

PACK YOUR PORTMANTEAU

A CENTURY IN SERENE, NATURAL FLORIDA

Mission Resort + Club in Howey-In-The-Hills celebrates 100 years



story and photos by
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Travel back in time to the Roaring '20s when Florida's Howey-in-the-Hills became one of the most scientific agricultural enterprises in America and the largest citrus destination in the world. Still a hidden rural town in Lake County, its rich history and charming, picturesque, gentle-rolling hills are nestled among crystal-clear lakes.

IT BEGAN AS A DREAM

Earlier than the 1920s, William J. Howey had a dream: creating his legendary El Campeón golf course in 1917, the centerpiece of today's Mission Resort + Club. One of the oldest courses in the South, it's featured on the Florida Historic Golf Trail and is visible from all the resort's 176 oversized guestrooms, suites and villas.

Rising in the center of Florida, midway between Jacksonville and Tampa and between the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, Howey-in-the-Hills' nickname is "The Alps of Florida."

Appropriately named on top of the highest hills found in Central Florida, William Howey's personal saga encompasses volumes. He was a visionary of Florida's greatest citrus community, a builder of cities and an overseer of 60,000 acres of orange and grapefruit groves that surrounded and poured golden wealth into his era of unceasing endeavors.

In a town where little existed except citrus groves, juice plants and a "time capsule" of a 1927 bridge crossing Little Lake Harris, The Howey Company paved the way for national attention to Florida's vast commercial enterprise of the true



beginning of the citrus industry.

A REMARKABLE HOME

Howey's lavish home, Howey Mansion, completed in 1927, was photographed in House Beautiful magazine and is worthy of a visit. It's a grand Mediterranean-style home open for narrated small tours and is easily walkable from the Mission Resort.

If your busy life needs a serene escape from the bustle of everyday, this hidden gem is a captivating drive from anywhere in Florida, especially if you're passionate about back roads. Discover small hamlets that are on the shores of hundreds of lakes from Tavares, Eustis and Umatilla to Mount Dora, Yalaha and Okahumpka.

Once you enter the pristine Mission Resort + Club property with its distinctive Spanish Colonial architecture, manicured gardens and breathtaking golf courses, perhaps a golf cart or bicycle is the perfect transportation for a few days of R&R!

William Howey's "time capsule" of Florida's inland playground became a distinctive destination of early charm, beauty and luxury that began dotting the tropical waterways. From bass fishing and dude ranches to game hunting and the sportiest golf courses for interna-

tional visitors, sunny days on small cabin cruisers and early train travel were met by 1920s motor coaches.

Ah, one can only dream about this epoch time of laid-back Florida!

A 'DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH'

As the '20s, '30s and '40s drifted away from the Howey era, by 1964 Nicholas Francis Beucher recognized that the growth and hard times still left Howey-in-the-Hills a "diamond in the rough." A Chicago industry leader, he was enticed by the historic golf course and antiquated clubhouse. With his wife and six children, his vision of building the new resort flourished through multi generations of the Buecher family until 2022!

Mission Inn enjoyed six decades of hospitality and opportunity. Beucher's remarkable accomplishments were no mistake to this Chicagoan, who was top salesman for Morton Salt Co. at a young age. It's amazing that he spent 39 days in the saddle riding 1,400 miles across Mexico; it was this journey that inspired the Mission Inn's architecture from Del Rio, Texas, past Mexico City!

A NEW DIRECTION

Today's golf enthusiasts might recall decades filled with TV commercials of El Campeón's course seen in Chrysler, Calloway, PGA Tour, the Golf Channel tournaments and hundreds of celebrity TV spots. In January 2023, another family of hospitality leaders purchased this storied meeting-and-golf destination. MMI Hospitality Group, a Mississippi-based family-owned and -operated organization rebranded the name to Mission Resort + Club.

Micajah P. Sturdivant IV, CEO of MMI, is a hands-on Southern gentleman, stating, "Our family immediately recognized the Beucher family's 60-plus-year history. Like our family, they worked and played together, knowing how to serve their guests in so many ways. With 500 acres of opportunity sharing the heri-

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MISSION RESORT

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tage for new visitors and residents, we believe Mission Resort will continue to be the leading destination of Howey-in-the-Hills and Florida's 'hill country.'"

Since golf has never been merely a game, golfers (and golf watchers) recognize the historic courses that are swathed in natural Florida beauty. Permeating the grounds, guests and members of El Campeón and Las Colinas follow in the footsteps of more than a century of enthusiasts and legends. Each season, guests discover golf and vacation packages that include creative culinary chef-dining, luxury

spa services and even a simple day-time pleasure of shuffleboard, bicycling and pet-walking pathways. Within steps of the resort is the Howey Mansion, open to the public for tours and a glimpse into the grandeur of a century ago.

While on vacation in Lake County (known as "The land of 1,000 lakes"), one can never get enough of escaping into the shade of the resort's ancient

live oaks and swaying palms. With three distinct restaurants that have been thoughtfully designed and crafted for leisurely breakfast, lunches with stunning views and romantic dinners, the chef's herb garden inspires each menu that celebrates seasonal ingredients and regional tastes!

If you're a spa seeker, Mission Resort's sanctuary is an intimate world of relaxation. Citrus history inspires my favorite treatment: citrus serenity body treatment that's so warm and luxurious with clementine oil.

Accommodations resemble Spanish Colonial architecture, all spacious with modern comforts.

Scenic views of the rolling fairways and beautiful lakes dominate most suites, rooms and villas featuring screened balconies and ground-floor patios where the ibis come close enough for memorable photos. Marble and granite bathrooms, artwork that reflects the rich history of Howey-in-the-Hills and many options of accommodation allow for extended vacations when you just can't imagine leaving this "garden of Eden."

A PATHWAY THROUGH HISTORY

If a vacation means not wandering from the resort, Mission Resort's peacefulness and consideration to on-property activities could fill weeks of satisfaction beginning with the heated pool no matter the season. Uncrowded and tranquil, it's an oasis within steps to a playful billiards and game room, cutting edge fitness Cybex center, volleyball, pickleball and championship tennis courts.

Most fascinating is the unique Conquistador Trails, where you take your own journey through untouched landscapes set within the scenic golf course, stretching over a third of a mile. This navigable path is perfect for families to uncover Central Florida's rich Spanish history!

As Howey-in-the-Hills celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, allow yourself to be transported back to the nostalgia of the 1920s. The mellow, homelike atmosphere of the Mission Resort + Club reminds us that "Once Upon a Time ..." still feels so good. Happy Birthday Howey!



FROM OCEAN TO GREEN AND *everything in between*

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