

HISTORIC EVENTS TIMELINE: Florida, Southwest Florida, and Fort Myers/Lee County.

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- 1513 Juan Ponce de Leon discovers Florida.
- 1763 Spain trades Florida to the Kingdom of Great Britain
- 1814 First Seminole War begins.
- 1818 Andrew Jackson captures Indian traders/Creek agitators at the Suwanee River, trying, convicting, and carrying out death sentences.
- 1819 Florida is purchased from Spain for \$5.0 million (debt forgiven) - Adams/Onis Treaty.
- 1819 First Seminole War ends.
- 1835 Second Seminole War begins.
- 1838 Seminole Chief Osceola, imprisoned at Ft Moultrie, SC, is painted by renowned portrait artist George Caitlin.
- 1839 Harney Point Massacre. Seminole Indians attack trading post killing 13 of Col. Wm. S. Harney's soldiers.
- 1840 Dr. Perrine, a botanist who is the developer of the Perrine lemon, is murdered, along with his family, by an Indian war party, at Indian Key.
- 1841 Hurricane destroys Fort Delaney (October 1841).
- 1842 Second Seminole War ends.
- 1845 Florida becomes the 27th state of the United States of America.
- 1847 Thomas Edison is born in Milan, Ohio, on February 11, 1847.
- 1850 Fort Harvie, a military fort, is constructed. Later renamed Fort Myers.
- 1855 Third Seminole War begins.
- 1857 The last stand of the Seminoles against the US, at Welch's Grove in present Collier Count, per WSH.
- 1858 Chief Billie Bowlegs surrenders and the fort (Fort Myers) is abandoned.
- 1858 Third Seminole War ends.
- 1859 Manuel A Gonzalez, born in Spain, becomes a naturalized citizen in Monroe Co., Fla.
- 1861 US Civil War begins.
- 1861 Major James Evans, then living in Southwest Fla., plants coconut trees near the river in what would become the city of Ft Myers.
- 1861 In April, the Confederate Congress begins printing its first paper money, which honors then-capital, Montgomery, Alabama.
- 1863 Union army troops reoccupy Fort Myers (December 1863)
- 1865 Fort Myers is attacked by three companies of the Florida militia (February 25,1865).
- 1865 US Civil War ends.
- 1866 Manuel A Gonzalez arrives in Fort Myers, becoming it's first settler.
- 1873 Punta Rassa destroyed by 110 mph winds and 14' storm surge.
- 1880 Edison is granted patent for electric lamp.
- 1881 Hamilton Disston purchases 4.0 million acres of Florida and dredging begins south of Lake Okeechobee.
- 1883 W. Stanley Hanson is born in Key West during November.
- 1884 Dr William Hanson and family arrive in Fort Myers.
- 1884 Mary Stilwell Edison, Thomas Edison's first wife, dies of "congestion of the brain."
- 1885 Thomas Edison and Ezra Gilliland discover Ft. Myers. TAE pays \$2,750 for 13-acre riverfront site.
- 1886 City of Fort Myers is incorporated. Second largest city on Florida's west coast.
- 1886 In May, Frank Stout and family arrive in Ft Myers from Michigan to run the Press.
- 1887 Construction is completed on the Seminole Lodge, laboratory and Gilliland residence.
- 1887 Lee County is created by act of the legislature. Formerly part of Monroe County.
- 1888 Harvie E. Heitman, 16-years old, arrives in Ft. Myers and later enters business with his uncle, Howell A. Parker.
- 1888 Henry Flagler opens Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine, on January 10, 1888.
- 1888 Mrs. Hanson, Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Stout and others canvass for the Nickel Club to raise money for worthy civic projects in Ft Myers.
- 1889 Merchant Howell F. Parker, first postmaster and first mayor of Ft Myers, opens his own bank.
- 1889 Peter O. Knight, a 24-year old FM mayor, moves to Tampa with his wife, the former Lillie Frierson, and establishes law firm that will become Holland & Knight.
- 1891 Henry Plant opens the Tampa Bay Hotel.
- 1891 The Town of Trabue, in present Charlotte County, Fla., changes its name to Punta Gorda.
- 1892 In response to pressure from women's groups and religious leaders, the State of Fla agrees to set aside lands for the Seminole Indians.
