



Florida State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

Florida State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Florida

Juan Ponce de Leon landed on the shores of northeast Florida in April of 1513. He called the area "la Florida" Spanish for flowery, covered with flowers, or abounding in flowers. Historians favor the idea that Ponce de Leon named the state because he discovered it on Easter or Palm Sunday. Others don't discount this theory, but impress upon us that the full flush of spring was on the area and the abundance of flowers in bloom and the "fragrant and delicious odors" certainly played a role.

People who live in Florida or who come from Florida are called Floridians.

Floridians have been referred to as "Alligators" after the Alligator population of the state. They've been called "Crackers" in a reference to the sound of the Mule-driver's whips over the backs of their mules in the early days of the state. "Fly-Up-the-Creeks" is another old nickname given to Floridians. This nickname was based on the name given to a variety of Green Heron that was common along marshy shorelines.



Map of Florida – Capital, Major Lakes and Rivers

STATEHOOD

On March 3, 1845, Florida became the 27th state to be admitted into the Union.

STATE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the State of Florida is the document that establishes and describes the duties, powers, structure and functions of the government of the state of Florida, and establishes the basic law of the state.

Florida's first constitution, the constitution of 1838 was approved by popular vote in 1839 and served as Florida's constitution at the time Florida was admitted to statehood in 1845.

Florida has been ruled by six different constitutions, the Constitutions of 1838, 1865, 1868, 1885, and 1968. Florida's current constitution was adopted by the state's voters on November 5, 1968.

PREAMBLE: *We, the people of the State of Florida, being grateful to Almighty God for our constitutional liberty, in order to secure its benefits, perfect our government, insure domestic tranquility, maintain public order, and guarantee equal civil and political rights to all, do ordain and establish this constitution.*

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Florida state government is made up of three separate branches of state government – Executive, Legislative, and Judicial and is regulated by the Florida State Constitution.

The executive branch of the government of Florida consists of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Florida Cabinet (which includes the Attorney General, Commissioner of Agriculture and Chief Financial Officer), and several executive departments. The Governor of Florida is the chief executive officer of Florida government and the chief administrative officer of the state responsible for planning and budgeting for the state.

The Governor has the power to execute Florida's laws and to call out the state militia to preserve public peace. At least once every legislative session, the Governor is required to deliver an address to the Florida Legislature, referred to as the "State of the State Address", regarding the condition and operation of the state government and to suggest new legislation. The Governor is elected by popular election every four years, and may serve a maximum of two terms.

The Florida Legislature is the Legislative branch of Florida state government. The Florida Constitution mandates a bicameral state legislature, consisting of a Florida Senate of 40 members and a Florida House of Representatives of 120 members. The two bodies meet in the Florida State Capitol. The Florida House of Representative members serve for two-year terms, while Florida Senate members serve staggered four-year terms, with 20 Senators up for election every two years. Members of both houses are term limited to serve a maximum of eight years.

The judicial branch of Florida government, officially titled Florida State Courts System, consists of the Florida Supreme Court, the state supreme court, the district courts of appeals, and the lower courts. The Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court serves as the chief administrative officer of the entire branch. The Office of the State Courts Administrator, largely housed in the Supreme Court Building in Tallahassee, assists the Chief Justice in administering the courts.

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms. Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the congressional delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Florida elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and 25 people, based on Florida's current population, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

STATE SEAL

In 1868, Florida's new State Constitution mandated that the first session of the Legislature must adopt a seal to represent the state. And the Legislature lost no time in coming up with a Joint Resolution that they sent to the Governor in August of that year. The resolution specified that the seal had to be the size of an American silver dollar. It also stated that the seal should contain the sun's rays, a cocoa tree, a steamboat, and a female Indian scattering flowers. These images were to be circled by the words "Great Seal of the State of Florida: In God We Trust."



Several changes have occurred on the seal over the years, although the basic design has been maintained. The Indian woman has changed her clothing and taken off her feathered headdress (only male Seminoles wore headdresses) so that she is now a more authentic Seminole Indian. A mountain in the background has been flattened (Florida has no mountains). The steamboat has been repaired a few times. And a sabal palm has been transplanted in place of the original cocoa tree to reflect the state's adoption of the sabal palmetto palm as the official state tree in 1953.

The latest revisions took place in 1985 and this version of the Great Seal of the State of Florida appears to have been generally accepted as the definitive version.

