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Tacky Treasures: Vintage Florida Souvenirs, Exhibit Brochure

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1864
1928

A HISTORY OF THE FLORIDA SOUVENIR TRADE

The "Tacky Treasures" exhibit pays homage to a more innocent age of travel and consumerism in the Sunshine State.



Long before it blossomed into the multi-billion dollar enterprise that exists today, the Florida tourism industry catered to curious northern visitors who flocked to the state for its "healthful" climate and "exotic" destinations. Indeed, the first wave of visitors began to trickle into Florida settlements such as St. Augustine and Jacksonville as early as the 1830s and '40s, when a network of modern hotels and ship routes began to emerge.



However, the souvenir industry really blossomed during the era between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the



Depression, a period in which Florida emerged as America's most popular tourist destination.

Visitors who flocked to Florida in the latter part of the nineteenth century were often intrigued by locally-made crafts, postcards, and travel guidebooks.



By the turn of the century, tourists' tastes turned towards more refined and expensive mementos, such as fine china, carefully-crafted wooden canes, and sterling silver spoons. Throughout the middle of the twentieth century, Florida's tourism industry still featured numerous "mom and pop" souvenir stands that catered to vacationers driving across the state in search of surf, sun, and sightseeing.



While on the way to Florida's beaches, orange groves, and luxury resorts, the curious and the weary tourist was often lured into roadside stands full of alligator wallets, pink flamingo plates, sundry seashells, and many other keepsakes both cheap and expensive.



Today these "tacky treasures" are highly prized by collectors and historians alike, and the significance of Florida souvenirs as cultural icons has recently been memorialized in museum exhibits, in websites, and in scholarly books and articles (see the Bibliography for more information).



We hope this exhibit contributes to your understanding of this important part of Floridiana and encourages you to explore more of the Sunshine State and its ever-growing tourism industry for yourself.

—Tim Bottonff, Rosen Librarian

Bibliography

The following sources may be helpful for those wishing to learn more about the history of souvenirs and tourism in Florida:

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Rosen Library's Fun & Educational Exhibit

Features more than thirty vintage souvenirs on loan from the Orange County Regional History Center, including such "tacky treasures" as painted plates and cups, miniature vases, antique Florida handkerchiefs, and various other novelties.

For more information about the OCRHC, please call (407)-836-8500 or visit www.thehistorycenter.org



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Is pleased to present a Special Exhibit Featuring

Florida Vintage Souvenirs from the 1930's-70's

May-June 2004