

JACKSONVILLE'S LEGACY

AFRICAN — AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL
JACKSONVILLE HISTORIC PEOPLE & PLACES

FIRST EDITION



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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MAYOR

ST. JAMES BUILDING
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September 2013

Dear Friends:

As mayor, it is my pleasure to celebrate with you Jacksonville's wealth of history, a cultural heritage that made our fair city what it is today. In its early days, our city was known as a place where cattle could cross the St. John's River. Jacksonville was later named in honor of Andrew Jackson, first military governor of Florida and later president of the United States, and received its first charter in 1832.

A great fire leveled much of the city in 1901, scouring across more than a hundred city blocks. Reflective of its citizens' resilience, Jacksonville quickly got back on its feet. Lives were pieced back together as were piers, buildings, docks and shipyards. Architects flocked to Jacksonville to build upon our, essentially, blank slate. In fact, our City Hall is now located in one of Henry J. Klutho's structures, the St. James Building, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

The historical legacy of African Americans in our community represents an important part of our past. Immediately after the Civil War, Jacksonville's neighboring town, LaVilla, was predominantly African American. In the town's short 18 year history, most of its political officers were African American. In later years, LaVilla became the cultural and economic center for African Americans in Jacksonville and surrounding areas. Many distinguished African Americans have called Jacksonville home including James Weldon Johnson, A. Philip Randolph, Zora Neale Hurston and Bob Hayes, to name a few.

Today, Jacksonville is a vibrant, diverse community with approximately 850,000 residents and has the distinction of being the largest city in land mass in the continental United States. Our city also proudly hosts the Jacksonville Jaguars, and is home to our nation's largest urban park system with more than 80,000 acres dedicated as parks. The beautiful St. John's River is the longest in the state of Florida and is one of the many impressive waterways which define our city as well as our history as a river town. I encourage you to take a closer look at Jacksonville then and now, the gateway to Florida.

Sincerely,

Alvin Brown
Mayor

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Jacksonville's Antiquity

THE KINGSLEY PLANTATION, FORT GEORGE ISLAND

Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: Stolen from the coast of her homeland of Senegal, West Africa, the young Wolof girl, Anta Njaay was taken to Havana, Cuba in 1806 to be sold into slavery.

Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr., an English slave trader and planter who had been reared in Charleston, South Carolina purchased 13-year old Anta. Folk legends labeled her as “an African princess”. Kingsley stated in his will that he and the beautiful Anta were married “in a foreign land” and that their marriage was “celebrated and solemnized by her native African custom, altho’ never celebrated according to the forms of Christian usage.” He called her Anna and her African name was transposed into Spanish and English by officials in Florida. Kingsley would live with her openly and referred to her as his wife. Together they would have four children. According to Daniel Shafer’s book entitled simply Anna Kingsley, “Kingsley was an advocate of humane treatment and encouraged slaves to live in family units and to maintain African customs.” There was never any doubt as to Anna’s status. Kingsley is quoted as having said “She has always been respected as my wife and as such I acknowledge her, nor do I think that her truth, honor, integrity, moral conduct or good sense will lose in comparison with anyone”. After almost five years of enslavement, Kingsley formally emancipated Anna on March 4, 1811.

By 1811 Kingsley was a wealthy man. He owned Drayton Island, a large plantation at Lake George on the St. Johns River, Laurel Grove Plantation along Doctors Lake and Fort George Island. His business travels left Anna at Laurel Grove as household manager. In addition Kingsley chose to employ black slaves. Kingsley sailed into several ports including Cuba, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, Wilmington, New York and Fernandina with black sailors and was known for sailing with an all black crew.



~ The slave cabins were partially constructed of tabby, an early cement building material made by mixing oyster shells, sand, water and covered with a protective coat of lime plaster. ~



~ Kingsley Plantation House ~



~ Esther Bartley, born a slave on the plantation, shown living on the grounds in the early 20th century ~

By 1812 Anna was a free black woman in Spanish East Florida. Along with her property holdings, Anna's household included twelve slaves. When Florida joined the Confederate states in 1861, the interracial Kingsley family was forced to leave for their safety, only to return when peace was restored years later.

