

IF I COULD TEACH
THE HISTORY OF OUR
ORANGE COUNTY PIONEERS....

Cornerstone Charter Academy

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If I could teach the history of our Orange County pioneers, I would tell you how this community started. These hardworking, brave, and courageous people settled here and created the towns we live in today. Orange County pioneers aren't just people from a long time ago they are our history.

Back then, life in Florida was harsh. Thick forests, marshes, and swamps made up the landscape. Indians attack early pioneers. Bugs, especially mosquitos were everywhere. In fact Orange County was originally called Mosquito County until 1845. Can you imagine surviving in Florida without insect repellent, electricity, or air conditioning?

Do you know who first settled in the area called Pine Castle? His name was Will Harney. He was from Kentucky and came here after the Civil War. Using the pine trees he built his family a large home on Lake Conway. This home was later nicknamed "Pine Castle" for its size and beauty. That is why this area of Orange County was named.

Pine Castle. Over the years, Pine Castle has flourished.

Another area called Fort Gatlin was founded to protect early pioneers from Indians. It was built between three lakes: Gem Mary, Jennie Jewel, and Lake Gatlin. Life was rough for these soldiers who primarily fought the Seminole Indians. Eventually the army closed the fort, but many families stayed behind renaming the town, Orlando.

The history of Eatonville and Maitland is unique. At the time, there were lots of Indians and former slaves in the area. Three union officers including Captain Eaton and Captain Lawrence founded the area of Maitland. They used former slaves to clear the land in Maitland, but treated them fairly. Tony Taylor was elected Mayor and Joe Clarke was elected Town Marshal both of whom were former slaves. Mr. Clarke came up with the idea of creating an all black town. The Union Captains supported his idea and helped Mr. Clarke create Eatonville, an all black town.

Mr. Chase and Mr. Chapman founded Winter Park. They bought 600 acres of land for \$13,000 on lakes Maitland and Osceola. For health reasons, they were looking for a winter resort to avoid harsh winters. Industries included tourism, citrus, and logging. Canals were dug to connect the lakes to float the logs to a sawmill. The Dinky Dock train connected Winter Park to Orlando. This is still a beautiful city today.

Like many of the pioneers who came before me, I am proud to be part of this great community and am grateful for their contributions. I honor those who came before us by continuing to build our community, being involved, giving back, keeping our lakes clean, and protecting the environment, and I am proud to be an American, a Floridian, a citizen of Orange County, and a resident of Belle Isle. I pledge to work to build this community and in doing so honor those pioneers.