

Did you Know?



This year (1995) Florida is celebrating its 150th year of statehood. During this sesquicentennial year, it may be a good time to reflect on Florida's colorful history.

1. The first Indians in Florida were not the Seminoles. The Seminoles arrived 200 years after the Spaniards and the Africans.
2. Ponce de Leon sighted Florida in the spring of 1513 and since it was Easter, which the Spanish called "Pascua de Flores," he named the land "Florida." Ponce made landfall just above St. Augustine, but on his way south he landed at the Jupiter Inlet where he met the hostile "Jobe" tribe. Just south of there he met the friendly and peaceful "Abacoa" tribe, whose friendship he mentions in his ship's log. Developers are using this name for the new development on Donald Ross Road.
3. In 1521, Ponce was back with six heifers and a bull and by 1763, when Spain left Florida for Cuba, herds of horses and cattle were released before the English takeover. The first cowboys in America were in Florida and they were not the John Wayne or Jimmy Stewart types, but were Indians, blacks and descendants of the Spanish.
4. Florida's Spanish heritage is a long one, for instance, Florida was a part of Spain for nearly 300 years, much longer than it has been a part of the United States.
5. Florida has the oldest European history of any part of the United States. St. Augustine, founded in 1565, is older than Jamestown, Virginia (1607) or Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts (1620).



By Richard Procyk

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6. The United States purchase Florida from Spain in 1821, for five million dollars and made it the twenty-seventh state in 1845.
7. The oldest fortified structure in the nation, the Castillo de San Marcos, is in St. Augustine where the first Christmas was probably celebrated in the new land.
8. The first Underground Railroad ran south from Old English plantations in South Carolina to St. Augustine where runaway black slaves risked their lives seeking sanctuary from the Spanish colonists. The African born refugees were granted freedom if they converted to Catholicism and fought in the black militia and by 1700 the population had grown so large that a new town at the fort was established. Known as Fort Mose, it was the first free black community in North America.
9. The Second Seminole War in Florida was the longest, bloodiest and most costly Indian War in history. Forty million dollars was spent, more than the American Revolution.
10. The first war fought over slavery in the United States, was the Second Seminole War, not the Civil War.
11. The three Seminole Wars cover over forty years, 1817 to 1858. During the Second Seminole War, 4,000 white soldiers fought 1,500 Seminoles with no clear victory or final treaty. It was the only Indian war that the government used all its services, the army, navy and marines.
12. The only memorial to the Second Seminole War in Palm Beach County is located on the east end of Winding Lake Drive in "The Shores of Jupiter."

Editor's Note: We continue our gratitude for Dick Procyk's authoritative and professional contribution.