

# Florida Humanities Speakers Directory



Engaging Speakers



Compelling Topics



Thought-provoking  
Discussions



## Lu Vickers

*Author, Historian*

Lu Vickers has been awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for fiction for excerpts for a novel in progress. She has also been the recipient of two Florida Book awards and three Florida Individual Artist Fellowships for fiction. In addition to writing *Remembering Paradise Park* (with C. Graham), she has written the novel *Breathing Underwater* and three other Florida history books: *Weeki Wachee*, *City of Mermaids*, *Cypress Gardens*, *America's Tropical Wonderland*, and *Weeki Wachee, Thirty Years of Underwater Photography*, with Bonnie Georgiadis.

### Programs Available

#### **Cypress Gardens: America's Tropical Wonderland**

Vintage photographs illustrate the story of Cypress Gardens, the world-famous tourist attraction that Dick Pope created out of swampland in Winter Haven that cemented Florida's reputation as the land of sun and fun from the 1930s to 2009 when it was sold to Legoland. The flamboyant Pope, known as the "man who invented Florida," combined a water ski show, tropical Gardens, and iconic Southern Belles to create an enduring symbol of Florida.

#### **Remembering Paradise Park**

In 1949, during the Jim Crow era, Silver Springs' owners Carl Ray and Shorty Davidson did something unique: they created a place for African-Americans tourists. Located downriver, they dubbed their creation "Paradise Park for Colored People" and put Eddie Vereen in charge. From 1949 to 1969, the former Silver Springs boat captain ran one of the most popular places for African Americans to visit.

#### **Weeki Wachee: City of Mermaids**

The fascinating history of Weeki Wachee Springs told through vintage photographs of the mermaids from their earliest days performing silent ballets to the heyday when ABC built them a million-dollar theater. When Newt Perry sank a theater into the edge of the spring in 1947, he had no idea his mermaids would become world-famous Florida icons.

**Contact Information:**  
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#### **Program Format:**

- In-person
- Virtual

**Need to reach Florida Humanities?** For Grants, contact Lindsey Morrison at [lmorrison@flahum.org](mailto:lmorrison@flahum.org), for Florida Talks, contact Lisa Lennox at [lennox@flahum.org](mailto:lennox@flahum.org). For more information about the Florida Humanities Speakers Directory, visit <https://floridahumanities.org/speakers>.

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