



Before the European explorers and settlers came to Florida, American Indian tribes with ancestors related to the Mayan and Incan tribes lived in Central Florida. They were forefathers of the Sioux, Cherokee, and Iroquois. Archeologists have been unearthing valuable history of those tribal bands including their artwork, customs, spirituality, and their conflicts among tribes. The Mayaca and Joroco tribes lived in the Sanford area. By 1760 these tribes were decimated by war and disease and were replaced by the Seminole tribe.

<americanindianccoc.org> <richesmi.cah.ucf.edu>

“**Mayaca** was the name used by the Spanish to refer to a Native American tribe in central Florida, to the principal village of that tribe and to the chief of that village in the 1560s. The Mayacas occupied an area in the upper St. Johns River valley just to the south of Lake George. According to Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, the Mayaca language was related to that of the Ais, a tribe living along the Atlantic coast of Florida to the southeast of the Mayacas. The Mayacas were hunter-fisher-gatherers, and were not known to practice agriculture to any significant extent, unlike their neighbors to the north, the Utina, or Agua Dulce (Freshwater) Timucua. (In general, agriculture had not been adopted by tribes living south of the Timucua at the time of first contact with European people.) The Mayaca shared a ceramics tradition (the St. Johns culture) with the Freshwater Timucua, rather than the Ais (the Indian River culture).”

<dbpedia.org/page/Mayaca_people>

“The **Jororo or Hororo** lived just to the south of the Mayaca. They first appear in the Spanish records in the 1680s and spoke the Mayaca language. Like the Mayaca, the Jororo were hunter-fisher-gatherers. Their land was very wet, full of lakes and "brambles", and subject to frequent flooding. Hann suggests that the name of the mission at Jizime or Atissime or Atisme indicates that Jororo territory extended in the valley of the Kissimmee River.” <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayaca_people>

“Sanford sits on the south shore of Lake Monroe at the head of the navigation on the St. Johns River. Lake Monroe is the middle basin of the St. Johns River. The river rises in the marshes of Indian River County and flows slowly north 310 miles to Jacksonville and the Atlantic Ocean. The river spreads out in a chain of lakes including the five-mile-wide Lake Monroe, named for U.S. President James Monroe. In the 1800s, riverboats opened south Florida to tourists and settlers. Lake Monroe, the head of navigation on the river, was chosen as the location for the port city of Sanford in 1870.

During the Seminole Wars of the 1830’s, the area was the site of a U.S. Army post named Fort Mellon. As settlers moved into the area, the town of Mellonville was established. With the advent of commercial steamboat service, the town became a distribution point for goods essential for the growth of Central Florida. When Orange County was created in 1845, Mellonville became the county seat.” <sanfordfl.gov>



"In 1870, Henry Shelton Sanford purchased the land west of Mellonville. He planned a new city "the Gate City of South Florida," which he believed would become the transportation hub for all southern Florida. In 1877, the city of Sanford was incorporated and Mellonville was annexed six years later. In 1880, Henry S. Sanford formed a land company in London to encourage investments in the new city. That same year construction began on the South Florida Railroad with a terminus in Sanford. By 1884, Sanford was a prosperous town with wharves, a railroad station, and a large hotel." <sanfordfl.gov>

Henry Shelton Sanford was a wealthy Connecticut manufacturer, lawyer, and statesman. He decided to invest in various enterprises in South Carolina and Florida. Some failed until he bought the land near Lake Monroe. He hired black laborers, who were later attacked by whites and eventually fled the area. He then encouraged Swedish immigrants with various skills to immigrate to Florida. By 1871, Central Florida had five Swedish settlements, the largest near Sanford with many working at the Belair Station. Some of the settlements failed between 1894-95 due to a bitter winter that struck the citrus groves and caused many to leave. <orlandosentinel.com>

Sanford's early history included a citrus grove that became an agricultural experimental station called Belair. It was a 400-acre plot, once part of General Henry S. Sanford's 12,000-acre acquisition in 1870, with over 140 varieties of citrus imported around the world. Its purpose was to find the best citrus in Florida's climate. The Belair site included exotic flowers and a variety of trees. In 1915, much of east side of Sanford, including the Belair Station was destroyed by fire. Wooden structures helped the fire to consume much of the community. During the rebuild, brick was used as a major building material. <hmdb.org> <sanfordfl.gov>

Given the climate of Florida, between 1877-1913, Sanford became one of the top shipping centers in the country for vegetables. It was known as "Celery City" for this crop after the freeze that destroyed the citrus trees. <richesmi.cah.ucf.edu/>

In 1913, Seminole County was established with Sanford being the county seat. Between the early 1940s and late 1960s Sanford U.S. Naval Air Station attracted non-agricultural people to the area. Sanford's International Airport is the site of the former naval air station.

