

Seminole Rest

A Pre-Historical & Historical Interpretive Park

WELCOME!

Seminole Rest Snyder's Mound - Instone House

River Road, Oak Hill, Florida

From Route 1 in Oak Hill, turn east at light on Halifax Avenue, then north on River Road to the entrance (about 1.5 miles from Route 1).

An ancient Native American Mound with a half-mile wheelchair accessible trail with wayside exhibits. The site has parking and rest room facilities. It is open 7 days week from 6:00 am until sunset

Seminole Rest consists of several prehistoric shell mounds dating from 2,000 BC to 1565 AD. Snyder's Mound, the largest mound at this site, is unique because few structures this large remain intact today. Two turn of the century buildings occupy the mounds and have aided in their preservation. The National Park Service now preserves the site.

For further information contact the Canaveral National Seashore Visitor Information Center at (386) 428-3384 ext. 10.

SITE PREHISTORY AND HISTORY

The Timucuan and Ais Indians inhabited this part of Florida when the Spanish arrived. They raised corn, beans, and squash and supplemented their diets by gathering berries, nuts, tubers, and seeds and by hunting and fishing. Women maintained the crops and gathered food while the men hunted, fished, and waged war. Small villages included several extended families. Houses were constructed of logs with thatched roofs and woven twig or mat siding.

Seasonally, groups settled along the coast to gather and process clams, oysters, and fish that supplemented the meat and agricultural products eaten the rest of the year. Women and children were responsible for collecting the clams and processing them for later use while the men fished, hunted, and protected their families. The same sites were revisited year after year, and the large mounds that once dotted the Florida coastline were created.

At Seminole Rest several mounds exist, evidencing that this lifeway continued for hundreds of years. The largest is Snyder's Mound, which lies on the shore of Mosquito Lagoon. It was a large quahog clam processing center and dates from approximately A.D. 600-1420. It was used primarily between A.D. 700-1100. It measures approximately 740 feet from north to south and about 340 feet east to west and is approximately 13 feet high. Archeological testing recovered very few artifacts, which suggests that the mound was used seasonally for the gathering and processing of clams that were then taken elsewhere and consumed. Processing would have consisted of removing the shell and drying or smoking the clams. Over many seasons the clamshells accumulated and resulted in the large mound. No evidence of burials in the mound has been found and none is expected given the difficulty of excavation and the burial practices of the time.

Fiddle Crab Mound is a much smaller shell-capped sand mound, purposefully constructed, approximately 15 feet in diameter, between River Road and the canal. It was probably a platform for a structure, although no archeological evidence could be found of post molds that would have signified a structure. A much larger range of artifacts was found with this mound than with Snyder Mound, which suggests that the site was occupied seasonally during the late winter and spring and that it may have been a seasonal base camp used by a family. A series of four small middens or refuse sites are also associated with Fiddle Crab Mound, which appears to have been constructed on an earlier midden. Radiocarbon dating indicates that Fiddle Crab Mound and associated middens date between A.D. 120-1040.

Occupation of the site began even earlier, as indicated by the inclusion of a type of pottery known as Orange series. This pottery dates as early as 2000 B.C. or as late as 500 B.C. Further study would be required to learn more about the earliest period of site occupation.

In the 1500s Europeans arrived, bringing disease and social disintegration. The Timucuan and Ais ceased to exist as separate tribal units, and sites like Seminole Rest were abandoned.

Permanent settlement of this part of Florida began after the Civil War. The area had been harvested for live oaks used to build ships. This gave the name Oak Hill to the mound that later lent its name to the town to the west. Today the mound is called Snyder's Mound or Seminole Rest.

The site was settled in the early 1870s, the pioneer period for this part of Florida. It was inland from the ocean, mostly low and swampy, and more difficult to get to than the communities along the coast, so this area was not heavily settled until drainage projects could create large expanses of dry land for citrus farms. With the coming of the railroads at the end of the 19th century, the citrus industry grew rapidly. This area has remained relatively rural and agricultural despite the rapid population growth to the north, south, and west created by the burgeoning aerospace and tourist industries.

Snyder's Mound was divided into several lots during the 1870s and 1880s. One lot became the location of the post office serving Oak Hill. It escaped the fate of many of the other mounds along the east coast that were used for construction materials for roads because its owners, the Tumors and the Snyders, refused to sell.

Structures now on the site are the historic Instone house, the historic caretaker's house, a non-historic garage, and pilings from a non-historic boat dock.



Instone House

The Instone house was constructed sometime prior to 1890 and may have been moved from its original location elsewhere on the mound. It was enlarged from nine rooms to 14 plus three baths through the addition of a third floor by Hatton Tumor, who owned the property from 1890-1911. The structure is of a late Victorian style with steeply pitched roof and end gables. It is wood frame with board and batten siding covered with yellow shingles. It originally had porches surrounding it, but only the porches on the east, south, and west remain. The interior retains much of its original fabric and appears to have been altered only to provide electricity, indoor plumbing, and a modern kitchen.

In 1911 the property was purchased by Wesley H. Snyder and remained in the Snyder family until the late 1980s when it was sold to the Nature Conservancy and then to the National Park Service.



Caretakers House

The caretaker's house or cottage is a wood frame structure that dates to pre- 1890. It has a steeply pitched roof, board and batten siding, an original bay window, and porches on the east and south. Several doors and windows have been modified from the original, and the interior has undergone much more extensive modernization than the Instone house. This structure may have been the post office for Oak Hill for some years.

The garage is a frame structure with corrugated metal roof and siding on cement block piers. The national register form designates it as "noncontributing."

A wooden dock once extended out to the Intracoastal Waterway. It was replaced with a boat dock near the caretaker's house that was designated on the national register form as "noncontributing." Pilings are all that remain of that dock.

The significance of the historic structures and landscape as described in the national register form relates to (1) design and integrity of the buildings, (2) the nearly 100 years of occupation by only two families, (3) the local prominence of the two families, and (4) the lack of landscape change during the last 80 years. The history section of a historic structures report would probably compare and contrast the historic structures with others in this part of Florida to better understand their architectural significance.

The landscape of the site's historic period is thought to be relatively intact.

The archeological significance of the Seminole Rest mounds lies in the fact that they have survived relatively intact when 70% of the mounds in Volusia County have been destroyed. They are also significant because they are the only remaining mounds known to have data covering the Orange-St. Johns II periods. The scientific value of the mounds is high.

The archeological and historic resources are of statewide significance.

Preservation of the Seminole Rest site is made challenging by the nature of the resources to be protected. Mounds are best preserved by limiting public access and carefully monitoring for damage due to erosion, animal burrowing, or vegetation. Structures, on the other hand, are best preserved through use and quick repair of any damage resulting from wear and tear, weather, pest infestations, or aging. Because the historic structures are on the archeological mounds, and their stories are integral to an understanding of the site, preservation and interpretation would be hampered by not allowing visitor access. Visitors would be restricted to walkways leading up to the houses and to the interpretive trail around the base of Snyder's Mound.