Buttons, Badges and Bumper Stickers –
160 Years of Presidential Campaigns

An Exhibit from the Collection of John Owen Clark
November 3, 2008 to December 15, 2008
Smathers Library Exhibit Gallery – Second Floor

George A. Smathers Libraries
About the Collector

John Clark, 59, is a seventh generation Floridian who has had a deep and abiding love of politics and history for more than 40 years. His first venture into collecting was to buy both a Nixon and a Kennedy button at the North Florida Fair in Tallahassee in October, 1960. From there Clark developed a casual interest in politics which grew into a job managing several political campaigns and eventually into being the district assistant to Florida Congressman Don Fuqua, who represented Tallahassee and Gainesville. Along the way, Clark’s love for history and its preservation evolved into amassing a collection of political memorabilia specializing in Florida politics as well as presidential elections. The collection spans the mid 1850’s through the election of 2008, and includes buttons, badges, banners, posters, bumper strips, brochures, political torches and assorted 3-D items and ephemera. The collection has been exhibited extensively both nationally and in numerous forums in Florida. It has been featured in Florida Trend and as a cover story in Tallahassee Magazine as well as several newspaper articles. Clark has degrees in Political Science and Law from FSU, but is also an active Gator Booster with a son at UF and is a founding member of the UF Library’s Stewards of Florida History. He lives in Tallahassee and is a Vice President of a major New York Stock Exchange firm.

In Grateful Acknowledgment—

The Library appreciates the assistance provided by the following organizations and individuals in the preparation of the exhibit, the exhibit guide and opening events:

University of Florida Department of Political Science (Reception)
Stewards of Florida History (Underwriting of Exhibit)
Library Faculty Author Series, sponsored by the PR and Marketing Committee (Underwriting)
Goerings Book Store (Book Signing)
The Jim Liversidge Collection, UF Libraries (Cover images of Richard M. Nixon and Newsweek; Cartoon “Why bother to gripe?”; Re-Elect the President bumper sticker; and Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon scrapbook material for exhibit cases)
Matt Nelson (Web Editor, Florida Trend) (Interview with John Clark on DVD)
Barbara Hood (Library Administration), Bill Hanssen (Library Facilities and Planning), Mil Willis (Special & Area Studies Collections) and Gail Crawford (Library Development) (Production of Poster Art, Exhibit Program, and Promotional Materials, Reception and Exhibit Gallery Set Up)
University of Florida Political Campaigning Program, its interim head Dr. Daniel Smith and graduate students in the program: Christine Bainer, Marc Berkovits, Sagar Sane and Amanda Hamilton Seng (Exhibit Guide Content)
John Owen Clark (Selection and Loan of Exhibit Materials)
Introduction to the Exhibit

*Buttons, Badges and Bumper Stickers* illustrates some key components of presidential election campaigns as they have affected Florida, the nation, and the candidates themselves. Drawn from the private collection of John Clark, the items on display introduce viewers to the world of campaign memorabilia, from the early ribbons, badges and watch fobs worn to state and national conventions to recent novelty pins. Featured items include ribbons from the campaigns of Andrew Jackson (1828) and Abraham Lincoln (1860) and an example of a torch carried in turn-of-the-century torch light parades. While the exhibit contains many campaign standards and oddities from candidates who won through to the White House, it also reminds us of the forgotten or unsuccessful bids by Al Smith (first Catholic candidate), James Cox (later founder of Cox Communications), and Barry Goldwater. The exhibit showcases pins and badges associated with campaign firsts, the evolution of bumper stickers as vehicles for espousing a political cause or candidate, and the rise of negative campaigning. The role of Florida in national politics—exemplified in the stormy and controversial voting returns of the 1876 and 2000 presidential elections—is also prominent. Don’t miss seeing an example of the much-maligned Palm Beach County voting booth, a Votomatic III from Precinct 47C, complete with sample butterfly ballot and loose chads!

This ribbon (left) showing a young and clean-shaven Abraham Lincoln was the type worn by supporters in his 1860 campaign.

(Below) A more familiar image of our sixteenth president on a pin for his re-election in 1864.