Anna died in July 1870 at age 77. She spent her last days living in the Strawberry Creek area with her daughter, Mary Kingsley Sammis, and her family. The house built by Anna's son-in-law, John Sammis, still stands in the Clifton area of South Jacksonville. A small family burial ground is also located there. Although no grave stone with Anna's name exists, historians speculate that she is buried with her daughter and the Sammis family. In 1884, the great granddaughter of Zephaniah and Anna Kingsley, Mary F. Kingsley Sammis married Abraham Lincoln Lewis (pg. 22) to form another powerful union in the Kingsley dynasty.

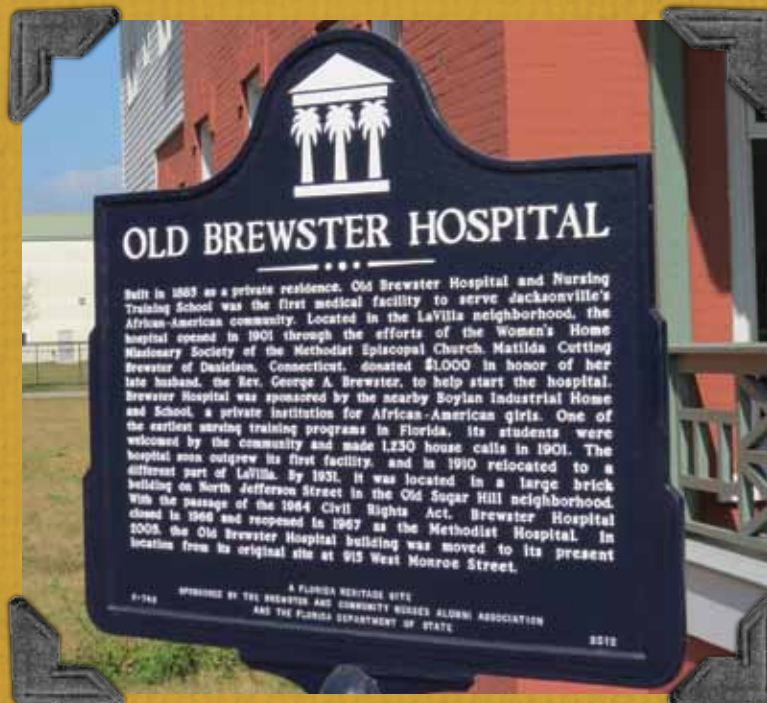
At present time the Kingsley Plantation is a part of the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. The grounds includes the main house (c.1798), a barn (c.1798), the Anna Jai House (c.1800 – 1820), and the slave quarters (c.1822).

**The Kingsley Plantation is located at:
11676 Palmetto Avenue, Jacksonville, FL 32226.**

Old Brewster Hospital

843 WEST MONROE STREET IN LAVILLA

Built in 1885 as a private residence, Old Brewster Hospital and Nursing Training School was the first medical facility to serve Jacksonville's African-American community. Located in the LaVilla neighborhood, the hospital opened in 1901 through the efforts of the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Matilda Cutting Brewster of Danielson, Connecticut, donated \$1,000 in honor of her late husband, the Rev. George A. Brewster, to help start the hospital. Brewster Hospital was sponsored by the nearby Boylan Industrial Home and School, a private institution for African-American girls. One of the earliest nursing training programs in Florida, its students were welcomed by the community and made 1,230 house calls in 1901. The hospital soon outgrew its first facility, and in 1910 relocated to a different part of LaVilla. By 1931, it was located in a large brick building on North Jefferson Street in the Old Sugar Hill neighborhood. With the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Brewster Hospital closed in 1966 and reopened in 1967 as the Methodist Hospital. In 2005, the Old Brewster Hospital building was moved to its present location from its original site at 915 West Monroe Street.



