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*Florida Folktales* edited by J. Russell Reaver

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section detailing the history of mound exploration by early explorers and scientists, from Thomas Jefferson to Smithsonian anthropologists.

Following this is a very good chapter on historic preservation. Much less care has been taken to safeguard these traces of the unwritten past than to preserve records of Euro-American history. Preservation laws (many listed here) now protect sites on public lands from vandalism, but disturbance of any archaeological materials is strongly discouraged.

The bulk of the book is a listing of forty-two mounds, their settings, accompanying public facilities, hours and dates open, reference materials and specific historical background. There are well drafted maps and verbal directions, including walking time, and other gems such as beautiful artifact photos and a quote from Thoreau. The sites are listed from Maine to Florida. It is curious that New Jersey, New York and other states with a wealth of mounds are neglected, but non-coastal West Virginia is included, as well as the Gulf Coast. Florida is especially well-represented, with many famous mounds noted in the Tampa Bay area. Preceding a good index are several bibliographies and even lists of museum exhibits and of maps and where to obtain them.

This book will be an excellent, though selective, guide for everyone from archaeologists and historians to interested travelers planning trips to include seeing some of the few remains of ancient America that we are finally beginning to conserve.

*Nancy Marie White*


The tapestry of Florida history is, like that of all histories, complex. Historians reweave this fabric from several threads, including written documents which specify and quantify, visual images which freeze an instant of time and oral histories which lend personal interpretation to the past. But others reweave in different fashion, and in this book J. Russell Reaver, Professor Emeritus of American Folklore and Literature at Florida State University, shows us how an accomplished folklorist goes about examining the texture of Florida culture.

Assuming that the folktales and legends of a people constitute a powerful expressive system through which they construct a social reality, Reaver has drawn from his personal archive (built on more than forty years of field collecting in Florida) more than ninety representative folktales. His choice is eclectic and his method scholarly. The tale bearers come from varied racial, cultural, occupational and regional backgrounds. Some are literate, while others are not, but all can spin off the lies and truths of popular lore in fine style: tales of slavery, Reconstruction, haunted Tallahassee houses, sunken treasure, marvelous disappearing lakes, gigantic mosquitoes, folk heroes like Bone Mizelle, animal tricksters like Rabbit, the divine origin of hushpuppies, a drift of ghosts and other wonders. Properly collected and recorded as told, these tales together demonstrate the richness of Florida’s folk traditions.
Reaver presents the selections in five chapters: “International Folktales,” subdivided into animal tales, ordinary tales, and jokes and anecdotes, following the standard form of the Aarne-Thompson index reference; “Legends”; “Tall Tales and Trickster Stories”; “Ghost Tales and Horror Stories”; “Urban Belief Tales.” The folkloric items thus range from traditional tales with widespread analogues on other continents and considerable antiquity to contemporary urban tales familiar to most readers. The author’s notes are extensive and give information about the informants, circumstances of the recording and comparisons of tale type and motifs. Indices summarizing tale types and motifs will be welcomed by those interested in comparative scholarship, and the bibliography will be useful to all who wish to do further reading.

This volume is a major contribution to our literature on Florida folklore and should stand on the shelf beside the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Alton Morris and Stetson Kennedy. The University Presses of Florida are to be congratulated on making Reaver’s valuable materials available to both public and academic audiences.

Patricia H. Waterman


Two texts, narrative and photographic, produce this cultural history of Victorian Florida, showing how the state was seen by wealthy and middle class white tourists during the second half of the nineteenth century. To these innocents, Florida was an idyllic winter playground, where one might find adventure, relaxation and good health. Travelling first by steamer and later in trains, aptly known as “travelling hotels,” the Florida-bound tourists entered the state in luxury. In resorts they enjoyed bicycling, gambling and golf. In the wilderness, men donned impractical but proper camping dress, such as “white flannel trousers, white rowing jersey, and a straw hat” (p. 75). Unless men were rowing, peajackets were appropriate wear. Female vacationers sported simpler versions of their uncomfortable (and hot) everyday clothes, wearing high collars and long sleeves, long skirts, corsets, bustles and elaborate hats – even when they were fishing, hunting or riding in rowboats and hoping for “no ill luck” (p. 143). According to Palm Beach gossip, one woman created controversy when she “disported herself in a man’s bathing attire to the amazement of onlookers” (p. 168). That is, she appeared in tight above-the-knee shorts and a tank top.

The incongruity between these tourists and the natural Florida landscape is startling. With stubborn specificity, photographs by artists, amateurs and commercial photographers reveal details of the natural beaches, lakes and rivers – settings which today are polluted and/or dwarfed by civilization. Prominent landscape photographers, most notably Charles Bierstadt, recorded the impressionist effects of the rivers and the swampland. But most of the illustrations of rivers, peaceful beaches and isolated private resorts which dazzle the reader are the work of lesser known commercial photographers, many of them from Florida and published here for the first time. At the end of the book are biographies of the photographers, picture credits, a selected bibliography and an extensive index.