

TIMELINE of FLORIDA JEWISH HISTORY

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1513	Juan Ponce de León discovers Florida for Spain and only Catholics can live in Florida for the next 250 years.
1565	Jews as <i>conversos</i> believed to be among the early settlers and soldiers of St. Augustine.
1763	England acquires Florida from Spain in the Treaty of Paris. For the first time, people other than Catholics—including Jews—are allowed. Alexander Solomons, Joseph D. Pallaccios, and Samuel Israel arrive in Pensacola as the first-known Jews to settle in Florida.
1769	Isaac Monsanto expelled from New Orleans and settles in Pensacola.
1783	England returns Florida to Spain, who orders a census that reveals a Polish Jew David Moses is operating a hide store in St. Augustine. Needing settlers, Spain allows Jews to remain in Florida.
1820	Moses Elias Levy begins purchase of 100,000 acres in what are now St. Johns, Volusia and Alachua Counties and organizes the first development corporation in Florida. In 1822, he builds “Pilgrimage Plantation,” a refuge for Jews that lasted until 1835. He publishes a plan to end slavery and also serves as territory’s first education commissioner.
1821	Lawyer Samuel Myers settles in Pensacola, becomes alderman and an officer in the military. In 1822, his wife Louisa gives birth to Virginia Myers , the first-known Jewish child born in Florida; the family relocated.
1836	West Point graduate Abraham C. Myers serves as Army Quartermaster for the Second Seminole Indian War (1835–42). City of Fort Myers is named to honor him.
1836	Raphael Jacob Moses opens a store in Tallahassee, later becomes a lawyer and then practices in Apalachicola.
1837	David Levy Yulee , a son of Moses Elias Levy, considered “Architect of Statehood,” elected to Florida Legislative Council (1837), helps write Florida’s Constitution (1838), is territorial delegate to the US Congress in 1841, elected Florida’s first US Senator when Florida becomes the 27th state (1845), is first person of Jewish ancestry to serve in the U.S. Senate (1845–51 and 1855–61), and organizes the first cross-state railroad (1853). The town of Yulee (Nassau County) and Levy County honor his name.
1844	Emaline Miley settles in Tampa with husband and plants first orange grove in area.
1850	Philip P. Dzialynski arrives in Jacksonville. His is the longest-known continuing Jewish family in Florida.
1856	Philip’s sister Helena D. Williams gives birth in Jasper to Rachelle Williams , the first child born in Florida to a Jewish family (Dzialynski) that planted roots in the state and has continued to live here as Jews since 1850.

1857	First Jewish cemetery in Florida established in Jacksonville.
1857	George Dzialynski is first boy in the Dzialynski family born in Florida, in Jacksonville.
1865	Floridian Jews serve in the Civil War. Judah P. Benjamin from Louisiana serves as Attorney General, Secretary of State and Secretary of War for the Confederacy (1861–65). At end of the Civil War, he escapes from the Union Army by hiding in the Gamble mansion in Manatee County.
1869	Samuel Fleishman , long time resident of Marianna, is murdered for giving credit in his store to freed slaves.
1871	Charles Slager serves as postmaster, sheriff and tax collector of Hillsborough County.
1874	B'nai B'rith opens a chapter, first Jewish organization in Florida.
1875	Jacob R. Cohen helps write charter for Town of Orlando and elected alderman. Later conducts first state-wide appeal for Jews in Palestine.
1876	Florida's oldest Jewish congregation Temple Beth El founded in Pensacola.
1879	Henry Brash elected Mayor of Marianna, the first-known of nearly 200 Jewish mayors in Florida.
1880s	Jacksonville has the largest Jewish population in the state.
1880	Morris Dzialynski of Jacksonville and Herman Glogowski of Tampa serve as mayors of their cities.
1880	Earliest known Jewish school in Florida established in Tallahassee.
1882	Temple Ahavath Chesed is founded in Jacksonville with Morris Dzialynski as president.
1884	Simon and Solomon Benjamin build Florida's first-known ice-making plant in Ocala.
1887	Congregation B'nai Zion founded in Key West with Morris Zion as president.
1888	United Hebrews of Ocala congregation is founded; its synagogue is the oldest extant in Florida.
1890	Dr. Louis Oppenheimer of Bartow establishes the local school system.
1891	Discriminatory peddler's tax imposed in Key West, prompting most Jews to leave for Miami or Tampa.
1892	Jews settle in West Palm Beach, following the path of Henry Flagler's railroad to South Florida.
1895	Key West Jews raise funds for Cuban revolutionaries fighting for independence from Spain.
1896	First permanent Jewish settlers arrive in the Miami area.
1897	Dr. Philip P. Phillips settles in Orlando, where he becomes King of Citrus with empire of 5,000 acres.
1898	Gertrude Dzialynski Corbett is probably Florida's first woman lawyer admitted to the bar.

