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Northwest Florida

# **John Gorrie Museum State Park**

*Pioneer of the Ice Machine*

## **Real Fun in the Real Florida**

While walking historic Apalachicola, visit John Gorrie Museum State Park to learn about the contributions of John Gorrie. In the early 1800s Apalachicola was a prominent port of trade, commerce and shipping in Florida. The museum reveals the remarkable and compassionate man and shows the amazing machine he created.

The Apalachicola River's rich floodplains attracted many settlers during the 1800s and played an

important role in the development of the town of Apalachicola. A customs office was opened in 1821. A young physician named John Gorrie arrived in 1833. Apalachicola was already flourishing as the third largest port on the Gulf, harboring ships carrying cotton back to Europe and New England. During his residence Gorrie served as mayor, postmaster, city treasurer, council member, bank director and founder of Trinity Church.

His most significant work, however, was in medicine. During an outbreak of yellow fever, Gorrie's concern for patients ill with the disease led him to develop a method for cooling their rooms. Gorrie invented a machine that produced ice, laying the groundwork for modern refrigeration and air-conditioning. He received the first U.S. Patent for mechanical refrigeration in 1851. Gorrie

died in 1855, unable to market his invention and witness the far-reaching effects of his discovery.

In Apalachicola, Gorrie Square is named in his honor. The square contains his grave site, a monument erected in 1899 by the Southern Ice Exchange, and the John Gorrie Museum.

## **History & Culture**

The coming of railroads in the 1850s affected Apalachicola's role in the formerly lucrative cotton trade. The town's dwindling economy was further shattered during the Civil War by a blockade that sealed off the harbor. The economy remained affected until a decade after the war, when a thriving lumber industry developed to revive the town's income. The town rode the crest of the

lumber boom until 1930, when the Apalachicola River floodplain was stripped of cypress.

Facing another economic crash, Apalachicola began to capitalize on a readily available natural resource. The bay had been a source of sponges and seafood since the early settlement days and seafood canning became the town's main industry.

Today, the seafood industry thrives with Apalachicola leading the state in the production of oysters and serving as a chief supplier of crabs, shrimp and fish. The Apalachicola Bay estuaries affect the fishing grounds of the Gulf of Mexico for 160 miles, and the Apalachicola River with its delicate balance of fresh and saltwater provides a breeding ground for many marine species. With the town's continuing economic stability depending on the protection of the river system, preservation of the river has become an important issue.

Today's Apalachicola is a picturesque setting of charming homes constructed in the 1800s and fishing fleets tied to piers with their daily catches.

## **Directions**

John Gorrie Museum is located on 6<sup>th</sup> Street, one block east off U.S. 98 in Apalachicola.

## **Park Guidelines**

- The museum is open Thursday through Monday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is closed Tuesday and Wednesday, Christmas, Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

- Museum entrance fee is \$1.00 (children 5 years old and under are free).
- Call (850) 653-9347 to arrange guided tours for groups.
- The museum offers many opportunities for visitors with disabilities. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the museum.

## **Contact Information**

Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

John Gorrie Museum State Park

P.O. Box 267

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