(Above right) Incumbent President William Howard Taft is depicted on a Florida delegate’s ribbon to the Republican National Convention of 1912 in Chicago. Taft eventually lost the election to Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson. Theodore Roosevelt ran in the same election as a Progressive on the Bull Moose ticket.
Political Badges and Voting—What the Law Allows

Thinking about wearing that Obama t-shirt or that McCain lapel pin to the polls on Election Day 2008? If you plan to vote in the state of Florida, consider yourself lucky. Florida is one of only a handful of states that allows voters to wear political insignia (t-shirts, hats, buttons, etc.) to the polls.

Though it might seem odd that wearing an Obama t-shirt or McCain pin this year would be prohibited, it is important to remember that on Election Day poll workers across the country are instructed to rigorously enforce anti-solicitation laws. Florida law provides for the punishment of any individual who “distributes or attempts to distribute any political or campaign material” or who “solicits or attempts to solicit any vote” within 100 feet of a polling site. But in Florida, wearing campaign items to polls is permissible. In 1982 Attorney General James C. Smith issued an advisory opinion stating that “wearing a campaign button is clearly not a distribution of ‘any political pamphlets, cards or literature.’” As long as your campaign item merely expresses your personal preferences, it is protected under the law.

Other states interpret their anti-solicitation laws differently. Minnesota, like Florida, bans solicitation within 100 feet of a polling place. Inside that zone, however, Minnesota law states “a political badge, political button or political insignia may not be worn at or about the polling place on primary or election day.” Connecticut state law similarly bans solicitation “on behalf or in opposition” to any candidate or question within 75 feet of a polling site. In most states with bans on insignia, voters are asked to cover up their campaign attire with a windbreaker or a sweater. Interestingly, Nevada statutes provide for assistance in this regard, but also provide for explicit protection of the right to vote of those individuals who are caught wearing promotional material. If a voter’s insignia cannot be covered properly, the local poll worker is obligated to “allow the voter to vote as expeditiously as possible” and then to “assist the voter in exiting the polling place as soon as is possible.”

—Sagar Sane (MA/Political Campaigning Program, University of Florida)

1. S. 104.36, Florida Statutes (1981)
2. AGO 076-74, also referencing S.104.36
3. Minnesota Statutes, 211B.11
4. Connecticut Statutes, 9-236(a)
5. NRS 293.740, section 2
The Evolution of the Bumper Sticker

Today automobile bumper stickers are ubiquitous but they originally came along as metal license plates as shown in the example (above) of a plate from the 1930s endorsing Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although metal plates are still issued as novelty items (as they were in the 1992 race between George Bush, Sr., Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot), by the 1950s they were giving way to cardboard versions that could also be mounted in a license plate frame. The “New York for Ike” plate shown above is an example. In a short time, these also fell away in favor of the adhesive paper bumper strip. Shown below: a sticker for Lyndon B. Johnson, employing the slogan “LBJ for the USA” that also appeared on campaign buttons; a popular 1972 sticker for Richard M. Nixon that simply said “Re-elect the President”; and a sticker for third party Reform candidate Ross Perot from his campaign bid of 1992.
The Rebus or Puzzle Button

Campaign buttons without a name, or perhaps with a partial name, are known as rebus buttons. In place of text, they use a symbol or caricature to convey the message. Rebus buttons have been around for more than 100 years. Some famous examples include a large set of grinning teeth, used first for Teddy Roosevelt and later for Jimmy Carter. Roosevelt also used an image of a rose and the ending *velt* to indicate how he preferred to have his name pronounced (as opposed to some who pronounced the name with *roos* instead of *rose*.) Other items bore the image of a teddy bear, again closely associated with the candidate.

Wendell Willkie in 1940 had many buttons with the word *will* followed by a key in the design to indicate his name. Gerald Ford had several varieties of buttons that featured a Ford Model-T automobile on them, but no name. In a clever play on words during his first speech to the nation as president, he reminded us that he was a “Ford, and not a Lincoln.”

Jimmy Carter made extensive use of peanuts as a motif for his candidacy while Barry Goldwater was perhaps the most prolific, with numerous items featuring the symbols for *gold* (Au) and *water* (H2O). He also made use of his trademark black horn-rimmed glasses, sometimes pictured on the brow of an elephant, symbol of the Republican Party.