~ Photo at right is a postcard of the Nurses' Training School for Brewster Hospital previously located at 1001 W. Union Street on the NW corner of Lee Street. The school had a capacity for 30 beds and was mostly a surgical hospital. The training school had up to 15 pupil nurses. ~



~ Brewster Hospital at its current location 843 W. Monroe Street ~



~ Photos: Brewster Hospital nurses courtesy of the Ritz Theater and Museum ~

James Weldon Johnson

1871–1938



One of our city's most noted citizens, James Weldon Johnson was born in Jacksonville on June 17, 1871 in the LaVilla neighborhood immediately west of Downtown. After graduating from Stanton School in 1887, Johnson attended college at Atlanta University graduating in 1894. Returning to his native city, he became a teacher and later principal of Stanton School where he was responsible for making it the first high school for African Americans in Florida.

In addition to producing his own newspaper in Jacksonville, *The Daily American*, in 1895, Johnson went on to become the first African American to pass the Florida Bar through an open exam before a state judge. In 1900, James Weldon Johnson and his brother John Rosamond Johnson, music director at the Florida Baptist Academy, composed "Lift Every Voice and Sing", which has become recognized as the Negro National Anthem.

By 1902, Johnson was making seasonal trips to New York City to join his brother and Bob Cole in the production of several musical pieces. In 1906, he was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt as U.S. Consul to Venezuela and later served in the same position in Nicaragua. In 1910, he married New York native, Grace Nail Johnson, and went on to publish his book, **The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man** in 1912.



In addition to being a contributing editor to the *New York Age*, Johnson was appointed field secretary of the NAACP in 1916, and later served as an executive secretary. During the 1920's and 30's, he was responsible for several publications, such as **God's Trombones** (1927), re-print of **The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man** (previously printed anonymously), editor of **The Book of Negro Poetry** (1922 & 1931), and his autobiography, **Along This Way** (1933).

~ Pictured left: This bust of James Weldon Johnson is located at the Ritz Theater and LaVilla Museum ~

During his life, James Weldon Johnson has received numerous honorary degrees and awards including Master of Arts degree from Atlanta University (1904); doctor of literature from Talladega College and Howard University; the NAACP's Spingarn Medal as "author, diplomat and public servant"; and the Harmon Award for **God's Trombones**. In addition to receiving a Rosenwald Fellowship for writing, Johnson was appointed in 1931 as the Adam K. Spence Professor of Creative Literature and Writing at Fisk University, as well as the visiting professor of creative literature at New York University.

James Weldon Johnson died on June 26, 1938 in an automobile accident near Wiscasset, Maine, and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.

The U.S. Postal Service issued a 22 cent Black Heritage collectable stamp in honor of James Weldon Johnson on February 2, 1988.



Born in 1873, John Rosamond Johnson

was a successful composer and singer most noted for his collaboration with his famous brother, James Weldon Johnson, in producing *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, that has become recognized as the "Negro-American National Anthem". J. Rosamond Johnson's musical training started early in his life under the guidance of his mother, Helen Louise Johnson. Trained at the New England Conservatory and later studying in London, J. Rosamond Johnson started his musical career as a teacher at the Florida Baptist Academy, and music director at the Bethel Baptist Institutional Church in Jacksonville. In the early 1900s, he moved to New York City where he teamed up with song writer Bob Cole. Joined seasonally by James Weldon Johnson, this productive team was responsible for numerous songs, as well as two Broadway operettas featuring an all black cast. After touring as a Vaudeville performer and a short stay in London, J. Rosamond Johnson served as director of the New York's Music School Settlement for Colored from 1914-1919. J. Rosamond Johnson continued touring as a singer, as well as performing in musicals and dramas. A true Renaissance man like his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson also edited several books on spirituals.



~ John Rosamond Johnson (1873 - 1954) ~

Dr. Eartha Mary Magdalene White

1876–1974



Born in 1876, Eartha M.M. White grew up in the Hansontown area immediately north of downtown. After attending local schools, Eartha M.M. White went on to enroll at Madam Hall's Beauty Culture School in New York City, as well as the National Conservatory of Music where she was tutored by Harry T. Burleigh and J. Rosamond Johnson. Returning to Jacksonville, Eartha M.M. White dedicated her life to continuing the humanitarian work started by her mother, Clara White. For years, Clara White had been providing food and assistance to the needy from her own kitchen.

