SEMINOLE COUNTY

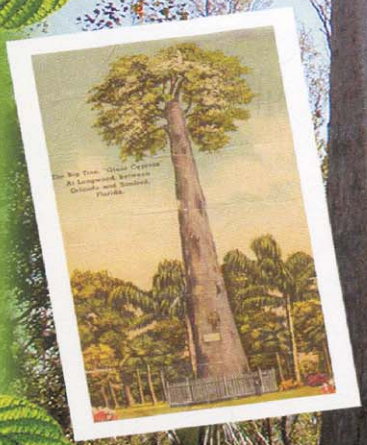
Big Tree Park is also home to "Lady Liberty", a companion of the champion Bald Cypress, "The Senator".

Big Tree Park

761 General Hutchison Pkwy
Longwood, FL 32750-3732
is open seven days a week
8:00 AM until Sunset
CLOSED THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

SEMINOLE COUNTY

BIG TREE PARK



Home of "The Senator"
National Champion Bald Cypress Tree

The Folklore and History of Big Tree Park

Seminole and other Native American Indians used "The Senator" as a landmark and the prominent cypress has been a tourist spot since the late 1800's. Visitors had to jump from log to log to avoid the wetlands. Today, a boardwalk has replaced the logs.

In 1925, a hurricane took off the top of "The Senator" reducing its size from 165 feet to 118 feet. Lightning rods were then installed by the Longwood Fire Department to protect it from further damage.

On April 5, 1927 Mr. C.W. Entzminger, appeared before the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners in reference to a park, which Senator Moses O. Overstreet, of Orlando agreed to donate to the County. Senator Overstreet was an early pioneer in the lumbering and turpentine industry in the area. At that time the donation was approximately six acres and the County agreed to open a road leading into the park. Since the donation, the Big Tree has been known affectionately as "The Senator."

In 1929 President and Mrs. Coolidge visited the tree where he made a speech and dedicated a bronze plaque.

In the 1930's Big Tree Park was part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal with a $9,000 grant. The grant built a pathway between the two large cypress trees and other major improvements to the park. The first iron fence was erected by the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs to keep visitors from carving their initials on the tree.

In 1945, the bronze plaque along with portions of the iron fence were stolen and never recovered. In 1946 The American Forestry Association bore a small hole in "The Senator" taking a core sample to date the tree. After counting the rings, it was estimated that "The Senator" was 3,500 years old.

On February 25, 1952 the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners considered a plan to pave the clay road leading from U.S. Highway 17/92 to Big Tree Park. Howard Hughes, a custodian, maintained the park and operated a concession stand. He improved the parking area, planted shrubbery and installed picnic benches.

In 1958 another small concession and gift shop operated by V.G. "Doc" Hasty and his wife Louise opened. They kept the concession open ten hours a day, six days a week for 10 years. Mr. Hasty died in 1966 and Mrs. Hasty operated it for two more years until September of 1968 when she retired.

In February of 1972 the County purchased about 300 acres adjacent to the existing park.

In 2005, the Board of County Commissioners in cooperation with the Seminole County Schools held a contest to name the companion tree to "The Senator." Students from Geneva Elementary School won the contest, and officially named the companion tree "Lady Liberty." The park is maintained by the Seminole County Parks and Recreation Division of the Department of Library and Leisure Services.

