

HANDOUT # 1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

People first reached Florida at least 12,000 years ago. The rich variety of environments in prehistoric Florida supported a large number of plants and animals. Florida began when Spanish explorer and adventurer Juan Ponce de León in 1513 arrived between April 2 and April 8. Ponce de León landed on the northeast coast of Florida, near St. Augustine. He called the area “la Florida”, in honor of Pascua Florida ("feast of the flowers"), Spain’s Eastertime celebration. Other Europeans may have reached Florida earlier, but there is no evidence.

On another voyage in 1521, Ponce de León landed on the southwestern coast with two-hundred people and fifty horses. His colonization failed because of attacks by native people. However, Ponce de León’s activities served to identify Florida as a desirable place for explorers, missionaries, and treasure seekers.

Britain gained control of Florida in 1763 in exchange for Havana, Cuba, which the British had captured from Spain. Spain evacuated Florida after the exchange, leaving no one here. At that time, St. Augustine was still a community with less than five hundred houses, and Pensacola also was a small military town.

The British divided Florida into two parts: East Florida, with its capital at St. Augustine; and West Florida, with its capital at Pensacola. They mapped much of the landscape and coastline and tried to develop relations with a group of Indian people. The British called these people Seminoles. Britain tried to attract white settlers by offering land and help for those who produced products for export. This plan might have made Florida into a rich colony, but British rule lasted only twenty years.

When the British left Florida, Spanish colonists and settlers from the newly formed United States came. Many of the new residents were attracted by favorable Spanish conditions for buying property. Others who came were escaped slaves, trying to reach a place where their U.S. masters had no authority and could not reach them. Instead of becoming more Spanish, the two Floridas increasingly became more "American." Finally, after several official and unofficial U.S. military expeditions into the territory, Spain formally surrendered Florida to the United States in 1821.

As a territory of the United States, Florida was interesting to people from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, who came in great numbers. After Florida became a territory, the two Floridas were united into one, with a new capital city in Tallahassee. Established in 1824, Tallahassee was chosen because it was halfway between the existing governmental centers of St. Augustine and Pensacola. Finally, Florida became a state on March 3, 1845.

In 1880, The South Florida Railroad extended its line down into Orlando from Sanford and the rest of the nation. With the coming of the railroad, Central Florida’s citrus

business expanded and sold to the North. It changed Orlando. It became the most important business city in Central Florida. By the mid-1920s Orlando was a busy city with a population over 10,000. Then came the Florida land boom in the 20's and for the first time, tourism became an important industry.

During World War II, in 1940, the Army trained ten thousand men and women here. Air bases were used as a Strategic Air Command unit with B-52s that carried atomic bombs.

In 1956, Orlando started to develop a technological economy. Lockheed Martin, built missiles in Orlando including the Pershing and Patriot Missiles. By 1960, the population of Orlando was over 60,000. Orlando was becoming the center of a metropolitan area that included Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties.

And then Disney came. By 1998, Walt Disney World announced the attendance of its 600,000,000th guest. Today, Orlando welcomes more visitors each year than the population of California - over 43.3 million (2000 statistics), which makes Orlando the number one tourist destination in the world. Most of them stay in one of 100,000 hotel rooms and visit 7 major theme parks. The current population of Orlando is approximately 185,000 and the Metro-Orlando population is over 1,500,000. Orlando continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in Florida as well as the United States.

HANDOUT #2

Orange County's History Center

The History Center is new, fun and interactive. It's the past, present and future of the Central Florida Area. It's for visitors and residents.

On September 29, 2000, the Historical Society of Central Florida, a non-profit corporation founded to preserve Central Florida's past, changed the history of Central Florida forever when Orange County's Regional History Center opened. The Historical Society of Central Florida and Orange County joined to create the Orange County Regional History Center in the renewed 1927 Orange County courthouse. The Society received additional support from the City of Orlando, the Downtown Development Board, the State of Florida and the community including private individuals, corporations and foundations. It is located in Downtown Orlando between Central Boulevard, Washington Street and Magnolia Avenue, at One Heritage Square.

"There is such a rich and colorful history in Central Florida that most people, even natives, don't know exists," said Sara Van Arsdel, executive director of the Orange County Historical Society and Regional History Center. "Our history is full of surprises. Did you know that one of our first residents wrestled alligators on Pine Street? Or that Central Florida had a booming tourism market in the 1920's?" These are just some of the unexpected facts the History Center reveals along with its interactive exhibits.

The History Center hosts a variety of permanent and traveling exhibits. The permanent displays include:

1. Florida's natural environment
2. Native Americans: Florida's first people, in their surroundings.
3. European contact
4. The pioneers- an exhibit on Florida Crackers and other pioneers with a replica cabin through which visitors can stroll.
- 5-The cattle industry
- 6-The citrus industry featuring life size figures picking fruit and describing their way of life.
7. The original use of the 1927 Courthouse recalls the early days of the area's court system as presented in the restored Courtroom B and the Grand Jury Room.
8. Transportation
9. Tourism
10. Aviation
11. The land boom
12. Walt Disney World's impact
13. Communities: the diverse communities that make up Central Florida today.

The History Center is financed in part by Orange County Government through the Department of Health & Family Service; the Historical Society of Central Florida, Inc., the Florida Department of State, Division of Historic Resources, Bureau of Historical Museums and United Arts of Central Florida, Inc.

It is located in Downtown Orlando between Central Boulevard, Washington Street and Magnolia Avenue, at One Heritage Square.

Reading and Comprehension:

Scan **“Orange County’s History Center”-handout #2** and answer the following questions using **complete answers**:

1. When did Orange County’s history center open?

2. Who founded the history center?

3. Who supported the creation of the history center?

4. What is the purpose of the History Center?

5. Where is the history center located?

6. Name some of the permanent exhibits you find interesting and why?

Handout #3

Orange County's History Center Community Activity Work sheet

My visit to Orange County's History Center:

Date: _____

Time: _____

1-Answer the following questions:

1. What do you think about the History Center's location? Was it easy or difficult to get there?

2. Was the History Center's building and its 3 floors what you expected? Explain your answer.

3. What was the most interesting exhibit? Why?

4. Did you find your community in the permanent community display? If yes, what is your opinion about it?

3- Essay Instructions

1-Hand in this work sheet with a 5 paragraph essay that should be typed and developed according to the following:

- a. an outline
- b. a revised draft edited for spelling, punctuation and correct grammar.
- c. a final 5 paragraph essay that is focused and organized.

2-Date: _____

OBS: the outline and revised draft should be attached to the final essay.