wild places were necessary for the soul, and his advocacy later became the driving force behind the creation of several national parks" (National Geographic). Even one hundred years ago, with less scientific availability, observers could see that there was something in these green natural spaces that was beneficial and even necessary to living a high quality of life. There was a feeling of refreshment and comfort and excitement that led to a good "soul feeling," so that even if they did not have the neuroscience to back it up, the benefits were obvious. Because of these benefits, in the early 20th century, "private commercial interests, including hotels, railroads, ranches, and sawmills, saw great profit potential in the parks and began to exploit their resources—often relatively unchecked" (National Geographic). Before the National Park Service was officially established, there was nothing stopping for-profit institutions taking over the spaces for their benefit. Mills would cut the trees, railroads would leave scars through the land, and other commercial interests had the opportunity exploit tourists who deserved access to the lands. "In 1915 a millionaire industrialist named Stephen Mather began a crusade to establish a distinct National Park Service dedicated to the preservation ideal. Mather garnered support from

titans of industry, as well as schoolchildren, newspapers, and even the National Geographic Society" (National Geographic). There was significant public interest in regulating the use of the lands and saving them for the enjoyment of the public. Keeping greenspaces throughout the country for citizens to experience "extent" and "being away" to increase their mental health and sense of well-being of the soul was important to people then as it should be now. National Geographic spoke with the National Park Service Chief of Public Affairs David Barna who said,

> Americans developed a national pride of the natural wonders in this nation and they believed that they rivaled the great castles and cathedrals of Europe … [the National Park System] stands as a collective memory of where we have been, what sacrifices we have made to get here, and who we mean to be. By investing in the preservation, interpretation, and restoration of these symbolic places, we offer hope and optimism to each generation of Americans.

As with most initiatives on the federal level, it eventually trickled down to the states, and groups started wanting to preserve lands on the state level. Mathis became the first National Park Service Director and in 1921, he sat down with a preservationist group to start the national discussion of instituting state parks. At the time, a state park "was defined as a 'relatively spacious area of outstanding scenic or wilderness character, often times containing significant historical, archaeological, ecological, geological and other scientific values'" (Coggins). Where urban environments such as Nashville seem to wrestle with preserving historically significant locations versus making room for progress, state parks were to be designated areas of preservation and conservation. This would give residents the opportunity to drive down the road and find a park that was as

historically and naturally significant to their specific state as national parks are to the United States.

Two years before Mathis and preservationist groups sat down, Tennessee State Geologist, Wilbur Nelson, called for the preservation of state parks here in Tennessee and said "'there should be sections of the state set aside for a full development of nature in her pristine condition, wild tracts which man had [sic] not yet altered…'" (Coggins). By setting aside these spaces, people would be able to see nature develop as it is supposed to without human cultivation and interference. These spaces would be educational as well as rejuvenating. Nelson would become the face of the Tennessee State Park movement as it developed over the next few years. "It was not until 1925 that the Tennessee General Assembly officially recognized the [state park] movement and established a governmental body known as the State Park and Forestry Commission" (Coggins). Four years after the National Conference for State Parks, Nelson got his governmental body to regulate and run the tracts of land that would become the Tennessee State Parks. "As early as 1934, some attempts had been made by the Division of Forestry to develop parts of Reelfoot Lake, the state's only large natural lake" (Coggins). It makes perfect sense that the beginnings of the Tennessee state land conservation would start in the 1930s, which was one of the bleakest points in American history due to the Great Depression. As people were looking for jobs and dealing with an incredible amount of distress, they were in need of all the mental health benefits that natural spaces provide: lower stress levels, reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, and a break from cognitive

overload. People needed that "soft fascination" that leads to calmness and feelings of pleasure.

During the Great Depression, "the State Forester's Office cooperated fully with the National Park Service, the U.S Forest Service, and the Resettlement Administration in the establishment of three areas that were previously designated (by the State Forester) as state parks…the Third, Montgomery Bell, was a National Park Service Recreation Demonstration Area near Dickson" (Coggins). To combat some of these issues that the U.S. was facing, Roosevelt founded the Civilian Conservation Corps to create jobs and preserve lands all across the country. The state of Tennessee cooperated with these initiatives and provided its own organizations to help out.

> TVA, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service were responsible for providing the projects and planning expertise for the emergency conservation programs. Under the CCC program, young men between the ages of 18 and 25 were employed in Tennessee and elsewhere throughout the U.S. to build roads and trails, plant trees, stabilize eroding soil, and fight forest fires (Coggins).

These programs would help not just the land in Tennessee, but also the workers and the economy, once again tying together natural spaces and progress in society.

The men employed with the CCC would stay involved with conservation efforts later in their lives. Coggins says that, "many of the career employees of the Tennessee Division of State Parks through the years have been former CCC enrollees and WPA workers." The skills, values, and trades learned by workers helped the families,

and gave the men a line of work in preservation and conservation that is still available today. This conservation initiative also helped change the public perception of public lands and greenspaces.

As people watched Roosevelt's program grow and public lands become more available, they started to see state parks and protected land with more importance. "They were becoming more aware of the psychological and sociological values of outdoor recreation. Many believed, more and more, that government had a strong responsibility, in fact an obligation, to provide recreation facilities and opportunities in the same way that it provided police and fire protection, garbage pickup, education and health and welfare services" (Coggins). Rather than being a dismissible recreation opportunity, quality time outdoors rose to the same level of necessity as government-issued public health, education, and safety measures, in the public's opinion. The government had taken on the responsibility of land protection when it started the CCC, and that level of preservation involvement for the sake of the people became an expectation.

*JSTOR, Coggins* Fall Creek Falls, 3 February 1951.

Once the public perception on outdoor recreation and government-protected spaces shifted, the definition of state parks changed as well. "Parks became more numerous and

less restricted to scenic features. According to the new philosophy of the 40s and 50s, the need and value of state parks should be determined by how many people they could serve well and how many people would visit them" (Coggins). The standard of state parks became how accessible they were and took on a customer-service oriented approach. The environment came secondary to providing recreation. According to Coggins, this is the philosophy of the park system that most influenced the Tennessee State Parks. This philosophy can be seen today in the parks here in Middle Tennessee, such as Montgomery Bell State Park and Henry Horton State Park, that emphasize man-made recreational features such as lodging, playgrounds, golf, or paddle boating. "This attitude was modified in the 1960s and into the 1970s as more emphasis was placed on the environment, both cultural and natural, and people began to look 'back to nature' and back to their 'cultural roots' (Coggins). State parks again began again emphasizing great natural elements and areas with cultural and historical significance here in Tennessee. David Crockett State Park and Dunbar Cave State Park are both great examples of parks with cultural and historical emphases, as well as recreational.

