

## Famous Floridians: Dr. John Gorrie

Florida would not be what it is today without air conditioning. Dr. John Gorrie is considered the father of air conditioning and refrigeration. He was also a physician, scientist, inventor, and humanitarian. Gorrie represents Florida with his statue placed in the National Statuary Hall in Washington D. C.

He studied tropical diseases. This influenced him to move to Apalachicola, Florida, a large cotton market on the Gulf coast. During his residence, Gorrie served as mayor, postmaster, city treasurer, council member, bank director, and founder of Trinity Church.

His most significant work, however, was in medicine. During an outbreak of yellow fever, Gorrie became concerned for patients ill with the disease.

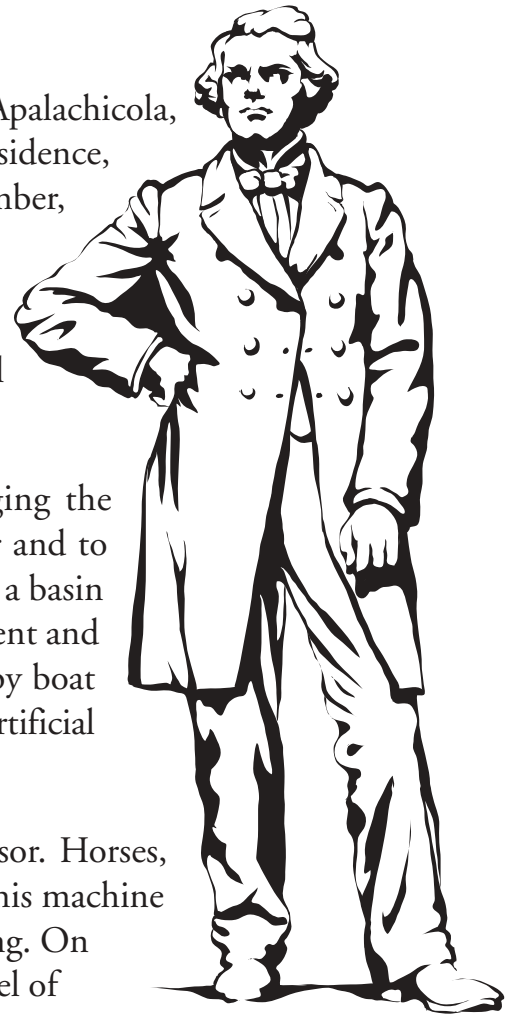
He noted that, "Nature would terminate the fevers by changing the seasons." He advocated the cooling of sickrooms to reduce fever and to make the patient more comfortable. He cooled rooms with ice in a basin suspended from the ceiling. Cool air flowed down across the patient and through an opening near the floor. Since ice had to be brought by boat from the northern lakes, Gorrie began to experiment with making artificial ice.

Gorrie invented a machine that produced ice, called a compressor. Horses, water, wind-driven sails, or steam could power his compressor. This machine laid the groundwork for modern refrigeration and air-conditioning. On May 6, 1851, he was granted Patent No. 8080. The original model of this machine and the scientific articles he wrote are at the Smithsonian Institution.

### Apalachicola

The Apalachicola River's rich floodplains attracted many settlers during the 1800s. It played an important role in the development of the town of Apalachicola. By the time the young John Gorrie arrived in 1833, Apalachicola was already flourishing as the third largest port on the Gulf. It harbored ships carrying cotton back to Europe and New England.

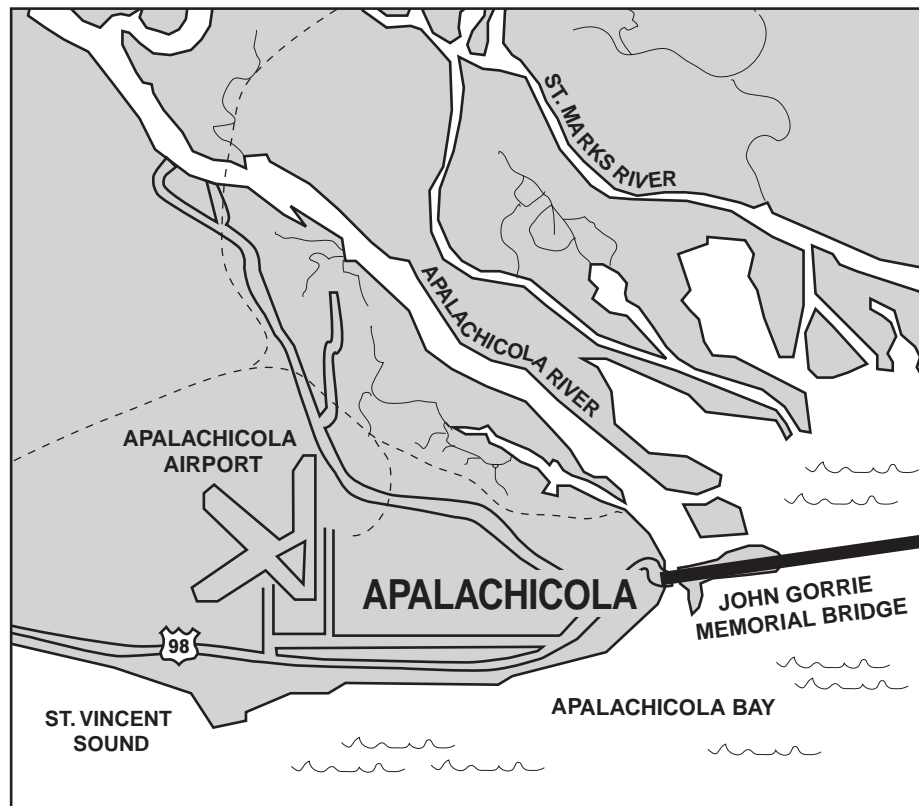
The coming of railroads in the 1850s hurt Apalachicola's role in the rich cotton trade. The town's economy was further shattered during the Civil War by a blockade that sealed off the harbor.



**The Statue of Gorrie by Charles Adrian Pillars stands in Statuary Hall in our nation's Capitol building.**

The economy remained in poor shape until 10 years after the war. At that time, a thriving lumber industry developed to revive the town's income. The town relied on this income until 1930, when the Apalachicola River floodplain was stripped of cypress trees.

Facing another economic crash, Apalachicola began to use another of its natural resources. The bay



Map of Apalachicola.

was a source of sponges and seafood. Seafood canning became the town's main industry.

Today, Apalachicola leads the state in the production of oysters and is a chief supplier of crabs, shrimp, and fish. Apalachicola is a charming setting of homes constructed in the 1800s and fishing fleets tied to piers with their daily catches. While there, visitors can go to the John Gorrie State Museum and see a replica of Gorrie's ice machine.