

MOUNT DORA TODAY



Shopping and dining in Mount Dora is a favorite pastime.

The town of Mount Dora was eventually incorporated into a city in 1953 and has experienced growth since that time. Today, Mount Dora is home to more than 10,000. The City retains the flavor of a small town with many historic buildings, its large canopy oak trees and is known for its variety of antique and specialty shops and numerous special events throughout the year.

Eight major annual events including the Mount Dora Arts Festival, an antique boat show, antique car show, sailing regatta, golf tournament, bicycle festival, crafts fair and the annual Christmas lighting festival draw thousands of visitors.

An interesting trivia fact: The 1981 film

Honky Tonk Freeway was filmed in Mount Dora, and many Mount Dora buildings were temporarily painted pink for the film's set.



Mount Dora retains an artsy flair today.

Today, Mount Dora is a still-growing City with a flair for the arts, and the City remains a popular tourist destination.



Every July 4th, Mount Dorans and visitors gather to watch the elaborate fireworks display over Lake Dora.



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The Fascinating History of Mount Dora, Florida



A 1900s photo of the Shamrock Building in downtown Mount Dora.



Mount Dora's history is alive in its historic buildings and architecture, as seen in this close-up of the Donnelly House.

HISTORY OF MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA



Dora Ann Drawdy, one of Mount Dora's first settlers.

The City of Mount Dora has a fascinating history.

The large, beautiful lake upon which the City grew is named for Ms. Dora Ann Drawdy (1819-1885), who homesteaded in the mid-1800s and befriended federal surveyors with her warm hospitality. In 1846, the surveyors named Lake Dora for her, and years later in 1883,

the small but growing town was named for the lake. Today, Ms. Drawdy is buried in Umatilla.

More settlers came to the area after Ms. Drawdy, including Mr. Ross C. Tremain and Capt. John Philip Donnelly, and each proved crucial to the growing settlement's vitality.

Tremain became the town's first official postmaster in 1880. The town was known as *Royellou* at the time, unofficially named for Tremain's three children, Roy, Ella and Louis.



Ross C. Tremain was Mount Dora's first postmaster. Pictured above is Mount Dora's first post office.

Three years later, the town's name was officially changed to *Mount Dora* to reflect the fact that the settlement rests upon a plateau 184 feet above sea level – an unusual feature in Florida.

A popular winter retreat for hunters, fishermen and boaters, *The Alexander House* opened in 1883 – a two-story hotel with 10 rooms. The Alexander House was renamed *The Lake House* in 1893, and in 1903, The Lake House



An early photo of The Alexander House. The Lakeside Inn, as it is known today, still hosts guests from around the world.

was renamed *Lakeside Inn* and remains in operation today. Visitors included Presidents Coolidge and Eisenhower, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.

In 1887, the arrival of the railroad stimulated the local economy and carried tourists and freight.



Mount Dora's railroad depot is home to the Mount Dora Area Chamber of Commerce today.

Tremain opened the first orange packing house in 1891, although surrounding groves were destroyed by the great freezes of 1894 and '95. Also during the 1890s, fertilizer factories were established as well as a cannery.



R.C. Tremain & Son was Mount Dora's first industry.

In 1910, the town was granted a charter with Capt. John Philip Donnelly as its first Mayor. With 371 residents, Mount Dora boasted two general stores, a hardware store, a drugstore, two churches and a town hall. *The Mount Dora Voice* became the town's first newspaper.

Donnelly's home, a Queen Anne style structure, was originally built in 1893 and is now listed on the National

Register of Historic Places.

The early 1920s marked a significant boom in residential growth and business development, and Mount Dora began the transformation from a country town into a city.

During this time, Mount Dora began investing in its public infrastructure. Streetlights, a water system, curbs and paved roads were installed. The town's first two public parks, Gilbert Park and Donnelly Park, were created after landowners Earl Gilbert and J. P. Donnelly donated prime pieces of land downtown and along Lake Dora's shore.



R. H. True's General Merchandise was one of Mount Dora's first downtown stores.



Donnelly's Victorian home today.



Mount Dorans gather in the Community Building for opening night of the Community Concert Series.

The Mount Dora Community Building was built largely from funds raised by Mount Dora residents, despite economic hard times during the late '20s. A determined group of residents pulled together to raise the necessary funds, and

in 1929, the impressive Mediterranean-style structure opened with one seat for every Mount Dora resident — approximately 800. Since then, the building has served as the City's primary performance and meeting venue, and today, the building is slated for a comprehensive restoration.