

# ENVIRONMENT - CEDAR FALLS PARK

## Pre 1700 Cedar Falls Environment

- The Piedmont foothills of South Carolina was a frontier landscape. Ancient oak and hickory trees reached for the sun creating a rich canopy that shaded the forest floor.
- The forest was interspersed with 20-50 acre Piedmont Prairies (grasslands) and canebrakes (thick 12'-15' tall grass like bamboo) that filled the floodplains along sparkling streams and rivers.
- Native Americans used fire as a tool to maintain and expand these grasslands. Fire eliminated the growth of tree seedlings and encouraged the grasses and herbaceous plants to return with vigor. The fires did little long term damage to the mature forest trees.
- The combination of deep forest, canebrakes, and open grassland provided a habitat that supported herds of bison, elk, and whitetail deer. Wolves, panthers, black bears, foxes, squirrels, turkey, and rabbits also populated the area.
- The Native Americans regularly relocated their hunting camps throughout the Piedmont foothills, thereby keeping the hunting and gathering prosperous.

## Post 1800 Cedar Falls Environment

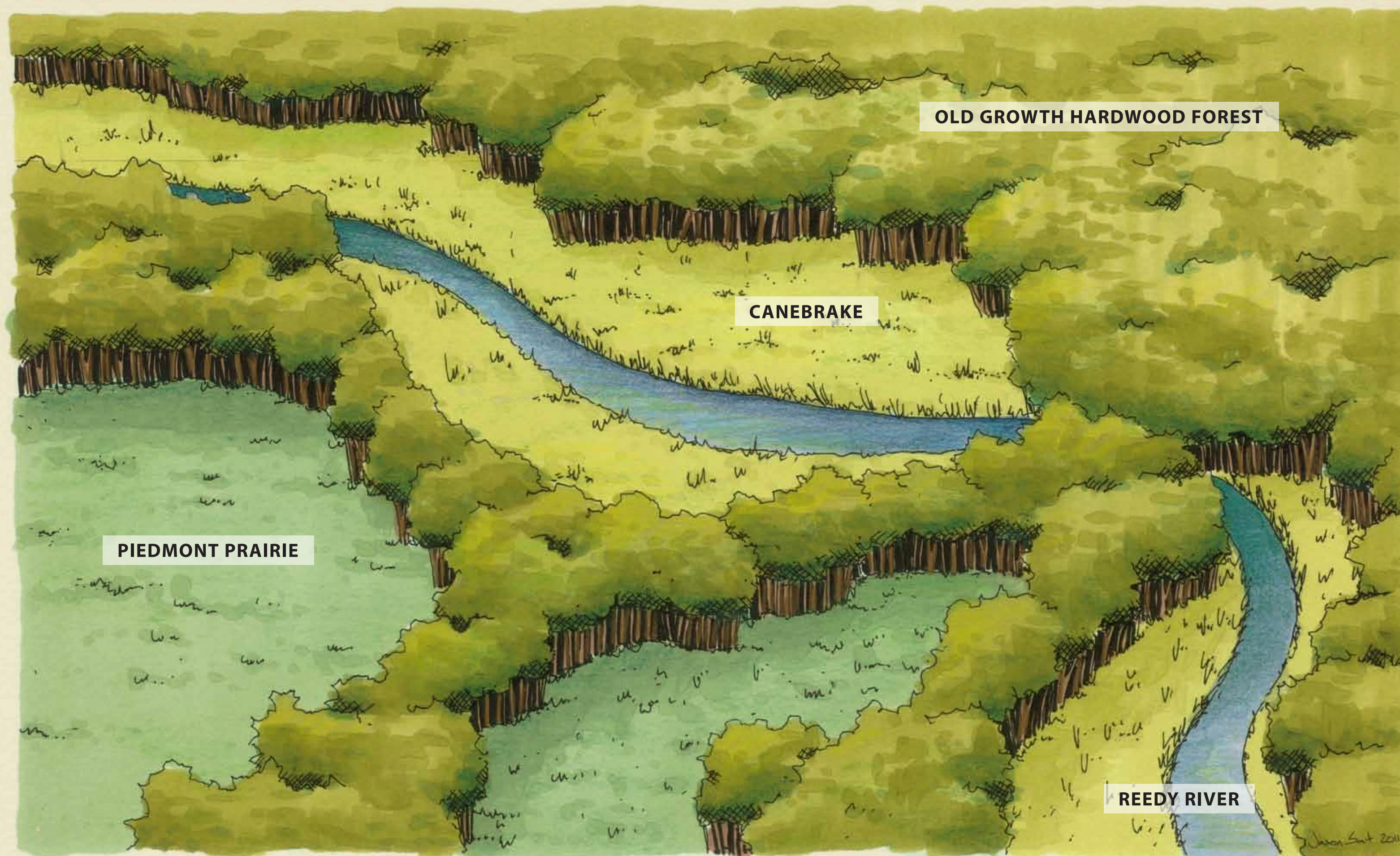
- European settlers moving into the area used fire to clear the land for farms and pastures. The "Old Growth" forest was harvested for building materials and firewood.
- The Piedmont Prairies were plowed for food crops. Herds of bison and elk plus black bears, wolves and panthers were hunted into extinction in the region.
- With the invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin and the coming of the Industrial Age, most of the land was used for crop production. From 1830-1860, cotton production grew from 720,000 to 5,000,000 bales in the southern USA. Any tillable land was now in crop production and little of the great forest and grasslands remained to support wildlife.

## Cedar Falls Environment Today

- By the 1930's the park land was out of crop production and had begun to reforest with pine, sweetgum and other fast growing trees. The transition from early pine forest to mature hardwood forest is currently well underway.
- Whitetail deer, turkey, squirrels, and river otters have returned to the banks of the Reedy River. Cowbirds and coyotes have migrated from the midwest states to the southeast.
- The mature oak and hickory tree forest, acres of canebrake, and grasslands are gone and will never return to their former greatness. Now indigenous plants compete with exotic plant species like Japanese privet are choking out the canebrakes. The future landscape will be more diverse and ever changing.

\*BEWARE OF POISON IVY

### Pre 1700 Cedar Falls Environment



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### Wildlife Commonly Seen at Cedar Falls



#### BIRDS

1. Carolina Wren
  2. Wood Duck
  3. Red-Shouldered Hawk
  4. Great Blue Heron
- Barred Owl  
Bluebird  
Brown-Headed Cowbird  
Northern Cardinal  
Blue Jay  
Great Horned Owl  
Mallard  
Northern Mockingbird  
Red-Headed Woodpecker  
Red-Tailed Hawk  
Turkey Vulture



#### AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

1. Copperhead Snake
  2. King Snake
  3. Yellow Belly Slider Turtle (Cooter)
  4. Snapping Turtle
- Black Snake  
Northern Water Snake



#### FISH

1. Flat Bullhead
  2. Largemouth Bass
  3. Bluehead Chub
  4. Channel Catfish
- Bluegill  
Mosquitofish  
Northern Hogsucker  
Redbreast Sunfish  
Spottail Shiner  
Yellowfin Shiner



#### MAMMALS

1. Beaver
  2. River Otter
  3. Wild Turkey
  4. White Tail Deer
- Bobcat  
Chipmunk  
Coyote  
Gray Squirrel  
Gray Fox  
Muskrat  
Opossum  
Rabbit  
Raccoon  
Red Fox  
Skunk