An integral piece of Tennessee State Park history to note, is its role in segregation. Up until Booker T. Washington State Park down near Chattanooga, Tennessee was dedicated in 1950, after World War II, state parks were only open to white citizens. Booker T. Washington State Park "was the first developed by the CCC, including some workers who were African American" (Tennessee State Museum). The only other state-designated area meant for African Americans was out in West Tennessee near Memphis. T. O. Fuller State Park is now partially operated by the University of Memphis because

“during an excavation for a proposed swimming pool in 1940, CCC workers unearthed evidence of prehistoric village, opening the door to a lost and forgotten civilization. The site has since been developed as Chucalissa Indian Village” (Tennessee State Parks). Until desegregation, all of the state parks and government protected natural areas in Middle Tennessee were for whites only.

Today, the Tennessee State Park system says that,

> 56 state parks encompass nearly 200,000 acres. The system operates six inns (642 total rooms) and conference centers, eight restaurants, nine golf courses, four marinas, 27 swimming pools, 35 different campgrounds that include more than 3,600 campsites, and 366 cabins scattered over 21 different parks.

Eighteen of these state parks are right here in Middle Tennessee, intertwined with cities and suburbs, providing areas for Middle Tennesseans to adventure, relax, explore, and learn. As the cities here, such as Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Clarksville, continue to grow and flourish both in their metropolitan centers and surrounding areas, preserved natural spaces become increasingly less common and state-protected parks become proportionally more important.

## V. What This Means

Middle Tennessee is in a wave of urbanization that is expanding over the region's greenspaces, and these greenspaces are critically important for the health of the people, the economy of the region, and the history of the state. The headlines of population growth articles highlighted by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce say things such as "Nashville Ranked Top U.S. City for Job Seekers in 2020" (Money Geek), "Nashville Named #2 Hottest U.S. Job Markets" (Wall Street Journal), and "Nashville named #1 metro with the most change in the 2010s" (Apartmentlist.com). The area is growing in population and its growth making the headlines of big media names, giving non-Middle Tennessee residents the opportunity to learn more about the area and move here, increasing the numbers further. According to the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the Nashville population was up 15% and net migration was up 60% between 2010 and 2019. Both the amount of people being born here and the people moving here increased over the last decade.

*This chart from MacroTrends uses U.N. population data to show past and projected population growth in the Metro Nashville Area.*

*The Tennessean* cites this same Census report and says that "Nashville's growing population has made it the 24th most populated city in the United States" (Timms). While being considered a mid-sized city now, it is possible that in the near future in could expand into the "large city" category.

This stretches beyond the immediate Metro Nashville area as well, with "cities and towns like Clarksville, Murfreesboro, and Franklin all [seeing] population increases" as of 2019 (Timms). Metro Nashville may get a lot of the media attention, however the surrounding cities and towns are expanding too, while offering more affordable living costs and a quieter pace of life. As these smaller areas grow, they may be in danger of adopting the same fast-paced lifestyle that Nashville has encouraged.

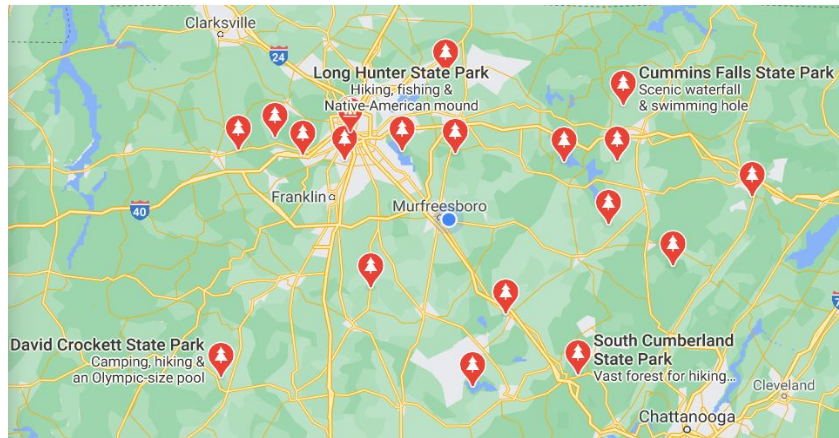
This urban reach will expand into the green hills, rolling rivers, and limestone ridges that Middle Tennessee is known for. These spaces are crucial for a healthy environment and population. During the Great Depression, when health and spirits were at an all time low, people found hope and jobs in investing time and energy into the environment. Especially today, in a time of political and social unrest, the global COVID-19 pandemic, and an increasingly fast-paced urban lifestyle, Middle Tennessee needs these spaces protected and preserved more than ever. David Barna told National Geographic that "never in its 200 years has this nation needed the National Park System more." This is true for our local parks as well. Tennessee State Parks give Middle Tennesseans the opportunity to experience the land as it once was, whether through kayaking on the Harpeth River, hiking at Old Stone Fort, or swimming in the falls at Savage Gulf. They can refresh themselves by taking a break from their busy lives and visiting one of the 18

state parks that are here in this region, experiencing the positive mental health benefits that are increasingly needed in this area.  These natural spaces need to be protected, preserved, and upheld not just as recreational opportunities but as a necessity for high quality of living.

## VI. Artist's Statement

This photographic project aims to show the contrast between the 18 state parks in Middle Tennessee and 18 of the neighborhoods in Nashville through long exposure photography. A digital camera is essentially a box with a shutter that opens and closes at the speed that the photographer sets before taking the photograph. When the shutter opens, the light and image that is in front of the camera is captured and hits a sensor in the back of the camera, which digitally records the data. With long exposure photography, the camera is set to keep its shutter open for longer amounts of time. The visual effect that this creates means the still objects in the frame stay sharp, while any movement turns into a blur in the image. By using long exposure photography, I was able to capture movement in a still image and show that Nashville typically has a lot of constant movement, while parks tend to be calmer and quieter. As with any study, there are a few exceptions, as you will see in the following images. These photographs illustrate that urban life is growing and constantly moving, while Middle Tennessee State Parks give visitors and tourists the necessary opportunity to slow down, get away, and refresh themselves.

