



TAMPA BAY
HISTORY
CENTER ONLINE EXHIBIT

Florida Front and Center: Objects That Define Florida

Sponsored by Nancy and Bob Bolt

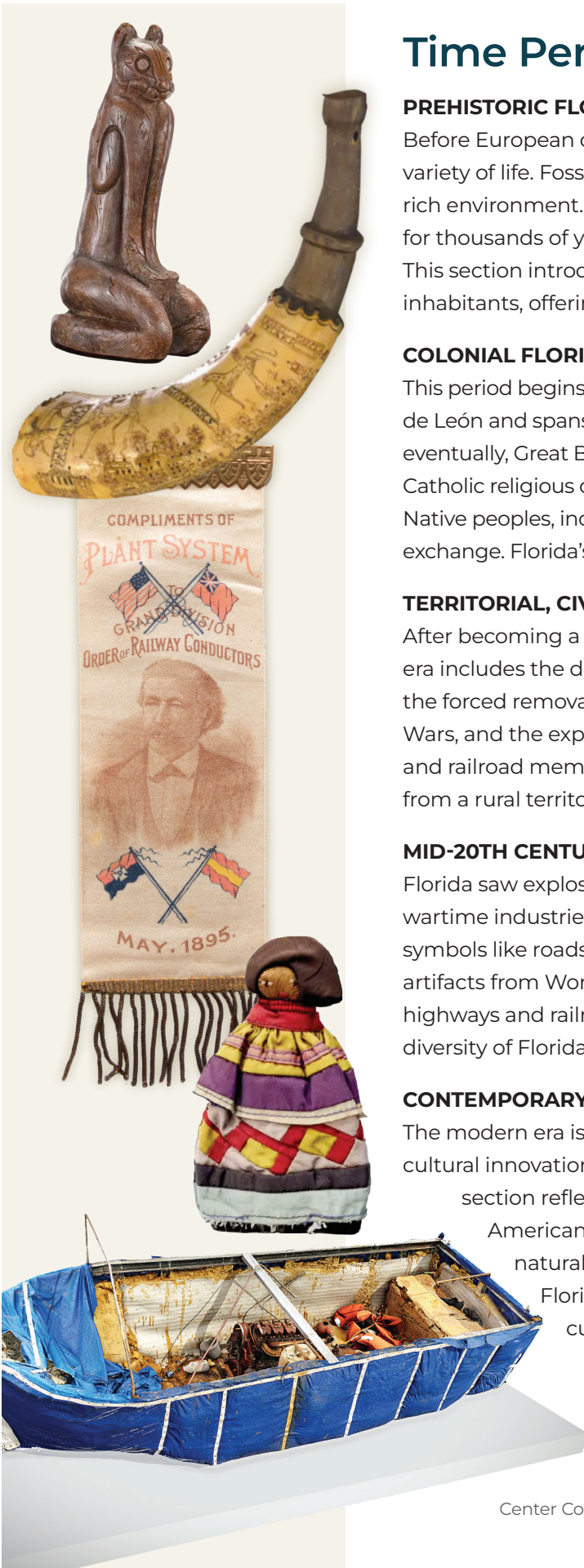


The Tampa Bay History Center's Florida Front and Center: Objects That Define Florida is a dynamic digital exhibit created for students and educators to explore the state's rich and diverse past. Featuring a curated collection of over 60 meaningful artifacts, the exhibit offers a compelling lens through which to examine Florida's history.

Organized into **five broad historical periods**, the exhibit spans millions of years, from the prehistoric creatures that once roamed the peninsula to the modern-day cultural icons that continue to shape Florida's identity. **High-quality images, immersive 3D scans, and insightful**

videos bring each era's artifacts to life. This artifact-based approach encourages close observation, critical thinking, and thoughtful classroom discussion, making it an ideal complement to **primary source-driven instruction**.

This collection of resources further supports visual literacy, material culture analysis, and historical inquiry—essential components of **effective social studies education**. Whether used to introduce a new unit or to deepen existing lessons, **Florida Front and Center** provides an accessible and engaging way for students to connect with the past through objects that matter.