Sanford's role in railroad history took place in 1880. Orange and Seminole Counties had an operational narrow-gauge railroad line between Sanford and Orlando covering 23 miles. As Florida expanded more rail lines were added beginning in 1882. To learn more about the [Sanford Station and its history of the Auto Train, click here or on station sign.](#)



The City of Sanford has several interesting sites with much history to learn from. One is the former Hotel Forrest Lake.

Forrest Lake (1868-1939) was Sanford's mayor, serving 11 terms/34 years. He was also a representative in the state's legislature. He was a key player in annexing part of Orange County and creating Seminole County in 1913. Other projects included street paving, a new city hall, golf course, a bandshell, and a sea wall along Lake Monroe. Lake ventures he was also into included real estate and business development. His hotel was opened in 1925 with 158 rooms, including a huge ballroom and two dining rooms. It was the largest hotel in Central Florida.

<thebokey.com> <hmdb.org>

The Forrest Lake Hotel closed in 1928 because of an investment scandal. What transpired was Lake's fraud and causing the city to be in financial ruins. "The city was left bankrupt with \$1,000,000 in debt." It took until 1971 for the city to financially recover from the Lake affair.



Lake went to jail for his actions, served his time in jail and returned to Sanford. He was shunned for the most part and died in 1939. <thebokey.com> <theclio.com>

In 1930, the City of Sanford purchased the hotel and changed its name to the Mayfair Hotel. The hotel/inn closed its operations in 1963. During its use, it had several occupants:

"In 1948 the hotel was purchased by the New York Giants Major League Baseball team. The team changed the name of the hotel to the Mayfair Inn. The Giants' farm teams held spring training in Sanford during the late 1940s and early 1950s." <hmdb.org>

"From 1963 to 1977 the hotel served as the Sanford Naval Academy, a private military school for boys. During this period the interior of the building was extensively altered, and all the remaining historic furnishings were sold off." <hmdb.org>

"In 1978 the New Tribes Mission, a non-denominational international missionary group, purchased the hotel and converted it into the organization's headquarters. Many of the hotel's guest rooms were converted into apartments for missionaries." <hmdb.org>

Several attempts have been made to reuse/reopen it.

Other noteworthy sites in Sanford are the war memorial and museum. The World War Memorial is part of The National War Memorial registry. The park commemorates World War I and All Veterans along south shore. To understand all this history, visit The Sanford Museum. It is in Mellon Park on the south shore of Lake Monroe. It was founded in the 1957 and covers Sanford's history from territorial era through today.

Downtown Sanford



Seminole Boulevard-River Walk



Boats on Lake Monroe and the St Johns River





“The St. Johns has been a major waterway for more than 500 years, and lays claim to an abundance of Florida history. It was travelled by the Europeans, the Spanish, and the French, whether it was for exploration or to escape religious persecution. The St Johns Rivership Company’s Barbara-Lee, pictured above, was built in 1986 and carries on the tradition of sternwheelers that have been sailing along the river for hundreds of years. She had her inaugural cruise in 2012 and is the only authentic sternwheeler you will see on the St. Johns River.” <floridianamagazine.com>



The World War Memorial



American Revolution 1776-1783

In the late 1700s, the British government under King George III imposed harsh taxes and laws on the residents of its American colonies. The Continental Congress was formed as a response to this in 1774 by men who would become the founders of the United States of America. The American Revolution began with an attack by British troops on the local militia towns of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts on April 19, 1775. The Continental Army was created to repel British attacks. General George Washington was appointed Commander in Chief. With the signing of the Declaration of Independence on 1776, thirteen American colonies separated from Great Britain with the intention of forming a new nation. The Continental Army composed of inexperienced volunteers from all the colonies and in early battles, the Americans were defeated. In the winter General Washington led his troops into camp at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania where they were trained by German General Steuben. Financial assistance was given by France under the direction of the Marquis de Lafayette and the Americans gained upper hand. The war ended with the surrender of the British troops under General Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia on October 1781. The official end came with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

Florida was not one of the original thirteen colonies and did not become part of the United States until 1821 when it was Spain. During the American Revolution, Florida was under British rule and was a haven for Loyalists fleeing the colonies war turned against Great Britain. Prior to the American Revolution in 1763, Great Britain acquired Florida from Spain. After the British during the Revolution, Spain regained possession of Florida.