My list of state parks came from the list that Google Maps gave me when I searched "State parks in Middle Tennessee." From February 2020 to October 2020, I drove across Middle Tennessee to visit and photograph each state park, looking to see what made it unique and a draw to locals and tourists alike. Sometimes this would



*Screen capture from Google Maps*

involve hiking, while other times the feature I wanted to photograph would be more easily accessible. I would then set my camera on a tripod, adjust my settings, and take as many photographs as it would take to get the desired aesthetic.

The neighborhoods I chose to photograph in Nashville came from nashvilleguru.com. I narrowed their list down so I had what I considered to be the 18 more well-known neighborhoods so that I had the same amount of images of Nashville as I would the state parks. My process for the Nashville images was the same. I would drive to the neighborhood, find a notable feature, set up my tripod, adjust my camera settings, and take a photograph.

For this project I used a Nikon D5600 with a Nikkor AF-S 16-85mm lens, a Slik Pro 700DX tripod, and a combination of two polarizer filters and a neutral density filter that varied depending on the image and lighting scenario. These filters were darker pieces of glass that I attached to my lens, which would let less light into the sensor. They allowed me to keep my shutter open for longer which was critical in high-light scenarios, to keep the final images from looking too bright and blown out. I took advantage of my wide angle lens which allowed me to capture a large, or "wide," portion of the landscape in front of me, rather than photographing only a small piece of the scene, as some lenses force the photographer to do. For the image of David Crocket State Park, I used an iPhone 7 and a Slik Pro 700DX tripod rather than the Nikon D5600. For that image, I used the live photo feature in the iPhone camera and then added the "long exposure" effect. The live photo feature takes a small video, and then the long exposure effect takes all of the video stills and layers them into one still image.

I will put together the final printed book for this project with Blurb.com's BookWright book-making software and I will print it from Blurb.com. On October 26, 2020, I will be hanging images from this series in the McFarland Student Gallery at Middle Tennessee State University for my capstone senior show. This show will run from November 9, 2020 through November 24, 2020.

This book intends to show the beauty in Middle Tennessee's natural areas, the busyness of Nashville, and the contrast between the two. This project spanned my senior year of college, from January 2020 to December 2020. It gave me the opportunity to explore a city that is close to my heart. I also got to live out the message of this project,

first hand. The year 2020 was hectic for many Tennesseans, but in the midst of the pandemic, political controversy, hazardous weather, and social unrest, I added getting married and then wrapping up my college career to the docket. Throughout the project, I found myself looking forward to the weekends where I could drive an hour away to a new state park, hike, and take photographs, and it was the only thing I had to think about in that moment. Photographing for this project showed me the benefits of taking time out of our schedules to get outside and experience nature. In the midst of work, the pandemic, wedding planning, schoolwork, and day to day tasks, I was able to experience that "being away" and "extent" that state parks offer. I took advantage of my visits to recharge my personal battery, feel a boost in my mental health, and gain a greater appreciation for my Middle Tennessee home region. After seeing this book and exploring Tennessee's beautiful state parks on your own, I hope you will, too.

## VII. COVID-19 Acknowledgement

This project was completed in Tennessee from January 2020 to December 2020. During this time the world-wide novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States inciting social distancing and quarantine measures for much of the year. In a project that aims to capture movement by park visitors and Nashville pedestrians, in addition to other visual noise, the possible effects of the pandemic on the scenes I photographed should be noted. The Nashville images were made in the Fall after quarantine measures had been lifted; however, it is possible that social distancing and mask mandates affected the amount of people out and about in Nashville, and it is possible there is less movement than there would be if there was no pandemic. The Tennessee State Park system did close down for a couple weeks over the Spring, and then, when they reopened at first, it was with all indoor facilities such as bathrooms and meeting spaces closed. Playgrounds were also closed. Over the course of this project, they slowly reopened these facilities with social distancing measures encouraged. Many people during this pandemic found more time to be outside and spend time with family; however, it is also possible that because of the

*A pavilion at Rock Island State Park is blocked off with yellow caution tape in April 2020 for social distancing measures. (Photo by Madeline Quinby)*

limited facility accessibility and social distancing measures, the number of people using the parks was affected.

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# IX. Book Layout

+AMDG+

To Luke, for driving around Middle Tennessee
to keep me company while giving me endless
love and support

&

To Jonathan Trundle, for all of your patience
and advice over the course of this project,
and the last 3 years

&

To all the people across Middle Tennessee
who posed in front of my camera thinking I
was taking video, for the reminder not to
take life so seriously

1

**Introduction**

The Tennessee state flag is simple. The background is red, there is a blue circle with three white stars in the middle, and there are blue and white bars on the outside edge. The "tri-star" in the center of the flag represents the three grand divisions of the state: West, Middle, and East Tennessee (Martin). This symbol is incorporated into logos, set onto T-shirts, made into stickers and is expressed by many Tennesseans as a symbol of pride for the state. The three divisions of the state, so woven into local identity, are not just separated by cultures, but also by geographical landscape. West Tennessee is known for river-bottom flatlands, Middle Tennessee is considered the "hilly" basin area of the state, and East Tennessee is known country-wide for its Great Smoky Mountains. Each area of the state has its unique features; however, the most diverse may be Middle Tennessee. According to Martin, "Middle Tennessee is known for its rolling landscape; bluegrass country. Defined by the circuitous path of the Tennessee River, Middle Tennessee is ideal for raising livestock and dairy farming and is known for its fine horses and mules." Middle Tennessee is also home to Nashville, Murfreesboro, Franklin, Clarksville, and many other cities, towns, and villages of varying sizes. In addition to the hills and the agricultural land, Middle Tennessee simultaneously has rapidly-growing urban areas and 18 state parks as well as other well-loved natural areas. Unfortunately, as urban areas grow, they encroach on natural land, and make Middle Tennessee's preserved areas even more precious, not just for the environment, but also for the people who live there. Despite this urban growth by an increase in metro populations, humans seem drawn to natural spaces: creating green spaces in cities, preserving great natural features in both national and state park systems, and by using landscapes to escape from the stress of everyday life.

