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Book Review: Dixie Before Disney

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Abstract

Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun by Tim Hollis (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), ISBN 1-57806-117-2, 206 pages, including acknowledgements, tables, index, \$25 paperback.

Keywords

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Book Review: *Dixie Before Disney*

by Joan S. Remington

Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun by Tim Hollis (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), ISBN 1-57806-117-2, 206 pages, including acknowledgements, tables, index, \$25 paperback.

Who said learning can't be interesting, informative and fun? *Dixie Before Disney* meets all three criteria. Its conversational tone makes it easy to relate to and easy to read. For anyone fortunate enough to have taken a family road trip through the South, the stories and remembrances really hit home. This is not an academic tome, but it wasn't meant to be.

Dixie Before Disney provides the reader a basis for intellectual discussions on the merits of attractions found throughout the South, some of which are still around today. Each state has its own unique features, as well as

many similarities with other states in the region. While the springs of Florida and the mountains of Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina are unique to their destinations, all of them had fantasy-land attractions that specifically appealed to children. Tim Hollis concentrated on attractions that "best exemplify the major genres of Southern attractions" and he makes it clear that not all attractions are included in his book.

The text is liberally sprinkled with old photos, maps, travel posters, and postcard messages with folksy, familiar dialogue. Imagine a family member writing home about his or her traveling adventures. Hollis shares these well-researched memories from pre-modern highway developments, through the coming of the railroads, and finally to the interstate highways of today and their effect on the development and disbanding of tourism attractions.

"I Wish I Was in Dixie" takes

us through the development of the federal highway system from the early twentieth century and tourist stops through the interstate highways of the mid-'50s and '60s. This chapter discusses Lady Bird Johnson's Highway Beautification program with elimination of billboards as a priority, the first state welcome stations opening in Florida in 1949 handing out orange juice and a brochure, followed by Georgia's 1961 Peanuts and Coke promotion and the coming of Disney.

"Stuckey's, Ten Miles" tells of a time before corporate America discovered the value of tourism expansion and focuses on the mom and pop operations of the Old South. Candy and gift shops, restaurants, motels, Sanders' Court and Café (the forerunner of Kentucky Fried Chicken), the development of Holiday Inns in Memphis (children stay free), and Dick Huddleston's store of Lum and Abner fame are all covered.

Hollis takes us through a colorful journey on the development of beaches, mountains, caverns, formal gardens, Florida's springs, fantasy lands appealing to children, historical battlefields, the unique, the bizarre, the hokey, the tacky, and attractions that are simply a hoot. He tells of unique advertising campaigns, conceptual developments and some great business ideas that are a history lesson for anyone considering destination and attraction development. The approach is as thematic, interesting, and educational as

those PBS specials on old Route 66 taking travelers across the country on their East-West journey.

Any nostalgia buff would find pleasure in *Dixie Before Disney*. Beyond the sheer pleasure of the book, it can be a valuable tool in the classroom as a reference for Tour Packaging, Tourism Marketing, Hospitality Promotional Strategies, Cultural/Heritage Tourism, or Sociology of Leisure courses. This history of tourism in the South offers a variety of applications in a number of venues with the possibility of making the classroom journey a fun and joyful learning experience. *Dixie Before Disney* is certainly worth reviewing for incorporation in class activities and exposing today's Gen Y's to a colorful past that can be applied to destination development in the future.

References

¹ Hollis, p. xiii.

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