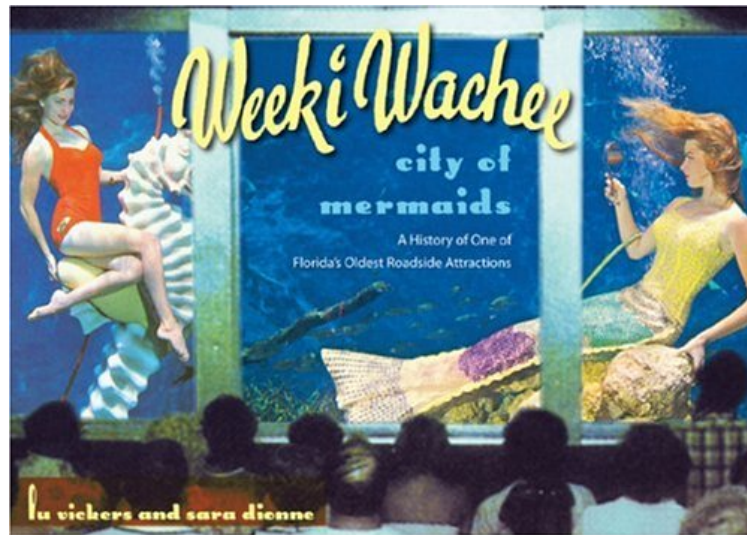


[Library ebook] Weeki Wachee, City of Mermaids: A History of One of Florida's Oldest Roadside Attractions (Florida History and Culture)

## Weeki Wachee, City of Mermaids: A History of One of Florida's Oldest Roadside Attractions (Florida History and Culture)

*Lu Vickers*

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**Lu Vickers : Weeki Wachee, City of Mermaids: A History of One of Florida's Oldest Roadside Attractions (Florida History and Culture)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Weeki Wachee, City of Mermaids: A History of One of Florida's Oldest Roadside Attractions (Florida History and Culture):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Serious kitschBy Julie NealMermaids in space suits. Mermaids on a swing set. Mermaids eating a 5-foot hot dog. If you like kooky photographs of bathing beauties then this is absolutely a book for you. It features hundreds of them, each one remarkably clear and full of detail.But, frankly, they're not the point. As its University Press of Florida pedigree suggests, "Weeki Wachee: City of Mermaids" recounts the serious -- yet never dry -- history of one of America's most funky roadside attractions. Marvelously researched with tons of personal interviews, it tells the sometimes inspiring, often fascinating and always slightly strange tale of how what started as a local novelty grew to be internationally famous, surviving everything from a visit from Elvis Presley to, after one performer nearly drowned, a mermaid strike.Even better, the book doesn't limit itself just to Weeki Wachee. There's a whole chapter on Wakulla Springs, the Tallahassee-area attraction with a similar homespun past. The author explains how Wakulla storytellers used tales such as that of Henry, the pole-vaulting catfish, to offer "a better brand of natural history than that found in far more sophisticated circles." (I can vouch for Henry. I've seen him jump that pole many times!)Produced in the same wide-rectangle proportions as a giant postcard, the book is smartly designed and well printed. It's one you'll love to have in your library.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Terrific historical study of a fun place to visit!By HighTech TeacherA highly detailed account that is part of a published series from the Florida University System. It has terrific detail and the writing style is enjoyable. Chock full of photos! Gives a perspective on the park that tells the positive and negative impacts on Florida of these attractions. I liked that it also gives a perspective on development of other water attractions in Florida and the people. I never knew that Ricou

Browning, who played the underwater role in "The Creature from the Black Lagoon," had so many other accomplishments and played a large role in the Florida springs attractions. I really enjoyed this book and I believe it is a real bargain for the price. Recently, I visited the park and if you get to Florida I can recommend Weeki Wachee Springs for a great fun-filled day! 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Lovingly Written Tribute to a Unique Florida Icon. By Marina, the Fire Eating Mermaid! Lu Vickers has captured the history and essence of a very special Florida attraction in this book. This book offers a glimpse into a fascinating place during a very interesting time in Florida's tourist history, where the unusual was the draw. It has obviously been written with great care and attention to detail, and is a beautiful homage to the legacy of Newt Perry's vision creation. We are very lucky to still have this historical and unique attraction~ perhaps this book will help to further encourage locals and tourists alike to take a trip and visit this special Florida icon. Doing so will help to make the experience of watching such graceful and talented performers available for future generations. ~Marina~MeduSirena~

In the postwar explosion of domestic tourism, Weeki Wachee spring offered the quintessential vacation fantasy, a city of colorful mermaids in a natural crystal spring right off the West Coast highway in a sparsely inhabited Florida. In those early days, the mermaids had to stand alongside the highway to flag travelers down, but once word of their charms got out, travelers headed south to playgrounds in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, and Tampa found Weeki Wachee a tantalizing detour from the grueling two-lane road connecting vacationland with the work-a-day world to the north. Vickers shows how that local novelty became a stellar international attraction. Founded in 1947 by Walton Hall Smith and Newt Perry, Weeki Wachee and its featured attraction, mermaids, combined the allure of pinup girls with the wholesome talents of variety entertainers to create a daily schedule of underwater acts ranging from eating bananas and performing ballet to staging underwater musicals. For nearly 60 years, these mermaids with their underwater talents have attracted crowds of vacationers, film crews, and celebrities. Drawing on extensive archival research as well as interviews with dozens of mermaids and other park employees, Vickers traces the park's rise to prominence. Brilliantly illustrated with 250 stunning photos, the resulting work shows what it was like to be a mermaid at Weeki Wachee in its heyday.

From Publishers Weekly When swimsuit-clad young women cavorted in the freshwater springs of Weeki Wachee, Fla., in October 1947, it seemed so fantastic, many visitors couldn't believe the performers were actually underwater. In this era before scuba, people were expected to drown if they stayed under for more than a few minutes. They certainly didn't dance ballet or eat bananas and drink soda pop underwater, like the Weeki Wachee mermaids did. For the next three decades, an ever-renewing roster of mermaids entertained growing crowds of roadside travelers and celebrity guests (Elvis himself hugged and kissed those mermaids). If Disney hadn't opened Magic Kingdom, and overdevelopment hadn't threatened the aquifer, Weeki Wachee might still be going strong today. But thanks to writer Vickers and designer Dionne, readers have backstage access to this classic American roadside attraction. From Vickers's interviews with retired "mermaids" and other employees, and Dionne's illustrative materials (over 200 publicity photos, advertising cards and other ephemera), readers get a feeling for the homegrown quality of this whole wonderfully quirky enterprise. While detail on their technological innovations and business decision making is interesting, what lingers with readers is a sense of how simply Americans amused themselves on the road, before all the franchises and theme parks took over. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Lu Vickers has written a truly delicious, sparkling history of Florida's own mermaid city of Weeki Wachee, one of the greatest oldtime roadside attractions. Her prose is bright, sharp and funny; combined with the illustrations brilliantly compiled by Sara Dionne, it makes for a wonderful, vivacious, superbly researched but never dry saga of the regular girls who transformed themselves into swimming goddesses and the tiny hamlet which got so famous even Elvis came to pay court." - Diane Roberts, National Public Radio correspondent and author of Dream State" About the Author Lu Vickers is a former Kingsbury Fellow from Florida State University and a two-time recipient of the Florida Individual Artist Grant for fiction, as well as a recipient of the 2002 Astraea Award for fiction. Her first novel, Breathing Underwater, is due out in 2007.