2

**Nashville Development**

***The Middle Basin***
*O, the glorious Middle Basin!*
*The rose in Nature's wreath!*
*With her purpling sky and her hills on high*
*And her blue grass underneath.*
*'Tis here our fathers built their homes;*
*'Tis here their sons are free.*
*For the fairest land*
*From God's own hand*
*Is the Basin of Tennessee*

*-Excerpt from The Middle Basin by John Trotwood Moore (Elliot)*

It is no secret to Middle Tennessee, or the rest of the country, that Nashville, Tennessee and the surrounding area is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. Anyone who lives there can tell you about how quickly and expansively their city, neighborhood, or county has grown in the last 15 years. New subdivisions are being constructed where there were once farms, the Nashville skyline seems to be getting taller and more crowded, and surrounding cities are mirroring that development. It was not always this way. The settlers of Middle Tennessee found a very different ecosystem. "What the first settlers found to work in the Central Basin was rich agricultural land, where the Highland Rim buffered crops and livestock from the downrush [sic] of arctic air from Canada, while catching the surge of warm, moist air from the Gulf to the south" and high-quality agrarian land that had little need for large scale urban development to be profitable (Kreyling). Nashvillians knew the natural treasure that they had found. A Nashville history book from 1911 praises the quality of land in this area: "The soil of Davidson County is good and there are many fine farms … There are other counties around Davidson. In them all the soil is rich and the streams and hills and valleys are very beautiful" (Elliott).

3

In fact, urban development would not just hurt the land, it would also hurt the economy of the area and the settlers. Between the railroads and the Cumberland and Harpeth Rivers that weave through Middle Tennessee eventually connecting to the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, Nashville had multiple avenues to ship out goods, and it evolved into a landlocked port city. With its port city role, its agrarian-focused white population, and an enslaved black population that was unable to participate in the market as economic consumers, "Nashville lacked strong stimuli for urban growth. That stimulus would only arrive with the federal forces from the North" during the Civil War (Kreyling). Urban growth in Nashville up to the point was not just unbeneficial, but also impossible. It was only able to shift its focus to urban growth after out-of-state influence brought to the city by Northern troops.

*Capitol Hill, 1952, Metro Archives, Kreyling*

One of the first spurts in Nashville's urban growth occurred ironically due to the introduction of natural spaces in the city. Because of high levels of gambling, prostitution, drinking, and unsanitary disposal of human waste, "in 1877 Dr. John Berrien Lindsley, the city's public health official, reported that Nashville had the highest death rate in the nation and the fifth highest in the world" (Kreyling). The drive to grow and develop the city was beginning, however, and real estate developers used cleaner, green spaces to their advantage. In his 1877 city health report, Lindsley says:

> *Previously to 1860, all the country immediately adjoining Nashville was a natural park, equal to any of those artificial parks so celebrated in Europe, for beauty of trees and variety in surface. The fell hand of war changed all this. On three sides the city is surrounded by bleak hills. The owners of these extended tracts would do a good sanitary work and greatly improve their property by planting hardy trees, so as, in a few years, to convert these hill-sides into eligible building sites.*

By introducing natural, less developed spaces into an unhealthy environment, developers would see the surrounding area grow and become populated, profitable, and healthier. About twenty years later, Nashville took inter-city natural preservation a step further and founded the Parks Board. The Board came up with "a plan for a citywide system of four parks of a minimum of fifty acres each, one for each quadrant of Nashville, as well as smaller neighborhood parks to be equally distributed throughout the city" (Kreyling). Even back in the late 1890s and early 1900s, there was acknowledgment from Nashville and its government that the natural spaces surrounding the city were disappearing as the first round of major urban development expanded outward.

4

Fast forward to the 1960s, and suburban development in the surrounding Davidson County grew rapidly as cars became more readily available and desegregation influenced neighborhoods.

> *People who migrated to the suburbs were exchanging decaying urban neighborhoods for a brand new house, a green lawn, and new schools and stores. 'Many white suburbanites also left the city out of an unspoken fear of blacks,' [Don] Doyle [an American Historian] points out, 'in effort to maintain social distance by creating more physical distance between the races at a time when the legal barriers of racial segregation were beginning to crumble' (Kreyling).*

The suburban expansion grew Nashville's reach into natural and undeveloped surrounding areas. While the more affluent Nashvillian population moved their living spaces outward, inside the metro area, the city's tone began to shift from a run-down, urban living area, to a city more centralized around work and industry, since that became the reason that the middle class would come into the city at all. "Old landmarks were routinely imploded to make way for new skyscrapers, parking lots, and roads" (Kreyling). Sadly, unique elements inside the city started to face changes also as Nashville evolved. Nashvillians watched as the character of their city being replaced by a cookie-cutter shape of the southern urban city where families live outside the city, commute inside the city, and work in similar stores and office buildings. More recently, in the last twenty years, the city has combined this work-centered functionality with a new influx of downtown residents and an increase in urban living spaces. "Downtown Nashville's residential population has grown from 4,986 residents in 2009 to 13,000 in 2019, a 160% growth over ten years" (Nashville Downtown Partnership). The amount of people living in downtown Nashville has almost tripled in the last decade, bringing with it the culture, quirks, and livelihoods of a thriving and diverse population.

Many of us who have lived here in the last ten years could tell you that if there is one thing that Nashville and its surrounding area does not lack, it is character. Despite the shift away from unique character in the 20th century, the city now advertises all sizes of high class eating, luxury shopping, honky-tonks, historical music venues, world-class universities, and so much else.

> *The reopening of the Ryman Auditorium and the Shelby Bridge, the rehabilitation of Second Avenue and Lower Broad, the transformation of the Broadway Post Office into the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, the construction of the Arena (now Gaylord Entertainment Center), the Coliseum, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and the downtown library—all these initiatives have brought people back to the streets and sidewalks of the city beyond the eight-to-five of office hours (Kreyling).*

5

Nashville has reembraced some of its historical characteristics in addition to building new structures. Repurposed buildings take great pride in their historical significance; the Frist Art Museum (renamed from the Frist Center for the Visual Arts) hosts an architecture tour on Saturdays that examines the art deco architecture of the building structure itself. "Nashville's continued economic strength, low unemployment and business-friendly environment has helped to attract business and corporate relocations. The city's thriving creative, entertainment and culinary scene has also been a driving force for the region's population growth, resulting in continued demand for housing" (Nashville Downtown Partnership). All of this has brought locals and tourists alike back towards the city center while supplementing its suburban growth with families and individuals who are looking for a more traditional living experience outside the city while being close to the metro area.

