

History of Montverde, Florida

Montverde is on the west shore of Lake Apopka 17 miles south of Tavares and 30 miles from Leesburg. The site of an early Indian settlement, one may take note of the burial grounds, pottery, beads and arrowheads found in the area. The first residents arrived in 1865 and called the place West Lake Apopka. Tradition says it was later called "Monte Verde," Spanish for green mountain, by someone from Vermont who came across Lake Apopka and was impressed by the rolling green hills.

The original homesteaders in Montverde were John W. Harden, W.H. Porter, John Griggs, Lt. Jim Franklin, and Andrew Shaw. John W. Harden, with his wife Aramenta, came from Chester, SC in 1865 and built a house and founded a town that was called West Apopka. Mr. Harden who was a veteran of two wars and for his service in the Seminole Indian War received a bonus of a Federal Land Grant of 200 acres of land by President Chester Arthur.

The Town of Montverde was incorporated on May 18th, 1925 with a mayor and five councilman. These are the same offices the town government has today. From 1887 to 1969, the town was served by the Tavares and Gulf railroad, used mainly to haul agricultural products. Grapes, citrus and vegetables were the main freight. Past industries included a cement plant, a facility for drying and processing moss for furniture and the original manufacturing plant of the Snapper Mower (originally called the Snappin' Turtle). The Snapper was developed in Montverde by Alex Smith and his brother Neal and has become well known all over the world.

Montverde today has maintained its small town rural character and life is generally easy-going. The town has its own volunteer fire department with two fire trucks; plus a brush truck for woods fires. All parts of town are served by the municipal water system which includes a network of fire hydrants.