Time Periods Covered in the Exhibit:

PREHISTORIC FLORIDA (35 MILLION YEARS AGO – 1511)

Before European contact, Florida was home to an extraordinary variety of life. Fossilized remains of prehistoric animal bones reveal a rich environment. Early Native American cultures also thrived here for thousands of years, crafting tools, pottery, and ceremonial items. This section introduces Florida's geological history and its first human inhabitants, offering students a look at the foundations of life in the region.

COLONIAL FLORIDA (1511 – 1821)

This period begins with the arrival of Spanish explorers like Juan Ponce de León and spans over 300 years of colonial rule by Spain, France, and, eventually, Great Britain. Artifacts such as coins, weapons, maps, and Catholic religious objects illustrate European ambitions and interactions with Native peoples, including moments of resistance, adaptation, and cultural exchange. Florida's role as a contested frontier is central to this era.

TERRITORIAL, CIVIL WAR, AND EARLY INDUSTRIAL FLORIDA (1821 – 1912)

After becoming a U.S. territory in 1821, Florida underwent rapid change. This era includes the development of agriculture (particularly citrus and cattle), the forced removal of Native American communities during the Seminole Wars, and the expansion of transportation networks. Items like cattle whips and railroad memorabilia help students understand Florida's transition from a rural territory to a developing state.

MID-20TH CENTURY BOOM (1912 – 1971)

Florida saw explosive growth during the 20th century, thanks to tourism, wartime industries, and mass migration. This section features iconic symbols like roadside attractions, early theme parks souvenirs, and military artifacts from World War II. It covers the construction of infrastructure like highways and railroads, the rise of resorts and real estate, and the growing diversity of Florida's population.

CONTEMPORARY FLORIDA (1971 – TODAY)

The modern era is defined by environmental awareness, political change, cultural innovation, and continued population growth. Artifacts in this section reflect the development of Walt Disney World, Cuban-American cultural contributions, and the challenges of managing natural resources and urban sprawl. Students will see how Florida has emerged as a national influencer in politics, culture, and environmental stewardship.

TOP TO BOTTOM: *Marco Cat*, 500 and 1500 years ago, courtesy of Smithsonian Institution; *British Hand Carved Powder Horn*, circa 1775, courtesy of J. Thomas and Lavinia Witt Touchton; Order of the Railway Conductor's Commemorative Ribbon, 1895, Tampa Bay History Center Collection; *Seminole Doll*, circa 1940, Tampa History Center Collection; *Cuban Chug Boat*, 2021, Tampa Bay History Center Collection

Alignment with Florida Department of Education Standards

USE IN THE CLASSROOM:

Each time period includes a thematic focus that aligns with state standards for history and social studies. Teachers are encouraged to use these time frames as a framework for curriculum planning, research projects, or artifact analysis assignments.

To support deeper engagement, age-appropriate Artifact Analysis guides—designed for Elementary, Middle, or High School students—are available to accompany learners as they explore the digital exhibit.

The *Florida Front and Center* digital exhibit aligns with multiple strands of the Florida Department of Education's Next Generation [Sunshine State Standards for K-12 Social Studies](#) instruction, including the following strands:

GRADES K-5

(ELEMENTARY SCHOOL)

- American History (SS.K-5.A)
 - Geography (SS.K-5.G)
 - Economics (SS.K-5.E)
 - Civics and Government (SS.K-5.CG)
 - African American History (SS.K-5.AA)
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GRADES 6-8

(MIDDLE SCHOOL)

- World History (SS.6.W)
 - American History (SS.8.A)
 - Geography (SS.6-8.G)
 - Economics (SS.6-8.E)
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GRADES 9-12

(HIGH SCHOOL)

- American History (SS.912.A)
- World History (SS.912.W)
- Geography (SS.912.G)
- Economics (SS.912.E)
- African American History (SS.912.AA)

For questions or further inquiries, please contact education@tampabayhistorycenter.org