The Post Office on Broadway (now the Frist Center for the Visual Arts) under construction. (Photograph, April 2, 1934. Marr and Holman Collection, The Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee State Library and Archives) *Kreyling*

With all of this growth, recentralization, and celebration of the urban environment, comes noise. Nashville's noise could be characterized by heavy traffic in the streets, loud music from the bars, the sounds of students visiting coffee shops, the crowd inside Bridgestone Arena, or bachelorette parties cruising down Broadway. However, the noise in Nashville is not just aural. As Middle Tennesseans watch construction and neon lights, feel social pressure grow, and see farms turned into strip malls, it becomes apparent that the noise produced by Nashville is often a feeling of chaos. There is an excitement to living in this chaos. It can also be dangerous. As real estate developers found out in the first stages of Nashville development, there is significant value that comes along with giving some priority to natural spaces

.



## Natural Spaces

Urbanization is exciting, but there are reasons outside of just the environmental factors that it are harmful for citizens' health. "Urbanization affects mental health through the influence of increased stressors and factors such as overcrowded and polluted environment, high levels of violence, and reduced social support" (Srivastava). Despite a population increase in a proportionately smaller space comes a level of anonymity that will increase feelings of loneliness and decrease feelings of happiness, leading to a negative impact on mental health. An increase in transportation, living spaces, and corporate offices means an increase in waste, emissions, and other pollutants, which will negatively impact one's physical health.

On the flip side, natural spaces and environments have been found to be linked to positive mental health benefits. According to research compiled by David Pearson and Tony Craig, "proximity to greenspace has been associated with lower levels of stress and reduced symptomology for depression and anxiety, while interacting with nature can improve cognition for children with attention deficits and individuals with depression." Being around nature can reduce negative mental health stress and harm caused by constant exposure to urban environments. It is not only helpful for adults who are under urban stress, but also helps children and their development. This is especially important as Nashville and Middle Tennessee suburbs grow in population and as inter-city urban living once again becomes more accessible to whole families, as well as professionals. "People exposed to urban environments are forced to use their attention to overcome the effects of constant stimulation (described as *hard fascination*), and this in turn over time induces cognitive fatigue" (Pearson). With the mental stress, constant noise, and unceasing movement that comes with being in an urban environment, especially one that is flashy and geared towards tourists like Nashville, residents and workers have to work mental overtime just to get through the oversaturated stimulation. Pearson and Craig go on to say that, conversely, "natural environments benefit from the term *soft fascination*, which refers to scene content that automatically captures attention while simultaneously eliciting feelings of pleasure." When people see great natural features, there is often a rush of happiness and awe that is refreshing.

It is not hard to understand this enrapturement humans have with the natural environment when whole vacations are centered around coastlines, mountains, and great natural wonders.



"Other important features of restorative environments identified by ART [Attentional Restoration Theory] include the experience of *being* away, in which a person feels a sense of escape from the stressful demands of daily life, and *extent*, in which a perception of vastness, and connectedness in an environment helps promote related experiences of 'being away'" (Pearson). While vacations and trips to other states are great opportunities to feel this 'being away' and 'extent,' often we do not even have to go that far to find these. By preserving local greenspaces in the form of state parks and natural areas, Middle Tennesseans are able to leave the new urban normal, even if just for a couple of hours, and visit a different kind of space that is quieter, fresher, and vast.

## History of National and Tennessee State Parks

Despite the recent urbanization of Middle Tennessee and the United States as a whole, North America has a rich natural history to look back on, and a history of conservation and preservation to learn from. When one thinks of modern great displays of natural phenomena in the United States, the first thing that often comes to mind is the National Park System, which are not recent institutions. "The concept of a 'national park' is an American innovation that, in part, grew out of the conservation movement that began in the nineteenth century. When Yellowstone was designated a national park in 1872, it became the first such park in the world" (Library of Congress). The "national park" is an originally American way of protecting great geographical features throughout the country as a matter of national pride and responsibility. The conservation movement back then was similar to the ones we see today in that rapid urban growth made people inspired people to not take greenspaces for granted. "The burgeoning of American national parks reflected contemporary intellectual, social, and economic changes that to a growing appreciation for wilderness and wildlife, a desire to escape the increasingly urban places that resulted from industrialization, and the popularization of the automobile" (Library of Congress). Just like in Nashville, when the automobile was mainstreamed, people were able to spread out from cities more easily, whether for living or vacation. All of a sudden, unique natural features across the country became much more accessible. In addition to the popular use of cars, "it is no coincidence that the first national park was explored and established in the same decade that saw publication of a great variety of articles and books about nature and wilderness" (Library of Congress). This pattern is seen again in modern day, when eco-awareness, climate change, and environmental responsibility is at the forefront of our media and dominates political and social conversation. An increase in social media usage today, especially media that is image-focused, like Instagram, inspires more people to visit places with high visual appeal, such as national parks.



Back in the late 19th and early 20th century, "elegant voices, like that of naturalist John Muir, brought the grandeur of such lands to those who had never seen them. His prolific and widely published writings stressed how such wild places were necessary for the soul, and his advocacy later became the driving force behind the creation of several national parks" (National Geographic). Even one hundred years ago, with less scientific availability, observers could see that there was something in these green natural spaces that was beneficial and even necessary to living a high quality of life. There was a feeling of refreshment and comfort and excitement that led to a good "soul feeling," so that even if they did not have the neuroscience to back it up, the benefits were obvious. Because of these benefits, in the early 20th century, "private commercial interests, including hotels, railroads, ranches, and sawmills, saw great profit potential in the parks and began to exploit their resources—often relatively unchecked" (National Geographic). Before the National Park Service was officially established, there was nothing stopping for-profit institutions taking over the spaces for their benefit. Mills would cut the trees, railroads would leave scars through the land, and other commercial interests had the opportunity exploit tourists who deserved access to the lands. "In 1915 a millionaire industrialist named Stephen Mather began a crusade to establish a distinct National Park Service dedicated to the preservation ideal. Mather garnered support from titans of industry, as well as schoolchildren, newspapers, and even the National Geographic Society" (National Geographic). There was significant public interest in regulating the use of the lands and saving them for the enjoyment of the public. Keeping greenspaces throughout the country for citizens to experience "extent" and "being away" to increase their mental health and sense of well-being of the soul was important to people then as it should be now. National Geographic spoke with the National Park Service Chief of Public Affairs David Barna who said,

> *Americans developed a national pride of the natural wonders in this nation and they believed that they rivaled the great castles and cathedrals of Europe ... [the National Park System] stands as a collective memory of where we have been, what sacrifices we have made to get here, and who we mean to be. By investing in the preservation, interpretation, and restoration of these symbolic places, we offer hope and optimism to each generation of Americans.*

As with most initiatives on the federal level, it eventually trickled down to the states, and groups started wanting to preserve lands on the state level. Mathis became the first National Park Service Director and in 1921, he sat down with a preservationist group to start the national discussion of instituting state parks.



