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August at the History Center: Florida Stories, Family Fun, and Swamp Legends After Dark

The Orange County Regional History Center invites visitors to explore Florida traditions, early Orlando, enchanted tales, and mysterious creatures during a full lineup of August programs. Events include hands-on family activities, a Lunch & Learn featuring bird's-eye-view maps of 19th-century Orlando, a sensory-friendly afternoon, and an after-hours journey into Florida folklore.

Visitors to the museum can also see *Extra! Extra! The Orlando Sentinel Turns 150*, a special pocket exhibit featuring photographs, archival materials, and artifacts that trace the newspaper's long relationship with the community.

Also, the special exhibition *Created in Community: Portraits of Pulse* continues at the Terrace Gallery of Orlando's City Hall through August 23. This powerful exhibition features 49 portraits honoring the lives lost and created through a collaborative community effort. Learn more at TheHistoryCenter.org/Exhibitions and TheHistoryCenter.org/Events.

History Alive: Florida Lifestyle

Saturday, August 1, 2026, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

From cattle ranches to citrus groves, Florida's communities were shaped by creativity and hard work. Explore the traditions, tools, and trades that helped build Florida into the vibrant state it is today. Discover how families lived in early Florida and the skills that kept communities thriving across generations.

Activities include navigating the challenges of early cattle ranching in the "Cracker Trail Board Game," shaping butter with pioneer-style molds, and taking on a citrus-packing challenge inspired by the Dr. Phillips Packing House, with a hands-on look at how Florida oranges were graded, packed, and shipped.

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

Details: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/History-Alive-Florida-Lifestyle/

Lunch & Learn: Orlando in the Late 1800s

Friday, August 7, 2026, Noon–1 p.m.

Orlando was incorporated as a town in 1875 and as a city in 1885. Using bird's-eye-view maps from 1884 and 1890, History Center historian Rachel Williams will highlight key people and places in early Orlando and explore how the city's beginnings helped shape the Orlando we know today.

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, August 6.)

Details & registration: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/Lunch-Learn-Orlando-in-the-Late-1800s

Sensory Sunday: Enchanted Fairytales

Sunday, August 16, 2026, Noon–4 p.m.

Fairies are best known for being mischievous, tiny, and glittery! This month, we celebrate the return of Fairy Doors at Orlando's Leu Gardens with a magical day of family-friendly activities at the History Center. Our Sensory Sundays offer a welcoming experience for guests with autism spectrum disorder and sensory sensitivities. Accommodations include reduced exhibit audio and lighting effects, a social narrative, noise-reducing earmuffs, sensory tools, a quiet space, and hands-on activities throughout the museum.

Details: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/Enchanted-Fairytales/

History After Dark: Swamp Legends

Friday, August 21, 2026, 5–9 p.m.

Florida has long inspired tales of mysterious creatures and unexplained encounters – from prehistoric-looking alligators and the elusive Skunk Ape to the Creature from the Black Lagoon movies filmed at our state's springs.

At this fun after-hours event, explore these mysteries at the History Center with guided tours, cryptid presentations, courtroom reenactments, games and trivia, live music, themed drinks, and activities throughout the galleries. Food and beverages will be available for purchase. This adults-focused evening offers a chance to experience Florida history from a different perspective.

Details & registration: TheHistoryCenter.org/Event/History-After-Dark-Swamp-Legends

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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Media Advisory: July 24, 2026