
Section 5

Community and Environment

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5.1 History of Tallahassee/Leon County

Leon County, originally part of Escambia County and later a part of Gadsden County, was created by the Territorial Legislature in 1824. Named for Ponce De Leon, Leon County was one of the most populous and prosperous counties in ante-bellum Florida.

Tallahassee, named for the "old fields" that it once encompassed, earned the title early in the 16th century from the Apalachee Indians who inhabited the area. Legend says that the final spelling was chosen by Octavia Walton, daughter of the territorial governor of Florida. Today, Tallahassee exemplifies not only the influence of the Indian, but also that of the Spanish, French and English who occupied the area in succession.

The City of Tallahassee, the county seat and only incorporated city in Leon County, was established in 1825, following a decision by the legislature to locate the capital of the new Florida Territory midway between the population centers of St. Augustine and Pensacola.

The following outline represents a brief historical sketch of the area:

500- 1528 Apalachee Indians flourish in the area, settling into villages and displaying a flair for agriculture, trading and pottery.

1528 An expedition under Panfilo de Narvaez become the first Europeans to come into contact with the local Indians.

1539 The Hernando de Soto expedition winters in an area that is within one mile of the present Capitol building and celebrates the first Christmas in Tallahassee.

1528-1607 Contact with Spanish invaders decimates the Apalachee population through disease and warfare.

1607 Apalachee Indians ask the Spanish Governor to send missionaries into the area.

1633 The Spanish establish a mission chain from St. Augustine to Tallahassee (Fort San Luis).

1704 Spanish missions are destroyed by combined Creek Indians and British forces; Apalachee Indians leave the area.

1725 Creek Indians enter the area from Georgia and Alabama. These and other Indians in the area later become known as Seminoles (runaways).

1763 The Tallahassee area becomes a British possession when Spain cedes Florida to England in exchange for Cuba.

1783 Spain regains possession of Florida.

1818 General Andrew Jackson invades Florida and drives the Seminole Indians from Leon County.

1819 Florida is ceded by Spain to the United States.

1822 The Territory of Florida is created by an act of Congress.

5.1 History of Tallahassee/Leon County

1824 Leon County is created by the Territorial Legislature with Tallahassee as the County seat and State Capital. The first land survey of the area is made. The City of Tallahassee was incorporated the following year.

1834 The Tallahassee-St. Marks railroad is constructed (reported to be the third oldest railroad in the United States).

1845 Florida becomes the 27th State.

1853 The West Florida Seminary is established; it later becomes the Florida State College for Women; today it is the Florida State University.

1861 Florida secedes from the Union.

1865 Federal troops are repelled at the battle of Natural Bridge in southeast Leon County, leaving Tallahassee as the only Confederate capital east of the Mississippi River not captured during the Civil War.

1887 The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University is established.

1919 The Legislature passes a new city charter for Tallahassee, authorizing a Commission-Manager form of government.

1931 The Lively Vocational Technical School is established.

1966 The Tallahassee Community College is established.

1997 Tallahassee citizens select their first directly-elected Mayor since 1919, replacing the system of yearly rotation among the City Commissioners.

2002 The citizens of Leon County voted to make Leon County a Home Rule Charter County. The charter provides citizens more direct participation in county government.

5.2 Tallahassee's History of Annexations

The City of Tallahassee has had a long history of annexation activity as a means of achieving growth. During its first 150 years, Tallahassee expanded from one-quarter of a mile in size to 28.18 square miles by 1980. Since 1980, the City has witnessed a tremendous increase in annexation activity with nearly 75 additional square miles having been added during this time, swelling the size of Tallahassee to 103.06 square miles as of December 31, 2008. Many of the annexations in the early 1980's were accomplished through a double-referendum process that required the approval of City voters. Since 1985 the vast majority of the City's annexations have been achieved through a voluntary process where the owners of properties petition for inclusion into the City.

Figure 5-1
Tallahassee's History of Annexations (1927-2008)

Year	Beginning Size (Square Miles)	Area Increase (Square Miles)	Ending Size (Square Miles)
1927 - 1959	2.30	12.18	14.48
1960 - 1979	14.48	13.70	28.18
1980 - 1984	28.18	26.79	54.97
1985 - 1989	54.97	7.25	62.22
1990 - 1994	62.22	19.64	81.86
1995	81.86	1.82	83.68
1996	83.68	10.29	93.97
1997	93.91	2.04	96.01
1998	96.01	0.57	96.58
1999	96.58	1.63	98.21
2000	98.21	0.29	98.50
2001	98.50	2.56	101.06
2002	101.06	0.38	101.44
2003	101.44	0.46	101.90
2004	101.90	0.10	102.00
2005	102.00	0.69	102.69
2006	102.69	0.28	102.97
2007	102.97	0.08	103.05
2008	103.05	0.01	103.06

Source: City of Tallahassee, Public Works Department, Engineering

5.3 Climate

Tallahassee has a mild, moist climate characteristic of the Gulf States, experiencing a subtropical summer similar to the rest of Florida. In contrast to the Florida peninsula, Northwest Florida of which Tallahassee is a part, experiences four seasons. Prevailing winds average 6.2 miles per hour and are from a southerly direction in the spring and summer, then shift toward a more northerly direction later in the year.