Eartha White continued her mother's work by organizing the Clara White Mission in 1932. Housed at 611-615 West Ashley Street, the Clara White Mission has indiscriminately assisted Jacksonville's less fortunate by providing hot meals, clothing, shoes, and temporary shelter for transients and the aged. Over the years, the mission became a major hub of activities in LaVilla, and accommodated numerous community projects and programs including Works Project Administration (WPA) sponsored cultural activities, the New Deal's Federal Writer's Project, as well as serving as a USO for African American service men during World War II.



As president of the Union Benevolent Association, Eartha M. M. White assisted in the establishment of the first retirement home for Jacksonville's African American seniors. She later assisted in the establishment of the Milnor Street Nursery, a tuberculosis sanitarium for African Americans, and Oakland Park, the first municipal playground reserved for African American children. In the mid-1940's, Eartha M. M. White acquired the Moncrief Springs property from the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. Eartha White renovated the spring fed swimming pool and constructed large bathhouses. The resort was used for numerous special outings organized by Eartha White, as well as the site of religious camp meetings and baptisms. In later years, she donated the Moncrief Springs property for the construction of the Eartha M. M. White Nursing Home.

During her long life, Eartha M.M. White had many careers and businesses.

While in New York City, she was a member of the touring Oriental American Opera Company. Eartha White was the first paid employee of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, and is credited with saving the company's records during the Great Fire of 1901. In addition to teaching for sixteen years, she was also one of the first paid social workers for Duval County and the first African American census taker. Eartha M. M. White was a licensed real estate broker, and at different times operated a department store, laundry, and house cleaning service.

During her long and illustrious career, Eartha M. M. White has received numerous awards and honors including an Honorary Doctor of Law degree from Edward Waters College, a Honorary Doctor of Humanities from Florida Memorial Institute, the Booker T. Washington Symbol of Service Award from the National Business League, the Better Life Award from the American Nursing Home Association, and the prestigious Lane Bryant Volunteer Award presented to her in 1970 by President Richard M. Nixon.

Eartha White transcended the barrier of race and gender through her service to the community and remained a tenacious advocate for the "poor and the halt" until her death in 1974; she was 97.



~ Pictured above, 1970, President Nixon & Mrs. Nixon, along with staff, honored Dr. Eartha White with the Lane Bryant Humanitarian Award at the White House reception. She was accompanied by her assistant Grayce Bateman. ~

The Eartha M.M. White Musuem



~ Eartha M.M. White's bedroom ~



~ Existing plaque ~



~ A photo taken by African-American photographer pioneer, E.L. Weems. ~

Zora Neale Hurston

1891–1960



Born January 7, 1891, Zora Neale Hurston became one of the most significant African-American writers of the first half of the 20th century. An anthropologist and a writer, Zora Neale Hurston travelled to countries such as Haiti, Puerto Rico and Jamaica to collect songs and stories throughout the African diaspora. She is most widely known today for her illustrative writing style and her often controversial use of the “Negro dialect”, as illustrated in her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Set in Hurston’s hometown of Eatonville, Florida and often touted as her best-known work, the novel was produced into a movie by Oprah Winfrey and starred Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry.

Although she was born in Alabama, Zora moved to Eatonville, Florida with her parents and siblings when she was a toddler. Her father became mayor of the all-black, independent town of Eatonville which was the first African-American town to be incorporated into the United States. Two weeks after her mother passed away Zora moved to Jacksonville, Florida to live with her brother John Hurston and his wife Blanche King Hurston in the East Jacksonville neighborhood of Campbell’s Addition. Zora spent many of her youthful years on Evergreen Avenue and on the Southside of the river in the Hogan Creek, Spring Glen and the Spring Park neighborhoods with her best friend Gerda King. Many humorous stories of her life here in Jacksonville are told through the eyes of one of the younger members of the household, Ms. M. Alene Murrell who is related to Zora’s sister-in-law Blanche. In her book, *Zora Neale Hurston In and around Jacksonville in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s*, Ms. Murrell, while in her mid-90s, gives her firsthand account of many outlandish and adventurous stories of Zora’s life and times while living in Jacksonville. In May 2013, the house where Zora lived at 1473 Evergreen Avenue was approved by the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission as a locally designated landmark.

