

---

# *NEW TRIBES MISSION*

## *INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS*

### *Sanford, Florida*

---

In the summer heat of 1925, 100 men were rushing to complete one of Sanford's biggest construction projects to date: the Forrest Lake Hotel.

The rush was made necessary by reservations which were already being received, though the hotel was not due to open until the following January. Each guest room had a private bathroom. On the first floor of the west wing was the dining area, centered around a main dining room 116 feet long by 42 feet wide. Behind that was a more intimate banquet room 50 X 50 feet. There was also a kitchen featuring the latest equipment in a fully fireproof construction. It cost a half-a-million dollars to build, boasted Howard Hullick, its first manager. (Another source stated it cost 5 million dollars.)

On January 4, 1926, the Hotel Forrest Lake, named for Sanford's Mayor, opened its doors to tourists from New York, New Jersey and other northern states. Though the first season went very well, the Florida land bust was just around the corner and the Hotel Forrest Lake was one of its victims. Investors in the hotel lost their fortunes. Then a series of owners bought and sold the hotel until, in 1930, the City took over the building and it was renamed the Mayfair Hotel.

In 1934, W.E. Kirchhoff, Jr., leased the facility from the City, re-opened it five months a year for the winter tourist season, and allowed permanent residents to stay in it year-round.

In 1937 Kirchhoff purchased the \$1,000 tax deed on it and continued its seasonal activities. During the off season, Kirchhoff allowed a local car dealer to store automobiles in the building, and it was often filled with people who came to see the latest offerings from Detroit.

When World War II came along, and brought the Naval Air Station to Sanford, the hotel was taken over as quarters for naval personnel. After the war, Kirchhoff added a swimming pool and, after doing battle with the damage done by the hurricane, September 4, 1947, decided to sell.

During a high school baseball tournament being held at the building in 1947, it was announced that a potential buyer had defaulted on the mortgage and all those present were made to adjourn and finish the game somewhere else. John Krider, involved with the New York Giants, and Ed Higgins of the Sanford Chamber of Commerce, then went to New York and persuaded the Major League Giants to take over the building, which they did, in 1948.

---



Along with the hotel, the Giants bought the Mayfair Golf Course, then spent \$75,000 renovating the building. They renamed it the Mayfair Inn. Celebrities such as movie star Tallulah Bankhead, Arthur Godfrey, Victor Borge, multimillionaire H.L. Hunt, Broadway actress and dancer Wendie Barrie, author Thornton Wilder, who wrote one of his most famous works "The Ides of March" during his visit, and notorious gangster, Al Capone, stayed at the hotel. Major League baseball guests included Leo Durocher, Branch Rickey, Mel Ott, Carl Hubbell, Mrs. John J. McGraw, and Horace Stoneham, president of the Giants.

The Mayfair Opening Ball on the first Saturday in December was the high spot of the Sanford social season. About 550 people, in formal attire, including about 300 hotel guests, turned out each year for the cocktail party, dinner and dance. Special New York cut steaks were flown in from New York. All the local leaders, politicians, society and business leaders were there.

Though the Giants had planned to bring their major league club to the Inn each year, they only came to Sanford for one year for training. For the next nine years, professional hotel man Charles Marion operated the Inn as a tourist hotel for them. Frank Mebane, Jr., who still lives in Sanford, was the Manager of the Inn during the fifties. In the late fifties the Giants left New York for San Francisco.

The National Exhibition Company, former owner of the New York Giants, later the San Francisco Giants Baseball Team, sold the property to Bernard MacFadden, Inc., which opened the Sanford Naval Academy in 1963. Sanford Naval Academy was a private boys' military school.

When the Academy went bankrupt in 1976, the National Exhibition Company regained ownership of the property. John Sauls, a Sanford real estate agent, learning that New Tribes Mission planned to move its Headquarters from Woodworth, Wisconsin, began negotiating for the property in late 1976 and by May 1977, the six-acre property was sold to New Tribes Mission. The property then included a gymnasium and a 15-unit former motel and classroom building next to the white academy building. The facility then became New Tribes Mission International Headquarters.

NTM paid \$400,000 and spent another \$350,000 in repairs. Another party wanted to buy this property and put up a high-rise condominium. They would have had to pay another \$75,000 to have the hotel torn down.