At the time, a state park "was defined as a 'relatively spacious area of outstanding scenic or wilderness character, often times containing significant historical, archaeological, ecological, geological and other scientific values'" (Coggins). Where urban environments such as Nashville seem to wrestle with preserving historically significant locations versus making room for progress, state parks were to be designated areas of preservation and conservation. This would give residents the opportunity to drive down the road and find a park that was as historically and naturally significant to their specific state as national parks are to the United States.

Two years before Mathis and preservationist groups sat down, Tennessee State Geologist, Wilbur Nelson, called for the institution of state parks here in Tennessee and said "'there should be sections of the state set aside for a full development of nature in her pristine condition, wild tracts which man had [sic] not yet altered…'" (Coggins). By setting aside these spaces, people would be able to see nature develop as it is supposed to without human cultivation and interference. These spaces would be educational as well as rejuvenating. Nelson would become the face of the Tennessee State Park movement as it developed over the next few years. "It was not until 1925 that the Tennessee General Assembly officially recognized the [state park] movement and established a governmental body known as the State Park and Forestry Commission" (Coggins). Four years after the National Conference for State Parks, Nelson got his governmental body to regulate and run the tracts of land that would become the Tennessee State Parks. "As early as 1934, some attempts had been made by the Division of Forestry to develop parts of Reelfoot Lake, the state's only large natural lake" (Coggins). It makes perfect sense that the beginnings of the Tennessee state land conservation would start in the 1930s, which was one of the bleakest points in American history due to the Great Depression. As people were looking for jobs and dealing with an incredible amount of distress, they were in need of all the mental health benefits that natural spaces provide: lower stress levels, reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, and a break from cognitive overload. People needed that "soft fascination" that leads to calmness and feelings of pleasure.

During the Great Depression, "the State Forester's Office cooperated fully with the National Park Service, the U.S Forest Service, and the Resettlement Administration in the establishment of three areas that were previously designated (by the State Forester) as state parks…the Third, Montgomery Bell, was a National Park Service Recreation Demonstration Area near Dickson" (Coggins). To combat some of these issues that the U.S. was facing, Roosevelt founded the Civilian Conservation Corps to create jobs and preserve lands all across the country.



The state of Tennessee cooperated with these initiatives and provided its own organizations to help out.

> *TVA, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service were responsible for providing the projects and planning expertise for the emergency conservation programs. Under the CCC program, young men between the ages of 18 and 25 were employed in Tennessee and elsewhere throughout the U.S. to build roads and trails, plant trees, stabilize eroding soil, and fight forest fires (Coggins).*

These programs would help not just the land in Tennessee, but also the workers and the economy, once again tying together natural spaces and progress in society.

The men employed with the CCC would stay involved with conservation efforts later in their lives. Coggins says that, "many of the career employees of the Tennessee Division of State Parks through the years have been former CCC enrollees and WPA workers." The skills, values, and trades learned by workers helped the families, and gave the men a line of work in preservation and conservation that is still available today. This conservation initiative also helped change the public perception of public lands and greenspaces.

As people watched Roosevelt's program grow and public lands become more available, they started to see state parks and protected land with more importance. "They were becoming more aware of the psychological and sociological values of outdoor recreation. Many believed, more and more, that government had a strong responsibility, in fact an obligation, to provide recreation facilities and opportunities in the same way that it provided police and fire protection, garbage pickup, education and health and welfare services" (Coggins). Rather than being a dismissible recreation opportunity, quality time outdoors rose to the same level of necessity as government-issued public health, education, and safety measures, in the public's opinion. The government had taken on the responsibility of land protection when it started the CCC, and that level of preservation involvement for the sake of the people became an expectation.

Fall Creek Falls, 3 February 1951.

*JSTOR, Coggins*

Once the public perception on outdoor recreation and government-protected spaces shifted, the definition of state parks changed as well. "Parks became more numerous and less restricted to scenic features. According to the new philosophy of the 40s and 50s, the need and value of state parks should be determined by how many people they could serve well and how many people would visit them" (Coggins). The standard of state parks became how accessible they were and took on a customer-service oriented approach. The environment came secondary to providing recreation. According to Coggins, this is the philosophy of the park system that most influenced the Tennessee State Parks. This philosophy can be seen today in the parks here in Middle Tennessee, such as Montgomery Bell State Park and Henry Horton State Park, that emphasize man-made recreational features such as lodging, playgrounds, golf, or paddle boating. "This attitude was modified in the 1960s and into the 1970s as more emphasis was placed on the environment, both cultural and natural, and people began to look 'back to nature' and back to their 'cultural roots' (Coggins). State parks again began again emphasizing great natural elements and areas with cultural and historical significance here in Tennessee. David Crockett State Park and Dunbar Cave State Park are both great examples of parks with cultural and historical emphases, as well as recreational.

An integral piece of Tennessee State Park history to note, is its role in segregation. Up until Booker T. Washington State Park down near Chattanooga, Tennessee was dedicated in 1950 after World War II, state parks were only open to white citizens. Booker T. Washington State Park "was the first developed by the CCC, including some workers who were African American" (Tennessee State Museum). The only other state-designated area meant for African Americans was out in West Tennessee, near Memphis. T. O. Fuller State Park is now partially operated by the University of Memphis because "during an excavation for a proposed swimming pool in 1940, CCC workers unearthed evidence of prehistoric village, opening the door to a lost and forgotten civilization. The site has since been developed as Chucalissa Indian Village" (Tennessee State Parks). Until desegregation, all of the state parks and government protected natural areas in Middle Tennessee were for whites only.