—John Owen Clark

Examples of Puzzle Buttons

Among the rarest and most popular campaign buttons are those that use symbols to identify a candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Au H2O 1964</td>
<td>Barry Gold (Au) Water (H2O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiling Teeth</td>
<td>Theodore Rose-Velt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose-Velt</td>
<td>Jimmy Carter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>George Wall-Ace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barry Gold (Au) Water (H2O)
Theodore Rose-Velt
Jimmy Carter
George Wall-Ace
Mud-Slinging—A Glimpse from History

Despite the focus on it today, negative campaigning is not a recent phenomenon. Surprisingly, the history of negative campaigning in America spans all the way back to our founding fathers. Although we may think of men like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams as high-minded and above the fray, they actually conducted some of the nastiest negative campaigning our country has ever seen.

The first real campaigns waged between two different parties occurred in the election of 1800. Thomas Jefferson, heading up the Democratic-Republicans, attempted to defeat incumbent President John Adams, the head of the Federalist Party. Throughout the campaign, the Democratic-Republicans made claims that Adams had acted more like a king than a president, and that he even planned to have one of his sons marry a daughter of King George III. This false accusation dealt quite a low blow to Adams, especially considering his role in the American Revolution. But Adams and the Federalists fought back by circulating a handbill stating, “Thomas Jefferson is a mean-spirited, low-lived fellow, the son of a half-breed Indian squaw, sired by a Virginia mulatto father.”

—Amanda Hamilton Seng (MA/Political Campaigning Program, University of Florida)

The Tilden-Hayes Election Controversy

A Democrat handily wins the national popular vote, but the Electoral College tally hangs in the balance, with the vote in Florida in dispute. In the end, the Republican candidate is pronounced the winner. Think it’s the Bush-Gore Florida controversy of 2000? Think again. It’s actually the election of 1876.

In 1876, neither Democrat Samuel J. Tilden nor Republican Rutherford B. Hayes received a majority in the Electoral College. Tilden won the popular vote, and held 184 electoral votes to Hayes’s 165, with 20 votes yet to be allocated. Of those, eight belonged to Louisiana, seven were from South Carolina, four were from Florida, and the qualifications of one Oregon elector were called into question. Both campaigns claimed victory.

To resolve the dispute, Congress created a special Electoral Commission. The commission consisted of 15 members—five members of the US House of Representatives, five members of the US Senate, and five members of the US Supreme Court. Eight were Republicans and seven were Democrats. The job of the commission was to sort out the conflicting election tallies for the states that were in dispute. The Electoral Commission’s 8-7 party-line vote awarded all 20 Electoral College votes to Hayes, besting the Democratic nominee Tilden by a margin of 185-184. Several days later, Hayes was sworn in as the 19th President of the United States.

A major factor that influenced the commission’s 8-7 decision in favor of Hayes was the Compromise of 1877, an informal agreement struck between Hayes and Southern Democrats. In exchange for a Republican victory, Democrats demanded the withdrawal of Federal troops from Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida, effectively ending the era of post-Civil War Reconstruction in the South. This deal exacerbated public concerns that the election was fraudulent.

—Marc Berkovits
(MA/Political Campaigning Program, University of Florida)

(Near right) Title page from the Congressional Record concerning charges of vote fraud in the 1876 election. (Above and far right) A pin for Samuel J. Tilden and a ribbon for Rutherford B. Hayes.
**Attack Campaigns—Do They Work?**

The 2008 Obama-McCain presidential contest has seen an abundance of attacks and counterattacks in political advertising. But are attacks on an opponent effective?

One group of scholars has found that exposure to negative ads can lower voter turn out by demobilizing up to 5% of likely voters. “Voters who watch negative advertisements,” they argue, “become more cynical about the responsiveness of public officials and the electoral process.”¹

Other scholars dispute this conclusion, pointing out that voters who are most attentive to the media (and thus more likely to be exposed to negative advertising) have the lowest incidence of demobilization. While they agree that political ads have become more negative since 1960 and that voter turnout may have declined in the same time period, they dispute any causal link between the two.²

Negative ads also raise questions “concerning the trade-off between the right to political expression and the right to vote.”³ Should there be limits on negative campaigning for candidates who receive public funding—or do they too have a 1st Amendment Right to free speech?