1900	There are six Jewish congregations in Florida.
1907	First <i>brit milah</i> held in Miami-Dade County (for Eddie Cohen , son of Ida & Isidor Cohen).
1910	Louis Brown is first-known Jew to settle in Broward County.
1913	B'nai Zion is first congregation in Miami-Dade County; later becomes Beth David.
1913	First Jews on Miami Beach are Jennie and Joe Weiss who start Joe's Stone Crab Restaurant.
1931	Brown family are first-known Jews to settle in Boca Raton.
1933	David Sholtz of Daytona Beach begins his term as governor of Florida (1933–36).
1939	German ocean liner St. Louis cruises off coast of Florida before US prevents European Jewish refugees from landing and forces their return to Europe, where 254 perish in the Holocaust.
1940s	Rear Admiral Ellis M. Zacharias of Jacksonville is the deputy chief of naval intelligence and conducts psychological warfare against the Japanese that leads to the US victory in the Pacific.
1943	Mitchell Wolfson serves as mayor of Miami Beach, the first of 17 Jewish mayors in that city. In 1949, he and Sidney Meyer start Florida's first TV station.
1953	Abe Aronovitz serves as mayor of Miami, the only Jew to serve in this office.
1957	Leonard and Julius Rosen develop Cape Coral in southwest Florida, a planned community with 400 miles of canals.
1959	Approximately 10,000 Cuban Jews seek freedom in south Florida.
1960s	Jules and Jack Freeman plant the largest citrus grove in the world, 24,000 acres (37 square miles) in Arcadia; they also develop San Carlos Park, a city in Lee County.
1966	First US postage stamp of living person is issued with image of master clown Lou Jacobs of Sarasota.
1968	Marshall Warren Nirenberg of Orlando and a graduate of the University of Florida awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for deciphering the genetic code.
1970	Burton Young of Miami elected first Jewish president Florida Bar.
1975	Richard Stone of Miami Beach begins term as US Senator (1975–80), the second Florida Jew to hold this office.
1975	Arthur England of Miami begins term as justice on Florida's Supreme Court (1975–81); becomes chief justice in 1978. More than 250 Jews have served as judges in Florida.
1976	Dr. Richard Hodes of Tampa elected first Jewish president of Florida Medical Association.
1978	Isaac Bashevis Singer of Miami Beach awarded Nobel Prize in Literature.

1981	Raymond Ehrlich of Jacksonville begins term on Florida's Supreme Court (1981–91); becomes chief justice in 1988.
1984	MOSAIC project created to document Florida's Jewish history; traveling exhibit evolves into the Jewish Museum of Florida.
1987	Gerald Kogan of Miami begins term as justice on Florida's Supreme Court (1987–98); becomes chief justice in 1996.
1990	After eight years of statewide research of 250+ years of hidden Florida Jewish history, the traveling exhibit <i>MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida</i> begins its tour to 13 cities.
1990	Gwen Margolis of Miami becomes first female Florida Senate president, the first in the nation.
1994	Florida is one of first states to mandate Holocaust education.
1995	Jewish Museum of Florida opens in restored Beth Jacob Synagogue on South Beach.
1995	Miami Beach High School graduate Robert Rubin appointed 70th secretary of the US Treasury.
1997	Barbara Pariente of West Palm Beach becomes the second woman and first Jewish woman appointed to the Florida Supreme Court (1997–2019); becomes chief justice in 2004.
2000	Susan and Stanley Rosenblatt of Miami win \$145 billion tobacco verdict, largest civil damage award in US history.
2003	Governor Jeb Bush signs a bill designating each January as Florida Jewish History Month .
2004	Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Broward County elected to US Congress, the first Jewish woman to represent Florida.
2006	President George W. Bush signs a proclamation designating each May as Jewish American Heritage Month to honor contributions by American Jews to our nation. The Jewish Museum of Florida was the birthplace of this legislation, with the congressional effort led by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz.
2012	Jewish Museum of Florida becomes part of Florida International University (JMOF-FIU).
2012	Miami Beach High School graduate and Miami Dolphins football team owner Stephen Ross begins \$25 billion Hudson Yards project in Manhattan.
2014	Journalist Steven Sotloff of Miami is murdered in Syria by ISIS.
2017	Using controlled release fertilizer developed by Sarasota's Ed Rosenthal and NASA, the first crop of lettuce is grown in space and consumed by astronauts.
2018	St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society convenes the <i>Conversos</i> Conference.

2018	Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team owner Jeffrey Vinik begins \$3 billion, 52-acre project in Tampa with Cascade Investment (Bill Gates) to be completed 2027; if successful, will be world's first WELL-certified community.
2018	Holocaust survivor Tibor Hollo opens tallest building in Florida, 85 stories in Miami.
2018	David Wolkowsky donates his 14-acre Ballast Key property to US Fish and Wildlife Service.
2019	Miami native Nikki Fried elected commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the sixth Jewish member over the history of the Florida Cabinet.
2019	Robert Luck of Miami appointed to Florida's Supreme Court.