Today, the Tennessee State Park system says that,

> *56 state parks encompass nearly 200,000 acres. The system operates six inns (642 total rooms) and conference centers, eight restaurants, nine golf courses, four marinas, 27 swimming pools, 35 different campgrounds that include more than 3,600 campsites, and 366 cabins scattered over 21 different parks.*

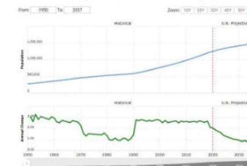
Eighteen of these state parks are right here in Middle Tennessee, intertwined with cities and suburbs, providing areas for Middle Tennesseans to adventure, relax, explore, and learn.



As the cities here, such as Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Clarksville, continue to grow and flourish both in their metropolitan centers and surrounding areas, preserved natural spaces become increasingly less common and state-protected parks become proportionally more important.

### What This Means

Middle Tennessee is in a wave of urbanization that is expanding over the region's greenspaces, and these greenspaces are critically important for the health of the people, the economy of the region, and the history of the state. The headlines of population growth articles highlighted by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce say things such as "Nashville Ranked Top U.S. City for Job Seekers in 2020" (Money Geek), "Nashville Named #2 Hottest U.S. Job Markets" (Wall Street Journal), and "Nashville named #1 metro with the most change in the 2010s" (Apartmentlist.com). The area is growing in population and its growth making the headlines of big media names, giving non-Middle Tennessee residents the opportunity to learn more about the area and move here, increasing the numbers further. According to the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the Nashville population was up 15% and net migration was up 60% between 2010 and 2019. Both the amount of people being born here and the people moving here increased over the last decade.



*This chart from MacroTrends uses U.N. population data to show past and projected population growth in the Metro Nashville Area.*

*The Tennessean* cites this same Census report and says that "Nashville's growing population has made it the 24th most populated city in the United States" (Timms). While being considered a mid-sized city now, it is possible that in the near future in could expand into the "large city" category.



This stretches beyond the immediate Metro Nashville area as well, with "cities and towns like Clarksville, Murfreesboro, and Franklin all [seeing] population increases" as of 2019 (Timms). Metro Nashville may get a lot of the media attention, however the surrounding cities and towns are expanding too, while offering more affordable living costs and a quieter pace of life. As these smaller areas grow, they may be in danger of adopting the same fast-paced lifestyle that Nashville has encouraged.

This urban reach will expand into the green hills, rolling rivers, and limestone ridges that Middle Tennessee is known for. These spaces are crucial for a healthy environment and population. During the Great Depression, when health and spirits were at an all time low, people found hope and jobs in investing time and energy into the environment. Especially today, in a time of political and social conflicts, the global COVID-19 pandemic, and an increasingly fast-paced urban lifestyle, Middle Tennessee needs these spaces protected and preserved more than ever. David Barna told National Geographic that "never in its 200 years has this nation needed the National Park System more." This is true for our local parks as well. Tennessee State Parks give Middle Tennesseans the opportunity to experience the land as it once was, whether through kayaking on the Harpeth River, hiking at Old Stone Fort, or swimming in the falls at Savage Gulf. They can refresh themselves by taking a break from their busy lives and visiting one of the 18 state parks that are here in this region, experiencing the positive mental health benefits that are increasingly needed in this area. These natural spaces need to be protected, preserved, and upheld not just as recreational opportunities but as a necessity for high quality of living.



### Artist's Statement

This photographic project aims to show the contrast between the 18 state parks in Middle Tennessee and 18 of the neighborhoods in Nashville through long exposure photography. A digital camera is essentially a box with a shutter that opens and closes at the speed that the photographer sets before taking the photograph. When the shutter opens, the light and image that is in front of the camera is captured and hits a sensor in the back of the camera, which digitally records the data. With long exposure photography, the camera is set to keep its shutter open for longer amounts of time. The visual effect that this creates means the still objects in the frame stay sharp, while any movement turns into a blur in the image. By using long exposure photography, I was able to capture movement in a still image and show that Nashville typically has a lot of constant movement, while parks tend to be calmer and quieter. As with any study, there are a few exceptions, as you will see in the following images. These photographs illustrate that urban life is growing and constantly moving, while Middle Tennessee State Parks give visitors and tourists the necessary opportunity to slow down, get away, and refresh themselves.

My list of state parks came from the list that Google Maps gave me when I searched "State Parks in Middle Tennessee." From February 2020 to October 2020, I drove across Middle Tennessee to visit and photograph each state park, looking to see what made it unique and a draw to locals and tourists alike. Sometimes this would involve hiking, while other times the feature I wanted to photograph would be more easily accessible. I would then set my camera on a tripod, adjust my settings, and take as many photographs as it would take to get the desired aesthetic.

The neighborhoods I chose to photograph in Nashville came from nashvilleguru.com. I narrowed their list down so I had what I considered to be the 18 more well-known neighborhoods so that I had the same amount of images of Nashville as I would the state parks. My process for the Nashville images was the same. I would drive to the neighborhood, find a notable feature, set up my tripod, adjust my camera settings, and take a photograph.

*Screen capture from Google Maps*



For this project I used a Nikon D5600 with a Nikkor AF-S 16-85mm lens, a Slik Pro 700DX tripod, and a combination of two polarizer filters and a neutral density filter that varied depending on the image and lighting scenario. These filters were darker pieces of glass that I attached to my lens, which would let less light into the sensor. They allowed me to keep my shutter open for longer which was critical in high-light scenarios, to keep the final images from looking too bright and blown out. I took advantage of my wide angle lens which allowed me to capture a large, or "wide," portion of the landscape in front of me, rather than photographing only a small piece of the scene, as some lenses force the photographer to do. For the image of David Crocket State Park, I used an iPhone 7 and a Slik Pro 700DX tripod rather than the Nikon D5600. For that image, I used the live photo feature in the iPhone camera and then added the "long exposure" effect. The live photo feature takes a small video, and then the long exposure effect takes all of the video stills and layers them into one still image.

This book intends to show the beauty in Middle Tennessee's natural areas, the busyness of Nashville, and the contrast between the two. This project spanned my senior year of college, from January 2020 to December 2020. It gave me the opportunity to explore a city that is close to my heart. I also got to live out the message of this project, first hand. The year 2020 was hectic for many Tennesseans, but in the midst of the pandemic, political controversy, hazardous weather, and social unrest, I added getting married and then wrapping up my college career to the docket. Throughout the project, I found myself looking forward to the weekends where I could drive an hour away to a new state park, hike, and take photographs, and it was the only thing I had to think about in that moment. Photographing for this project showed me the benefits of taking time out of our schedules to get outside and experience nature. In the midst of work, the pandemic, wedding planning, schoolwork, and day to day tasks, I was able to experience that "being away" and "extent" that state parks offer. I took advantage of my visits to recharge my personal battery, feel a boost in my mental health, and gain a greater appreciation for my Middle Tennessee home region. After seeing this book and exploring Tennessee's beautiful state parks on your own, I hope you will, too.



