

## ABSTRACT

**Title of Thesis:** PRESERVATION STRATEGIES FOR HISTORIC  
COMMERCIAL ROADSIDE TOURIST  
ATTRACTIONS IN FLORIDA

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This thesis examines the historical significance of, and preservation strategies for, Florida's commercial roadside tourist attractions. From 1929 to 1971, Florida's commercial roadside tourist attractions flourished. Silver Springs, Cypress Gardens, Marineland, and McKee Jungle Gardens were among Florida attractions that became nationally known tourist destinations.

This thesis focuses on a significant period in Florida's tourist industry that begins with the dedication of Edward Bok's Singing Tower at Lake Wales in 1929 during the infancy of the automobile age and concludes with the opening of Disney World near Orlando in 1971. Corporate theme parks, such as Disney's Magic Kingdom, and

changing travel habits of tourists resulted in the rapid attrition of Florida's significant historic tourism sites.

This study is organized into five parts. Chapter One defines Florida's commercial tourist attractions and explains why they are important historic resources. This chapter describes the evolution of the Florida attractions industry and examines the various issues that have shaped its growth and ultimate decline.

Chapter Two examines Florida's transportation systems in relation to the development of roadside attractions, with a particular focus on the development of Florida roads and the impact of the interstate highway system and Florida Turnpike.

Chapter Three consists of a survey of 120 major Florida commercial tourist attractions founded from 1929 to 1971, classifying them by major categories: Garden, Aquatic, Zoological, Novelty, and Historic.

Chapter Four reviews historic preservation activities in Florida, methods available to preserve historic attractions, and reviews the events leading to the preservation of a representative site: McKee Jungle Gardens in Vero Beach.

Chapter Five provides a summary of findings and offers conclusions.

Sources of this study include a variety of books, magazines, newspapers, Florida tourist attraction promotional literature, State of Florida records, archival collections, and interviews.