- 1893 The Women's Indian Missionary Society deeds its Seminole Mission to the Episcopal Church.
- 1894 Cyrus Teed brings his followers to Estero, FL ("New Jerusalem").
- 1894 The Great Freeze (18 degrees F in Orlando on Dec. 29th).
- 1896 Florida East Coast Railway reaches Biscayne Bay.
- 1896 Minnie Moore Wilson publishes "The Seminoles of Florida."
- 1898 USS Maine (ACR-1) sinks in Havana harbor. Boat is 324' long, 57' beam, and 22.5' draft. Over 250 killed.
- 1898 Royal Palm Hotel opens and Fort Myers is nationally known as a winter resort.
- 1901 Edison begins spending winters in Ft. Myers.
- 1901 William Sherman Jennings begins term as governor.
- 1901 President McKinley assassinated on September 6th.
- 1901 Major James Evans, a lifelong bachelor, dies in Ft Myers, Fla, and is buried in his hometown of Suffolk, VA.
- 1904 Atlantic Coast Line (ACL) railway extended 28- miles to Fort Myers from Punta Gorda (May 10, 1904)
- 1905 Napoleon B. Broward begins term as governor.
- 1906 The "Elections of 1906": Cyrus Teed suffers head injury that is believed to later cause his death.
- 1906 Franklin Miles, founder of Miles Laboratories, begins a buying spree of prominent homesites in Lee County, amassing numerous riverfront parcels.
- 1908 Cyrus Teed dies.
- 1909 Albert W. Gilchrist begins term as governor.
- 1911 Barron Collier visits Useppa Island and later purchases it for \$100,000.
- 1911 Dr. William Hanson and his son, Newton, die during December.
- 1913 Park Trammel begins term as governor.
- 1913 The Seminole Indian Association is organized and chartered, with F.A. Hendry president and W. Stanley Hanson, treasurer.
- 1913 Seminoles of Florida recognized as a separate entity from the Seminole Nation residing in Oklahoma.
- 1913 The San Carlos Cigar Company, a manufacturing concern, opens in Ft Myers, employing 25.

1914 Henry Ford and his family camp in the Everglades with the Edisons.
1914 World War I begins.
1914 First Ford Car Dealership was opened in Fort Myers.
1915 Construction begins on the "north-south" section of the Tamiami Trail.
1916 Henry Ford purchases the Gilliland property for \$20,000, later to become the site of "The Mangoes".
1917 Sidney Johnstone Cotts begins term as governor.
1918 World War I ends.
1919 Construction of Tamiami Trail stops because Lee County is not able to complete it's section of the road.
1921 Terry family donates 25-acres for Terry Park.
1921 Cary A. Hardee begins term as governor.
1923 Tamiami Trail "blazers", a group of west coast businessmen, leave Fort Myers for Miami during April.
1923 Collier County is created by act of legislature (May 8, 1923).
1923 Tamiami Trail construction begins during October 1923.
1924 Construction of Tamiami Trail bridge across river is completed and spurs growth in Fort Myers.
1925 Connie Mack and the Philadelphia Athletics begin spring training at Terry Park.
1925 John W. Martin begins term as governor.
1926 Edison Park is completed and dedicated on April 7th. James D. Newton markets residential lots.
1926 The Miami-Hurricane, noted for putting an end to the Florida Land Boom of the 1920s.
1928 Tamiami Trail, at a cost of \$8.0 million or \$25,000 per mile, is opened on April 26, 1928.
1928 Lake Okeechobee Hurricane, killing over 1,800 people, hits Palm Beach on Sept. 16th.
1929 US financial markets collapse and the Great Depression begins.
1929 Doyle Carlton begins term as governor.
1929 Henry Ford moves Edison's Menlo Park laboratory to Deerfield, MI. Ford would also remove the FM laboratory.
1929 Bok Tower Sanctuary is completed in Lake Wales, Fla.
1931 Edison dies on October 18, 1931. Henry Ford discontinues his visits to Ft. Myers.
1931 W Stanley Hanson takes members of the Seminole tribe to Washington, DC, to meet with members of U.S. legislative body and others.