### COVID-19 Acknowledgment

This project was completed in Tennessee from January 2020 to December 2020. During this time the world-wide novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States inciting social distancing and quarantine measures for much of the year. In a project that aims to capture movement by park visitors and Nashville pedestrians, in addition to other visual noise, the possible effects of the pandemic on the scenes I photographed should be noted. The Nashville images were made in the Fall after quarantine measures had been lifted; however, it is possible that social distancing and mask mandates affected the amount of people out and about in Nashville, and it is possible there is less movement than there would be if there was no pandemic. The Tennessee State Park system did close down for a couple weeks over the Spring, and then, when they reopened at first, it was with all indoor facilities such as bathrooms and meeting spaces closed. Playgrounds were also closed. Over the course of this project, they slowly reopened these facilities with social distancing measures encouraged. Many people during this pandemic found more time to be outside and spend time with family; but it is also possible that because of the limited facility accessibility and social distancing measures, the number of people using the parks was affected.

*A pavilion at Rock Island State Park is blocked off with yellow caution tape in April 2020 for social distancing measures. (Photo by Madeline Quinby)*

Hillsboro Village
36.1366° N, 86.8013° W

18

Tims Ford State Park
35.2204° N, 86.2558° W

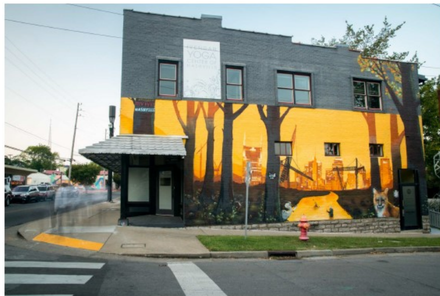
19

Midtown
36.1494° N, 86.7972° W

20

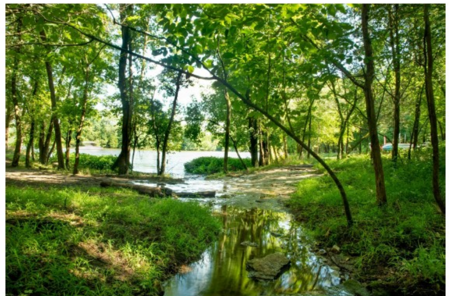
Dunbar Cave State Park
36.5559° N, 87.3039° W

21



12 South
36.1252° N, 86.7894° W

22



Bledsoe Creek State Park
36.3784° N, 86.3606° W

23

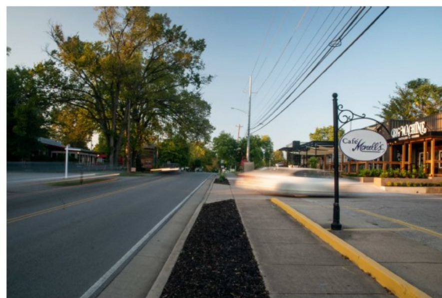
West End
36.1385° N, 86.8194° W

Long Hunter State Park
36.0938° N, 86.5567° W

Downtown
36.1608° N, 86.7782° W

Cedars of Lebanon State Park
36.0831° N, 86.3192° W





Berry Hill
36.1139° N, 86.7665° W

Harpeth River State Park
36.1474° N, 87.1218° W

Marathon Village
36.1641° N, 86.7962° W

30

Fall Creek Falls State Park
35.6671° N, 85.3562° W

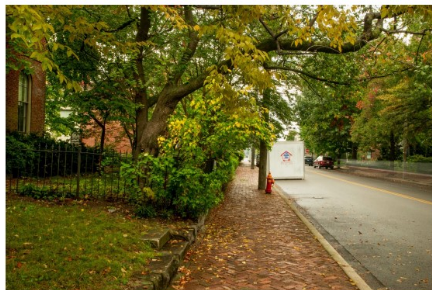
31

Belmont
36.1329° N, 86.7942° W

32

Henry Horton State Park
35.5951° N, 86.6978° W

33



Germantown
36.1759° N, 86.7889° W

34

Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park
36.1709° N, 86.7876° W

35

The Gulch
36.1528° N, 86.7834° W

Cummins Falls State Park
36.2537° N, 85.5653° W

Elliston Place
36.1480° N, 86.8067° W

Montgomery Bell State Park
36.0929° N, 87.2694° W

SoBro
36.1561° N, 86.7781° W

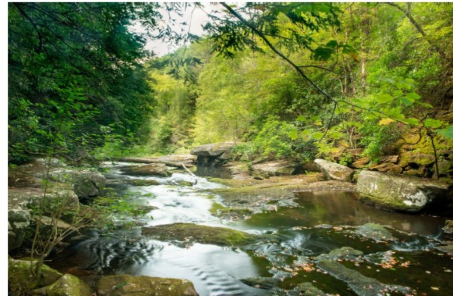
David Crockett State Park
35.2656 N, 87.3571° W

Music Row
36.1499° N, 86.7928° W

Radnor Lake State Park
36.0628° N, 86.8099° W

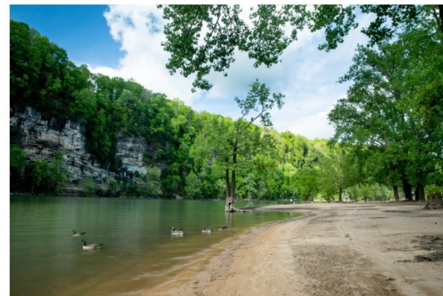
East Nashville
36.1738° N, 86.7600° W




South Cumberland State Park
Savage Gulf State Natural Area
35.4537° N, 85.5837° W

The Nations
36.1568° N, 86.8490° W




Rock Island State Park
35.8085° N, 85.6415° W

Green Hills
36.1066° N, 86.8141° W

48

Burgess Falls
36.0442° N, 85.5942° W

49

Melrose
36.1228° N, 86.7761° W

50

Edgar Evins State Park
36.0876° N, 885.8129° W

51

8th Avenue South
36.1290° N, 86.7776° W

Old Stone Fort Archaeological Park
35.4863° N, 86.1026° W

52

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