Political attacks do provide one means for candidates to differentiate themselves from their opponents.⁴ Rather than dismissing negative campaigning out of hand, it might be better to advocate for methods to expose intentionally misleading ads or ads that distort statements by taking them out of context. Blanket criticism of negative campaigning does little to resolve these issues.

—Christine Bainer (MA/Political Campaigning Program, University of Florida)

---


3. Ansolabehere et al.

The “Daisy Ad”—The Classic of Negative Advertising

On the evening of September 7, 1964, those watching the movie *David and Bathsheba* on NBC witnessed a political ad unlike any before in the nation’s history. “Peace, Little Girl”—better known as the “Daisy Ad”—aired just once, but it had a telling impact on President Johnson’s re-election campaign, as well as on every political campaign since.

The black and white 60-second spot, created by legendary ad-man Tony Schwartz, began with an image of a young girl picking the petals off a daisy in the middle of a pasture. The girl is counting the petals, somewhat incorrectly, showing her complete innocence. As she reaches the number nine the image of her freezes, and the sound of a missile countdown interrupts the scene. As the countdown hits zero, a nuclear explosion and its mushroom cloud lights up the screen. Overlaying the explosion, President Johnson states, “These are the stakes! To make a world in which all of God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die.” Following the President’s voiceover, the narrator intones, “Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home.”

Although the ad aired only once, the Johnson campaign used the second voiceover on many other advertisements in the President’s reelection bid against Senator Barry Goldwater. Most of Johnson’s ads did not mention Goldwater by name, but it was quite clear whom the ads were targeting. Political campaigning scholars often point to the effectiveness of the “Daisy Ad” for its contribution to Johnson’s landslide victory. The legacy of the ad continued well beyond the 1964 campaign. Tony Schwartz’s disturbing image revolutionized the way campaign consultants use television ads.

—Marc Berkovits (MA/Political Campaigning Program, University of Florida)


A still shot from the opening of the “Daisy Ad” showing a young girl pulling petals off of a daisy and counting them as she goes.

Single frame clip from film footage owned by the Democratic National Convention.
Florida and the 2000 Presidential Race

The 2000 presidential election between Democratic candidate Al Gore, Jr. and Republican candidate George W. Bush was a rare and complicated example of a tight election. On election night, everything came down to the state of Florida. Early in the evening, the media declared that Gore had won Florida as based on exit poll information. Later, it seemed that the race in Florida was too close to call, so the media took back their earlier projection. Eventually, the media projected that Bush would actually take Florida, so Gore conceded the election to Bush. Upon receiving more information about how close the count was, Gore rescinded his concession. Such a tight race, down to about 500 votes in Florida, triggered a recount rule in the state, meaning that all votes had to be recounted to ensure accuracy.

The Florida recount gained substantial national media attention as everyone waited for the final outcome to determine who would become president. Manual recounting of votes was a monumental task. One of the major problems was a particular type of ballot called a butterfly ballot where voters had punched out a hole to indicate their vote choice. Those implementing the recount had to determine what should be considered a vote when chads, the part of the ballot which was supposed to be punched out, were not entirely detached or were, in some cases, just dimpled but still in place. The butterfly ballot also confused some voters, who had difficulty telling which hole aligned with the names of candidates. A number of voters, seeing they had accidentally punched the wrong hole, corrected their mistake without obtaining a new ballot. This meant they punched two holes under one office, thus over-voting and disqualifying their vote.

Florida’s Secretary of State, Katherine Harris, a Republican, interpreted state law as requiring that all manual recount results be reported within one week. The Florida State Supreme Court, mostly Democratic, intervened by preventing Harris from certifying the results. After Gore lost a local court case contesting the results, the case went to the US Supreme Court. Ultimately, in Bush v. Gore, the Supreme Court decided to end the recounting and to allow Florida to certify the election in support of Bush. The result left Gore with a higher proportion of the popular vote, but Bush had gained more Electoral College votes thus earning him the presidency. The truly interesting aspect of the 2000 presidential election was not all of the twists and turns, but rather that after Bush v. Gore was settled, Americans accepted the decision as final.

—Amanda Hamilton Seng (MA/Political Campaigning Program, University of Florida)