1933 David Scholtz begins term as governor.
1933 Prohibition ends as the 18th Amendment is repealed.
1933 New Deal program begins and the WPA builds roads and schools throughout Florida.
1933 Architect Nathaniel Gaillard Walker and workers employed by the WPA complete the federal building in Ft Myers.
1935 Labor Day Hurricane, the strongest in US history, hits Florida Keys on Sept. 2nd, killing over 400.
1936 Cypress Gardens tourist attraction opens near Winter Haven.
1937 Fred P. Cone begins term as governor.
1938 Edison Pageant of Light is created to commemorate the Thomas Edison's life of achievement.
1938 US nears the end of the Great Depression.
1938 Marineland tourist attraction opens south of St. Augustine.
1939 Barron Collier dies at the age of 66. Largest land owner in Florida.
1939 World War II begins.
1940 New Deal program ends as the US economy reaches the end of the Great Depression.
1941 Spessard Holland begins term as governor.
1942 Construction begins on the Buckingham Army Airfield, an aircraft gunner base: \$10.0 million, 7,000 acres.
1943 Florida's first commercial oil well (Sunniland).
1944 Floyd Ellis is elected sheriff of Lee County, Florida.
1945 Millard F. Caldwell begins term as Florida governor.
1945 Henry Ford sells his estate to the Biggar family, who retains it for over 40-years.
1945 World War II ends.
1945 W. Stanley Hanson, known as the "White Medicine Man", dies on April 5th.
1947 Mina Edison deeds the Edison Estate to the citizens of Ft. Myers.
1947 Marjorie Stoneman Douglas' The Everglades: River of Grass is published to wide acclaim.
1948 Flanders "Snag" Thompson elected sheriff of Lee County.
1949 Fuller Warren begins term as Florida governor.
1953 Daniel T. McCarty begins term as Florida governor.
1955 LeRoy Collins begins term as Florida governor.
1955 Lee Ratner acquires 18,000 acres of land that becomes Lehigh Acres.
1957 Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc. is created in response to the Indian Reorganization Act.
1958 Cape Coral's first home is constructed.
1959 Cuban immigration leads to a large wave of Cuban immigrants.
1960 Hurricane Donna hits Fort Myers on September 10th.
1961 C. Farris Bryant begins term as Florida governor.
1962 Miccosukee Indian Tribe of Florida is created in response to the Indian Reorganization Act.
1962 Cuban Missile Crisis during October 1962.
1962 Edison Junior College admits its first student.
1962 Caloosahatchee Bridge opened in 1962.
1963 Sanibel Causeway, connecting Sanibel and mainland Lee County, opens on May 26, 1963.
1963 President Kennedy assassinated on November 22nd.
1965 W. Haydon Burns begins term as Florida governor.
1967 Claude Kirk begins term as Florida governor.
1968 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, TN, on April 4th.
1968 Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles, CA, on June 5th.
1969 Apollo 11, on July 20, becomes first spacecraft to land humans on the moon.
1969 Woodstock Music & Art Fair takes place in Bethel, NY, during August.

1970 Kent State shootings. On May 4, 1970, four student protestors are killed by the National Guard.
1971 Reubin Askew begins term as Florida governor.
1971 Disney opens the Magic Kingdom, the first component of Disney World.
1972 Frank Wanicka defeats Flanders "Snag" Thompson to become sheriff of Lee County, Florida.
1974 Richard Milhous Nixon resigns as the 37th president of the US, on August 8, 1974.
1975 Viet Nam conflict ends as Saigon falls on April 30, 1975.
1977 Interstate 75 completed from Tampa to Sault Ste. Marie, on December 21, 1977.
1979 Bob Graham begins term as Florida governor.
1983 Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) certified for operation in May 1983.
1983 Totch Brown, an Everglades City fishing guide, is arrested and convicted for drug smuggling.
1986 Final stretch of Interstate 75 in south Florida is completed.
1987 Bob Martinez begins term as Florida governor.
1989 Edison Festival of Light, Inc. assumes responsibility for public pageant events.
1991 Lawton Chiles begins term as Florida governor.
1991 Mikhail Baryshnikov stars in a benefit to raise funds to restore the Arcade theatre in downtown Ft Myers.
1992 FGCU site is chosen.
1997 FGCU holds first classes during August 1997.
1999 Jeb Bush begins term as Florida governor.
2010 Fort Myers population 62,298 (US Census).