

July 2021



Dear Club Members,

This month our colour is inspired by the Florida Orange. Citrus has been farmed in the US state since the mid-1800's, and whilst it now seems unimaginable to think of the area without citrus, it was the Spanish explorers who brought the plants with them in the mid 1500's. There's now nearly 6000,000 acres of agriculture devoted to citrus, and 74 million individual trees.

As modern agriculture goes, this crop is actually relatively beneficial, the trees provide a good habitat for wildlife, and act as a carbon sink. All is not well in the Florida citrus industry however, an imported disease is spreading through the groves causing the fruit to fail to ripen. The race is on to find varieties that are more resistant, and to develop ways of farming that still allows the fruit to ripen.

The reason I've picked this as the inspiration this month is because it's the 200th anniversary of the cessation of Florida from the Kingdom of Spain to the United States. Well sort of... there's about 5 different dates you can choose to celebrate as the anniversary depending on which treaty you're looking at, the date of the signing, and the date of the actual transfer of Florida from being an outpost of the Spanish Empire, and instead becoming part of the USA as a territory. The area doesn't gain statehood until 1845.

The first evidence for human habitation of the area is from around 14,000 years ago. This was at the end of the last glacial period. Around 8000 years ago, as the climate warmed the glaciers melted, and sea levels rose. Many pre-historic settlements are now submerged. By the 1500's these people had formed numerous tribes, and it's at this point that the first Europeans arrive from Spain. There were approximately 700,000 people living in Florida at this point, but infectious disease, introduced by the Spanish lead to large numbers of deaths. By the end of the 18th century many tribes were now extinct.

At the time of the Revolutionary War (War of Independence) Florida was in the hands of the British, the area had been traded with the Spanish in exchange for control of Havana, Cuba. Florida was loyal to Britain during the war, but when peace was signed was transferred back to Spanish control due to their assistance during the conflict.

It's at this time that Florida becomes a haven for escaped slaves from the other southern states. The remaining native tribe of the Seminole culture had settled on the northern border between Florida and Georgia, and many escaped slaves also made their home in this area. Southern Georgian slave owners demanded that Spain control the Seminole population, and recapture runaway slaves. The response from Spain was that the slave owners were welcome to try and recapture the runaways themselves!

Floridas status as a Spanish outpost continued to cause issues. British settlers moved in to the western end of the state in the early 1800's, and became part of an effort to overthrow Spanish rule. Seminoles had been accused of raiding in to Georgia, and the large number of escaped slaves finally led to an invasion of US forces, and the United States taking over control of the area. John Quincy Adams justified this saying " Florida had become "a derelict open to the

occupancy of every enemy, civilized or savage, of the United States, and serving no other earthly purpose than as a post of annoyance to them.”

At this point Spain decided that Florida had become a burden that they no longer wished to control. America paid the Spanish \$5 million, and a treaty was signed in 1819. On July 17th 1821 the United States formally took possession of the area.

Prior to this the Spanish authorities had been relatively uninvolved in the lives of the native tribes, but the United States government came under pressure to seize lands from the Seminoles. The tribe harboured and integrated runaway black slaves, and white Americans wished to develop plantations as they had done throughout most other areas of the Deep South requiring seizure of traditional tribal lands. The tribes were offered lands to the west of the Mississippi if they left voluntarily, but those who remained defended their lands. Between 1835 and 1842 the Seminoles fought a guerrilla war that's estimated to have cost the United States between \$20-40 million. By the time of the civil war Florida had the smallest population of the southern states, around 140,000, 44% of whom were enslaved. Most Seminoles had been relocated to Oklahoma, of the few that remained and fought in the wars against the United States around 500 were left, and their descendants now number around 17,000.

As ever, it's very hard to do justice to the complexities of 500 years of history in this short space. If you've got time, there's lots of links listed below for you to go and explore further.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Further Reading/ Watching-

Disease Spreading through Floridas Citrus groves-

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2019/11/09/end-florida-orange-juice-lethal-disease-is-decimating-its-citrus-industry/>

Florida's Native American Tribes-

<https://www.visitflorida.com/en-us/things-to-do/arts-history/native-american-culture-heritage-florida.html>

<https://www.semtribe.com/stof>

<https://www.floridarambler.com/historic-florida-getaways/native-americans-in-florida/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDPjOwJFmTY>

Timeline of Floridas history-

<http://info.flheritage.com/comprehensive-plan/chap7.cfm>

Florida State Department History-

<https://dos.myflorida.com/florida-facts/florida-history/a-brief-history/>

Florida History-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YM3-IOEFxDO>

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label
25% Corriedale,
25% Sari Silk,12.5% Eri Silk
37.5% Merinio