St. Johns County, Florida History

Flag

Seal

Location in the U.S. state of Florida

Florida's location in the U.S.

Founded	July 21, 1821
Seat	St. Augustine
Largest community	Ponte Vedra Beach
Area	
• **Total**	822 sq mi (2,129 km^2)
• **Land**	601 sq mi (1,557 km^2)
• **Water**	221 sq mi (572 km^2), 26.9%

Population (est.)	
• (2015)	226,640
• Density	363/sq mi (140/km²)
Congressional districts	4th, 6th
Time zone	Eastern: UTC-5/-4
Website	www.sjcfl.us

St. Johns County is a county of the U.S. state of Florida. As of the 2010 United States Census, the county's population was 190,039. The county seat and largest incorporated city is St. Augustine. St. Johns County is part of the Jacksonville metropolitan area.

The county was established in 1821. It is one of the two original counties established after Florida was ceded to the United States, at the start of the Florida Territorial period, and corresponded roughly with the former colonial province of East Florida. It was named for the St. Johns River, which runs along its western border.

Today, St. Johns County is primarily made up of residential bedroom communities for those who commute to Jacksonville. Tourism, primarily associated with St. Augustine and the many golf courses in the area, is the chief economic industry.

History

St. Johns County's history begins in 1821, when Colonel Robert Butler received Spanish East Florida from Captain-General Colonel José M. Coppinger. Butler represented Major General Andrew Jackson, federal military commissioner for the Florida provinces (las Floridas) with the powers of governor, exercising the powers of the Captain General and the Intendants of the Island of Cuba and the Governors of the said provinces, respectively, who ordained that all of the country lying east of the river Suwannee should be designated as the County of St. Johns.

St. Johns was established, along with Escambia County (in the former West Florida province), on July 21, 1821, just eleven days after Butler received Florida for the United States, and only five days from the date that the city of St. Augustine was incorporated.

The name Saint John's was derived from the Spanish mission (c. 1580) *San Juan del Puerto* or Saint John of the Harbor. The apostrophe was dropped in 1932 by the U.S. Department of the Interior because an apostrophe implied ownership.

It was a huge county, encompassing most of peninsular Florida, or more than 39,000 square miles; it was 475 miles long by 165 miles wide. Much of the land was uninhabited. Saint Augustine (1565) was the oldest permanent European settlement, and there were Native Americans in the county as well.