STATE CAPITAL (Tallahassee)



Since 1845, the Historic Capitol has symbolized Florida state government. Restored to its 1902 appearance, the Historic Capitol stands as an icon at the center of Florida's Capitol complex; the modern-day nerve center of Sunshine State government.

Under the stained-glass dome, political history and tradition come alive in the exhibits. Restored areas include the 1902 Governor's office and chambers of the House of Representatives, Senate, and Supreme Court.

Tallahassee was chosen as the territorial capital in 1824. The first territorial government met in log cabins. A capitol building was constructed in 1826 but never completely finished. It was torn down in 1839 for the construction of the present structure, which was completed in 1845, just prior to Florida's entry into the Union as the 27th state. Additions to the Historic Capitol were made several times throughout the years. Architect Frank Millburn, who added the classical style dome, made the first expansion in 1902. The 1923 additions by Henry Klutho included two new wings and a marble interior. Finally large wings for the House and Senate chambers were added to the north and south ends of the building in 1936 and 1947, respectively.

Threatened with demolition in the late 1970s when the new capitol was built, The Historic Capitol was saved through citizens' action and was restored to its 1902 appearance. Architectural highlights include the elaborate art glass dome, red and white striped awnings, and a representation of the Florida State Seal over the entry columns. The restoration of The Old Capitol (1978—1982) was conducted under the supervision of the Department of General Services in conjunction with the Department of State. This intensive project of historical and archaeological investigation makes Florida's former capitol one of the most thoroughly documented restoration projects in the nation.

The [Florida Historic Capitol Museum](#) serves to illuminate the past, present, and future connection between the people of Florida and their political institutions through programs of civic education, historic interpretation, and preservation. Together with exhibit panels, photographs, and interactive multimedia, the museum offers a journey through the colorful history of representative government in Florida. More than 250 artifacts in 21 rooms invite visitors to trace the evolution of Florida government from territorial days to the present.

STATE MOTTO

In God We Trust

“In God We Trust” was officially adopted as Florida’s state motto on June 22, 2006 (House Bill no. 1145), effective July 1, 2006.

STATE FLAG

Reminiscent of Alabama's State Flag and the red "X" of the Confederate States of America, the Florida State Flag displays two diagonal red bars on a white field. The official state specifications indicate: The State Flag shall conform with standard commercial sizes and be of the following portions and descriptions: "The seal of the state, in diameter one-half the hoist, shall occupy the center of a white ground. Red bars, in width one-fifth the hoist, shall extend from each corner towards the center, to the outer rim of the seal."



The Great Seal of the State of Florida, at the intersection of the red diagonal bars, features a Native American Seminole woman scattering flowers, a steamboat, a cabbage palmetto tree and a brilliant sun. Florida is thusly represented as the land of sunshine, flowers, palm trees, rivers and lakes... "la Florida".

STATE NICKNAMES

The Sunshine State

Primarily supporting Florida's tourism industry, this nickname references the great measure of sunshine that falls upon the state each year.

The Alligator State

This nickname grew from the number of alligators that lived in the streams and swamplands of Florida.

The Everglade State

Florida is home to a vast network of Everglades.

The Orange State

The orange groves, so numerous across the state, earned this nickname for the state.

The Flower State

Florida is sometimes referred to as "The Land of Flowers," for the wildflowers that are so abundant from border to border.

The Peninsula State

In fact, Florida is a peninsula and, hence the nickname, "The Peninsula State."

The Gulf State

Florida is also nicknamed The Gulf State because of the great border with the Gulf of Mexico, to the west and south.

STATE BIRD

The Mocking Bird or **Mockingbird** (*Mimus polyglottos*) was adopted as the Florida state bird by Florida Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 3 approved on April 23, 1927.



STATE FLOWER



La Florida, Spanish for flowery, covered with flowers, or abounding in flowers, was named by Ponce de Leon in 1512. When it came to declaring an official state flower, the *Land of Flowers* had many, many choices. There was much support for the camellia and much support for the gardenia, but the native orange blossom's fragrance and widespread appeal won the honor. Today, it seems like this choice was simply meant to be.

The **Orange Blossom** (*Citrus sinensis*) was adopted by a Concurrent Resolution of the Florida state legislature on May 5, 1909.

Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.

Review Questions:

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

Answers to Review Questions:

