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This September, explore the past from malls to manatees – and how to tackle your own family’s story

Here’s hoping to see you in September at the Orange County Regional History Center, where visitors can explore Central Florida’s past in dynamic and engaging ways. From the transformation of our shopping landscape to the enduring beauty of Florida’s natural environment, the month’s programs highlight stories both familiar and surprising. Our monthly Lunch & Learn takes a fascinating look at Colonial Plaza, Orlando’s first shopping center, while the family-friendly fun at History Alive focuses on natural Florida, and an oral history workshop opens doors to telling your own family’s stories. Together with the ongoing special exhibition *Orlando Collected*, these programs offer fresh opportunities to connect with our community and the people who shaped it. Mark your calendars and learn more at TheHistoryCenter.org/Events!

Lunch & Learn: Colonial Plaza and the Era of the Malls

Friday, September 5, 2025, Noon – 1 p.m.

The opening of Colonial Plaza in 1956 marked a change in Orlando and caused a shift away from the city’s once-popular downtown business district. Throughout the following decades, the plaza would undergo several changes, including its conversion into an enclosed mall. By the 1970s and 1980s, Orlando was home to many popular malls, making it a shopping destination in Florida. Join our historian, Rachel Williams, for a look at the rise and fall of shopping malls in Central Florida. Participate online or in-person. Closed caption available online.

Cost: Free for History Center Members; General Public \$5. Cost with lunch: \$12 for History Center Members; General Public \$17. (Lunch must be ordered by 9 a.m. on Thursday, September 4.)

Details and to register: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/Lunch-Learn-Colonial-Plaza

History Alive: Our Natural Environment

Saturday, September 6, 2025, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

From arid plains to swampy wetlands, Central Florida’s natural environment has seen many changes. At this month’s History Alive, visitors can dig into natural history with guided tours and family-friendly activities. Learn how to tell a tree’s age and have fun with our Archaeological Dig Puzzle and Florida Plant & Animal Matching Game, featuring manatees and more. Earn prizes as you play!

Guided museum tours: 10:30 a.m., Noon, 1:45 p.m., 3:30 p.m.

Details: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/History-Alive-Our-Natural-Environment

Preserving Your History Series: Oral History

Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 1 – 4 p.m.

Learn the art of documenting your family's history through oral histories – a time-honored practice for passing down generation to generation. Learn how to document oral histories, what questions you might want to ask your family members, and more! Each participant will be provided with a Gaylord Archival Waterproof Stone Paper Notebook to get you started on your oral history journey. Additionally, we will have a lightbox available so you can photograph any family heirlooms.

This program completes a three-part series presented in conjunction with our special *Orlando Collected* exhibition, which celebrates the City of Orlando's 150th anniversary.

Details and to register: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/History-Series-Oral-History

Continuing On Display

Orlando Collected

Through January 11, 2026

Presented to honor Orlando's 150th anniversary, *Orlando Collected* constitutes one of the History Center's most ambitious exhibitions to date, designed to reveal the City Beautiful's past through 150 objects. Working with contributions from local historians, community organizations, and individuals, the museum has thoughtfully collected and preserved complex stories of our community. These memories, photographs, documents, and artifacts weave the intricate tapestry of our city's past.

Pocket Exhibit: *The 85'ers*

Through October 26, 2025

Before women's soccer captured the world's attention, the 17 athletes of the first U.S. Women's National Team helped lay the foundation for the global success the sport enjoys today. Through striking portraits by acclaimed photographer and filmmaker Randy Bacon, *The 85'ers* captures the authenticity, strength, and tenacity of these groundbreaking athletes. This pocket exhibit also highlights the team's meaningful connections to Central Florida. While the team's popularity has grown nationwide, the athletes' numerous ties to the local community make their achievements even more special for fans in the Orlando area.

The Orange County Regional History Center, housed in a historic courthouse at 65 E. Central Blvd. in downtown Orlando, features four floors of permanent and special exhibitions. The museum is a Smithsonian Institution affiliate and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is funded in part by Orange County Government through the Community & Family Services Department under Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings and the Board of County Commissioners. The Historical Society of Central Florida Inc. is supported by United Arts of Central Florida and sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. For more information, visit TheHistoryCenter.org.

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