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Summer Fun in the Florida Sun : A Collection of Floridiana [An Exhibit from June 2002 through Fall 2002]

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SUMMER FUN IN THE FLORIDA SUN

A COLLECTION OF FLORIDIANA

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Tourists who visited Florida during the early twentieth century enjoyed the natural beauty of a sparsely populated state. Exhibits at many attractions emphasized the Sunshine State's flora and fauna. Roadside attractions appeared along the major roadways of the time, including US 1, US 19, US 27, US 41, and US 441. By the early 1970s, the development of the federal interstate highway system and the opening of larger theme parks, such as Disney World, redefined patterns of travel and tourism.



Florida's love for baseball began long before the arrival of the Florida Marlins in 1993 and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays in 1998. Local promoters brought springtime professional baseball exhibitions to Florida during the early years of the twentieth century. After the "boys of summer" departed for distant diamonds in other states, minor league games at Al Lang Field and other venues attracted summertime crowds. Baseball fans can now enjoy America's pastime at nearby Tropicana Field.

Hurricanes and tropical storms threaten Florida during the summer and early fall. Since 1900, major storms have hit the Florida coastline and interior at the following times and locations:

Southeast Florida, Everglades and Miami	1906
Florida and other Gulf Coast states	1906
From the Keys through the peninsula	1910
Florida Keys	1919
Pinellas County through central Florida	1921
Miami and southeast Florida	1926
Southeast Florida, near Lake Okeechobee	1928
Florida Keys	1935
Miami through the peninsula to Jacksonville	1945
"Donna" along southwest Florida	1960
"Betsy" in south Florida and the upper Keys	1965
"Agnes" along the west coast and Panhandle	1972
"Andrew" in southeastern Florida	1992

Florida vacations became popular in the years following the Civil War. By the 1870s, travelers enjoyed boat rides along the St. Johns River and other navigable waterways. Between the mid-1880s and the 1920s, Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway and Henry Plant's Atlantic Coast Line Railroad brought many tourists to the opulent hotels that appeared along Florida's coastal shores. Similar to today's "snowbirds," many tourists "seasoned" in Florida during the months from December through March. With the mass production of the automobile after World War I, more visitors could afford to travel to Florida, and tourism became more of a year-round endeavor. Before the widespread availability of hotels, motels, and motor courts, many road warriors stopped at the popular "Tin Can Tourists Camps."

While air conditioning and modern architecture emphasize indoor activities, in earlier years many Floridians spent their summertime enjoying outside events, such as fishing, gardening, picnicking, or relaxing under a shady tree. Despite our growing urbanization and a population of nearly 16-million residents, Florida continues to possess an incredible diversity of municipal, county, state, and federal parklands.

Communities throughout Florida promote "sun and fun." These brochures and pamphlets represent a small sample of promotional literature from around our state.

These postcards of early St. Petersburg capture images from the early 1910s. (Postcards courtesy of Kathy Arsenault)

Leisure activities of yesteryear in Pinellas County included visits to the Million Dollar Pier, the St. Petersburg Kennel Club (Derby Lane), and afternoon "siestas" on the sparsely settled beaches. A resident of St. Petersburg took these pictures in 1933. (Photographs courtesy of Charlotte Barbour)

To capture their Florida experience, many tourists purchased souvenir dishes, trinkets, and other mementos. "Canned sunshine" also became a popular gift item that made its way from shelves in tourist stores to homes throughout America. Visitors bought empty metal cans with a label claiming that some Florida "sun" was packed inside. Beware: If you open the can, the sunlight fades away!

An extensive collection of travel literature describes life, travel, and leisure in Florida. An anonymous writer known as "Rambler" penned a small guide to waterway travel in 1875. By the early 1900s, many books appeared and many more tourists and settlers arrived. The real estate "boom" of the 1920s led to a publication bonanza for Florida books. Even during the lean years of the Great Depression, the Federal Writers' Project published its famous *Guide to Florida* in 1939.

Many Florida authors, including Marjory Stoneman Douglas, have written thought-provoking essays that capture Florida's natural history and pathways of human settlement, while instilling a love for the land.

Along with tourism, agriculture remains an important part of Florida's economy. While commercial agriculture continues to dominate in many central Florida counties, backyard gardeners can also benefit from a wide range of publications.

Many visitors to roadside attractions such as Silver Springs and Weeki Wachee Spring enjoyed summertime refreshments "to beat the heat."

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the popularity of "timeshares" allowed many visitors to become "one-week" owners of coastal condominiums. Timeshare condos offered comfortable accommodations, poolside entertainment, and restaurants with a tropical flare.

Please visit the display case on the third floor to see the rest of this exhibit.

Please visit the display cases on the first floor to see the rest of this exhibit.