Figure 5-2
Climactic Data for the Tallahassee Area

Month	Avg. High Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Avg. Low Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Avg. Days Above 90 degrees (Fahrenheit)	Avg. Days Below 32 degrees (Fahrenheit)	Avg. Number of Days With Rain	Avg. Rainfall (Inches)
January	64	40	0	10	9	5.4
February	67	42	0	7	8	4.6
March	74	48	0	2	8	6.5
April	80	53	1	3	6	3.6
May	87	62	9	0	8	5.0
June	91	70	19	0	13	6.9
July	92	73	23	0	16	8.0
August	92	73	22	0	14	7.0
September	89	69	15	0	9	5.0
October	81	57	2	0	5	3.3
November	73	48	0	3	6	3.9
December	66	42	0	9	8	4.1
Annual	79.5	56.3	91	34	110	63.2

Source: National Climatic Data Center

5.4 Public Safety

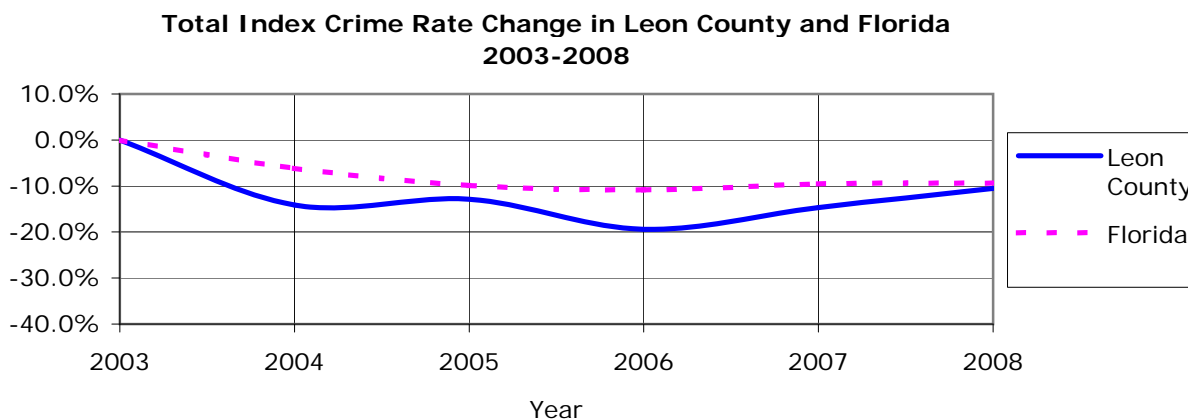
Between 2007 and 2008, Leon County experienced a 4.2% increase in the total crime index rate (rate per 100,000 population) compared to a 0.1% increase for the State of Florida. The index rate for violent crimes in Leon County increased 2.9% in 2008 over 2007 levels with an 11.9% increase in the number of robberies and a 20.0% decrease in the number of forcible sex offenses. Property crime rates increased 4.5% between 2007 and 2008 with the number of burglaries up 7.8% during the period and a 17.3% decrease in the number of motor vehicle thefts.

Figure 5-3
Leon County Crime Rates, Rate per 100,000 Residents (2003-2008)

Type of Crime	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Avg. Annual Rate Change (2003-2008)
Violent Crimes	736.6	756.4	781.6	776.5	815.7	839.6	2.6%
Murder	3.1	4.9	4.1	3.7	1.8	5.1	10.0%
Forcible Sex Offenses	108.8	114.4	103.3	101.7	102.6	81.5	-5.8%
Robbery	158.1	148.2	170.0	194.1	239.7	266.3	10.4%
Aggravated Assault	466.5	488.5	504.2	477.1	471.6	486.7	0.8%
Property Crime	4,871.2	4,112.2	4,149.6	3,842.2	4,026.1	4,207.1	-2.9%
Burglary	1,228.2	1,368.3	1,248.6	1,128.8	1,253.6	1,341.6	1.8%
Larceny	3,280.2	2,355.9	2,555.8	2,427.9	2,482.6	2,627.6	-4.4%
Motor Vehicle Theft	362.8	388.0	345.2	285.5	289.9	237.9	-8.4%
Index Rate (per 100,000)	5,607.8	4,868.6	4,931.2	4,618.8	4,841.8	5,046.7	-2.1%

Source: Florida Statistical Analysis Center, Florida Department of Law Enforcement

Figure 5-4
Total Index Crime Rate Change in Leon County and Florida (2003-2008)



Note: Index Rate is per 100,000 population

Source: Florida Statistical Analysis Center, Florida Department of Law Enforcement

5.5 Local Government

Since 1919 the City of Tallahassee has operated under a Commission-Manager form of government. The Mayor and four Commissioners are elected at-large for staggered four-year terms with elections for two commission seats being held every other year. The City Commission appoints four officers to administer the duties of the city: City Manager, City Treasurer-Clerk, City Auditor, and City Attorney. The County is guided by an elected seven-member Board of County Commissioners, five of whom are elected to serve specific commission districts and two members are elected at-large. Each Commissioner is elected to a four-year term with the position of Chairperson selected annually on a rotating basis. The County Administrator is appointed by the Board to oversee all functions, directives and policies. The County Administrator administers all county offices not governed by elected County officials. Elected County officials include the Sheriff, Property Appraiser, Clerk of the Court, Supervisor of Elections and Tax Collector.

Figure 5-5
Property Tax Rate (2008)

Taxing Authority	Millage Rate	Where Tax is Applied
Leon County Commission		
General Property Tax	7.8500	Anywhere in Leon County
County Health MSTU	0.0000	Anywhere in Leon County
County EMS MSTU	0.5000	Anywhere in Leon County
Leon County School Board		
State Law	5.1460	Anywhere in Leon County
Local Board	2.4500	Anywhere in Leon County
School Bond	0.2240	Anywhere in Leon County
Tallahassee City Commission	3.2115	Within City Limits Only
NW Florida Water Mgmt. District	0.0450	Anywhere in Leon County
Downtown Improvement Authority	1.0000	In the Downtown Area Only
Inside City Limits Total	19.4265	
Outside City Limits Total	16.2150	
Downtown Improvement Area	20.4265	

Source: Leon County Property Appraiser