



The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant (Florida History and Culture)

Susan R. Braden

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"A major contribution to Florida and American architectural history. . . . Braden's exhaustive research and excellent writing have brought the story of Flagler and Plant's hotel empires to vivid life."--Donald Curl, Florida Atlantic University

"Through an impressive blending of images, architectural analysis, and cultural perspective, Braden uncovers the multi-layered meaning of the Florida resort hotel."--Carroll Van West, Center for Historic Preservation

As the rail barons who transformed Florida pushed their lines southward, they also created a string of resort hotels to attract wealthy northerners with an appetite for balmy climates and luxurious accommodations. Susan Braden tells the story of the magnificent pleasure palaces created by Plant and Flagler and the impact of their conspicuous scale and opulence on the Florida wilderness.

Braden traces the enterprises that brought Plant and Flagler to Florida and then examines each of their hotels, describing the architecture, how they physically functioned, and what they offered their guests in the way of recreation and leisure. From the Spanish Renaissance of St. Augustine's Ponce de Leon, to Georgian Revival in Palm Beach's Royal Poinciana, to the Islamic Revival of the Tampa Bay Hotel and the Alpine ambience of the nearby Belleview, her individual profiles of each hotel show how the builders mixed recognizable style with physical and functional independence, and then capped both with an aura of blatant luxury on a scale previously unknown in Florida. The hotels' creators, by catering to the newly realized needs and demands of their affluent patrons, brought civilization to the frontier and established the legacy of tropical fantasy and escape that endures in Florida to this day.

Braden's research draws upon architectural plans and archival resources, as well as memoirs and accounts written by Gilded Age visitors and employees, to re-create the experience of Florida's winter resorts. Floor plans and abundant illustrations--many never before published--make this book a richly visual documentation that will appeal to architectural historians, preservationists, and general readers curious about Florida's pioneering tradition of exotic escape and the resplendent structures in which it was born.

Susan R. Braden is assistant professor of art history at Auburn University.

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