Big Tree Park

Home of "The Senator"
National Champion Bald Cypress Tree

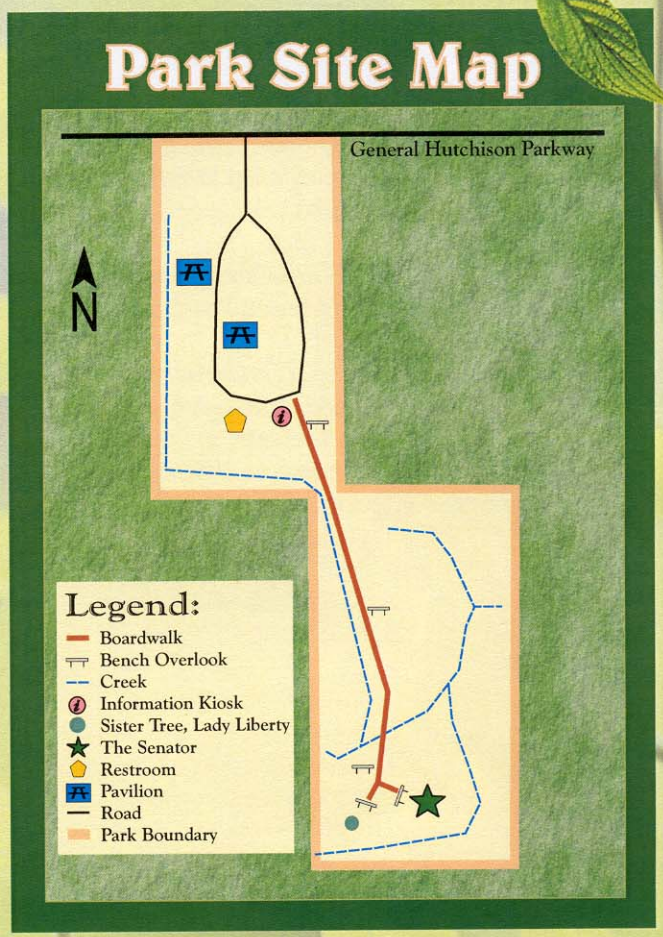
Big Tree Park is an eleven-acre park located within the 1,400-acre Spring Hammock Preserve. Big Tree Park has the honor of being the home of "The Senator" a 3,500-year bald cypress as well as several other large cypress trees. Dedicated in 1929 by President Calvin Coolidge, "The Senator' is a Florida Champion Tree, the largest cypress tree in the State. The tree stands 118 feet tall with a diameter of 11 1/4 feet and circumference 35 feet.

For many years this park has been a popular place for visitors to get a glimpse of what Florida's cypress forests used to be. Early traders along Lake Jesup used the large cypress trees as landmarks until they were logged as the State grew. Cypress wood was very desirable for early Floridians as the heartwood is famous for its resistance to decay and insect damage. Unfortunately this characteristic is only found in very old cypress trees. Most of the cypress trees found today are not old enough to have this quality. Fortunately "The Senator" was spared and we can still be inspired by its age and size.

Located 40 feet from The Senator, Lady Liberty is often referred to as the companion tree or the sister tree. Named by students from Geneva Elementary School, Lady Liberty stands tall as a symbol of patriotism. Lady Liberty is approximately 2,000 years of age with a diameter of 10 feet, circumference of 32 feet and height of 89 ft.

For more information
about the park and its ecosystems call
(407) 788-0405
www.seminolecountyfl.gov

Park Site Map



Big Tree Park is part of
Spring Hammock Preserve

Spring Hammock Preserve is a well-known landmark to residents and visitors of Seminole County because of its oasis-like appearance in the midst of a rapidly growing urban area. The Preserve is of vital environmental importance, serving as a watershed and wetlands area. It provides natural habitat for numerous species of plants and animals, and provides storage for flood and storm water.

The Spring Hammock Preserve is also home to a diverse assemblage of wildlife species. Raccoons, bobcats, and gray squirrels may be found throughout the Preserve. Typical small mammals in the forested wetland include cotton mice, golden mice and shrews. The common but lesser known flying squirrel occurs throughout the upland and wetland forests in the hammock.

Hydric Hammock

Forested wetlands provide key sources of food and shelter for migrating birds in fall and spring. Resident nesting birds within the preserve include warblers, Carolina wrens and the pileated woodpecker. Up to 40 species of birds may breed in the combined habitats of the upland and wetland forest areas of the hammock.

Florida Box Turtle

Common species of reptiles and amphibians include southeastern five lined skinks, green tree frogs, ribbon snakes and Florida box turtles. The most impressive reptile resident however, is the American alligator, which often swim in from Lake Jesup to hunt the streams and creeks of the hammock.

The Spring Hammock Preserve offers a unique opportunity to experience a natural piece of Seminole County so close to home. As you explore the trails under the dappled light of a sprawling canopy and listen to the calls of birds, frogs and other creatures, you can't help but appreciate nature's beauty and diversity.