In 1775, the Continental Congress appointed General George Washington Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, later to become the US Army. Following the war, Washington led the effort to draft a constitution. The United States Constitution, adopted on September 17, 1787, defined the role and structure of the government of the United States of America and established the office of President. In 1789, George Washington was chosen as the first President of the United States.



The Purple Heart is awarded to those who are wounded or killed in action against an enemy of the United States. The award was originally the Badge of Merit and was established by General George Washington during the American Revolution in 1782. The award was not used again during conflicts until World War II. The medal is a purple heart with a gold silhouette of Washington.



The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was founded in 1890 to preserve American history and the service of our ancestors. Since its founding, the DAR has been a leading force in the preservation of American history. The DAR has established the DAR Museum and research libraries across the United States. The DAR Chapter raised funds to establish the Sanford House extensive local history collection. The chapter also sponsors citizenship ceremonies and encourages American history.



US Army - The Continental Army, which would become the US Army, was formed on September 11, 1776.



US Navy - The Continental Navy, which would become the US Navy, was formed on October 13, 1775.

US Marines - The Continental Marines, which would become the US Marines, was formed on November 10, 1775.

War of 1812 1812-1815

The War of 1812 resulted from British attempts to restrict the United States' transatlantic trade and from the seizing and impressing of American sailors into the British Navy. On June 18, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain. By July, the American ship USS Constitution had won a major naval battle against the British in the Atlantic. The war was fought across the United States, parts of Canada, and Spanish Florida. At the same time indigenous people were fighting for their land. On March 26, 1814, US land belonging to the defeated Creeks was seized and sold off in a lottery. On August 24, 1814, the British attacked Washington, DC, the White House on fire, forcing First Lady Dolley Madison to flee. On September 13-14, Fort Mifflin in Baltimore was bombarded the night inspiring The Star Spangled Banner, the poem that would become the national anthem. As the war dragged on, the government, strained by war with Napoleon in Europe, agreed to negotiations for peace. On December 24, 1814, the Treaty of Ghent signed ending the war. News of the treaty did not reach the United States forces until months later. The Battle of New Orleans, the last battle of the war, was fought until January 8, 1815.

Florida was under Spanish control during the War of 1812 and was a haven for runaway slaves and Red Stick Creeks fighting the States. Invasions of Florida by US troops commanded by General Andrew Jackson during and after the War of 1812 led to Seminole War. Florida did not become a US territory until 1821 with the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty during the administration of President James Monroe.

Some of the earliest settlers on Lake Monroe, in the area that is now Sanford, were veterans of the War of 1812. Elias Woodruff and General Andrew Jackson in New Orleans. He was born in New Jersey and came to Florida from Mississippi in 1844. Woodruff's descendants still lived in Sanford in 2009. John Hughey, of South Carolina, arrived in 1845 to claim land granted to him by the Armed Occupation Act. He settled on land that later became known as Sanford Heights.



The words of the national anthem of the United States of America come from a poem written by Francis Scott Key in 1814 during the bombardment of Fort Mifflin near Baltimore. The "Star Spangled Banner" was the fifteen star flag of the United States flying above the fort through the night of the battle. This flag is now on display in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.



On August 19, 1812, the United States defeated Great Britain in a naval battle between the USS Constitution and the HMS Guerriere. It was noted at the time that the American ship repelled fire as if it was made of iron. This led to the USS Constitution becoming known as "Old Ironsides." Construction of the ship using Georgia oak was begun in 1794 and the name was chosen by President George Washington. The USS Constitution is the oldest commissioned ship in the US Navy and is docked in Boston.



Andrew Jackson commanded US troops and led the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in Alabama in March 1814. This the War of 1812 but it also ended the Creek War between the Red Sticks. Following the battle, Jackson invaded Florida where the last battle of the War of 1812 was fought. Jackson led an invasion of Florida during the war. He served as military governor of the Florida territory in 1821. He was President of the United States in 1829.

World War I 1914-1919

World War I, "The Great War," began in Sarajevo with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary by a Bosnian Serb in June 1914. Germany, under Kaiser Wilhelm, was Austria's ally and went to war against Serbia. Soon all of Europe was drawn into a war based on political alliances. The United States remained neutral for much of the war until German submarines threatened US ships in the Atlantic and were spotted off the coast of the US. The US declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. 117,000 Americans died in the war. The war inspired new movements around the world including the Russian Revolution, the Irish Revolution, and the rise of Nazi Germany. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919 bringing an end to the war but imposing such punishment on Germany that World War II was the result.



The broken column memorial in Veterans Memorial Park originally stood in Fifth Street Park (now Centennial Park) at 5th Street and Park Avenue. On it are listed the names of the Sanford men who died in World War I. It was donated to the city by T.J. Miller and his son Frank.



Sanford's Campbell-Lossing American Legion Post #53 was formed in February 1920 and was named for Frank Campbell and Arthur Lossing who were both killed in the war in 1918.



The ladies of the Sanford chapter first place for their Armistice 1920. Parades were held in 11 Armistice Day, to mark the end of World War I. Today Veterans Day.

In 1927, a flagpole with a fountain at the base was placed at the entrance to the City pier (now Veterans Memorial Park) in

World War II 1939-1945

World War II began in September 1939 when Germany, under Adolph Hitler, invaded Poland. France declared war on Germany. Italy, led by Benito Mussolini, allied with Germany and came under the control of invading German troops. The Germans were unable to invade England Channel and England's superiority in the air. The United States entered the war after the Japanese fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941. Japan, under Emperor Hirohito, had been exiled in 1931 with an invasion of China. The United States sent forces to Europe and the Pacific. On June 6, 1944 British forces landed in Normandy, France and began to reclaim Europe. Germany surrendered. Japanese did not surrender until August 14, 1945 after atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 418,500 Americans died in World War II.



National Guard Lt. Gen. Joseph C. Hutchison of Sanford accepted the surrender of Mindanao from Japanese Lt. Gen. Gyosaku Morozumi on September 8, 1945. Gen. Hutchison was the commander of the 62nd Infantry of the 31st Division of the US Army in the South Pacific during World War II.



Naval Air Station Sanford opened in November 1942 as an auxiliary training base for US Navy carrier pilots. The station had four 6,000 foot runways and more than 2,000 Navy and civilian personnel. About half of all pilots in the South Pacific during World War II received some training in Sanford. The first aircraft to arrive at the station were 34 PV-1 Ventura bombers. The Orlando-Sanford International Airport now occupies the site of NAS Sanford.



The Sanford Street building was built in 1942.



Sanford's access to Interstate Routes and Trains



Sources: <https://myfloridahistory.org/frontiers/article/156>, <https://americanindiancoc.org/native-american-tribes-the-indian-history-in-sanford-florida/>, https://dbpedia.org/page/Mayaca_people, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayaca_people, <https://visitsanfordnc.com/historical-places/>, <https://sanfordfl.gov/visitors/history-and-historic-preservation/>, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=93061>, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1989-12-03-8912023964-story.html>, <https://richesmi.cah.ucf.edu/omeka/items/show/2187>, <https://www.american-rails.com/auto.html>, <https://medium.com/florida-history/orange-and-seminole-countys-first-railroad-f6f9e27417bb>, <https://richesmi.cah.ucf.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/origins-of-the-celery-city/the-building-the-celery-city/celery>, <https://www.american-rails.com/fl.html>, <https://www.fdot.gov/rail/contacts/rrs.shtm>, <https://www.yelp.com/c/sanford-fl-us/landmarks>, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=55396>, <https://thebokey.com/2015/08/18/forrest-lake-crook-or-visionary/>, <https://sanfordfl.gov/ovapor/veterans-memorial-park/>, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=189979>, <https://theclio.com/entry/25946>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McltnO0eOpQ>, <https://www.historicdowntownsanford.com/sanford-fl/attractions/st-johns-rivership-co/>, <https://www.floridianamagazine.com/paddlewheelers-and-the-st-johns-river/>, <https://www.historicdowntownsanford.com/resort-style-historic-hotel-to-bring-visitors-jobs-to-historic-downtown-sanford/>, and <https://www.nationalwarmemorialregistry.org/joomla/upload/florida/sanford-veterans-memorial-park-marker>.