In August of 1939, Zora worked for the Federal Writer’s Project to interview and record workers of the Aycock and Lindsay turpentine camp. Material from her essay “Turpentine” later appeared in her book *Seraph on the Suwanee*. The Federal Writer’s project, in Jacksonville, was housed in the Clara White Mission in the LaVilla section of town.

Despite her 30 year long career and the successful publication of four novels, two books of folklore, an autobiography, numerous short stories, and several essays, articles and plays, Zora died in poverty and was buried in obscurity until she was “discovered” long after her death in 1960 by Pulitzer Prize winning author Alice Walker. It was Walker who found the unmarked grave, purchased a headstone, and called for the republication of Zora’s work in the 1970s. Today, the annual Zora! Festival, held in January, celebrates the life, times and writings of Zora Neale Hurston with several days of events in Eatonville, Florida.



~ The Zora Neale Hurston #0.37 cent stamp was issued on January 24, 2003 ~



~ 1477 and 1473 Evergreen Avenue; The building on the left is the flower shop owned and operated by Blanche Hurston (demolished). The building on the right is the home originally owned by the Hurston family. ~

Asa Philip Randolph

1889–1979



Nationally known civil rights and labor leader, A. Philip Randolph spent most of his youth in the Oakland neighborhood of East Jacksonville. Leaving his native Virginia, Reverend James William Randolph, the father of A. Philip Randolph, moved to Baldwin, Florida in 1884 to minister the small Campbell's A.M.E. Church. After relocating to Crescent City, Florida for a few years where A. Philip Randolph was born in 1889, the family moved in 1891 to a two-story house on Jessie Street in Oakland. In addition to being an itinerant minister for small congregations in Palatka and Green Cove Springs, Reverend Randolph, was for many years, the spiritual leader of the (Greater) New Hope Chapel that eventually relocated to North Davis Street in the Sugar Hill area of Jacksonville.

In 1925, A. Philip Randolph organized a small group of Harlem sleeping car porters into what eventually became the powerful **Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters**, the first black union to be granted an international charter by the American Federation of Labor. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters successfully negotiated a contract in 1937 with the Pullman Company that reduced working hours, increased pay, and provided better working conditions.



~ Pictured above, left: Charles Robinson, Jacksonville Pullman, Porter Instructor. Photographer: E.L. Weems; Courtesy of the Ritz Theatre and Museum Photograph. Pictured above, right: the A. Philip Randolph room "colored Waiting Room" at the Jacksonville Union Terminal ~

A. Philip Randolph organized several civil rights marches on Washington D. C. with the last in conjunction with Reverend Martin Luther King. It was at this march on August 28, 1963 that Reverend King gave his famous, "I Have a Dream Speech". In addition to working with President Harry S. Truman to end discrimination in defense plants and segregation in the military, he was also a strong ally of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In 1964, President Johnson presented the Medal of Freedom to A. Philip Randolph to honor and recognize his significant contributions to the civil rights and labor movements. The name of Florida Avenue in East Jacksonville was changed to A. Philip Randolph Boulevard to honor this distinguished American.



~ Picture above, left: Jacksonville Union Terminal, located at 1034-1076 West Bay Street; Pictured above, right: the A. Philip Randolph Black Heritage Stamp issued February 3, 1989 ~

Bessie “Queen Bess” Coleman

1892–1926



America’s first female African American flier, Bessie Coleman tragically lost her life in Jacksonville while preparing for an air show. A Texas native who moved to Chicago in 1915, Bessie Coleman had developed a strong desire to fly, but no flying school in the country was open for blacks. With support of the *Chicago Defender* newspaper and her own resources, she attended schools in France and Germany where she was trained to fly and was able to receive an international license in 1921. Bessie Coleman returned to the United States with the goal of obtaining her own plane to open a flying school for African Americans. Not having the financial resources to open the school, she went on a traveling circuit as a barnstormer and stunt pilot. During her short career, Bessie Coleman made 350 appearances, and developed a reputation as one of the best female stunt pilots in the nation.

In Jacksonville for a show to benefit the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League, Bessie Coleman and her pilot, William D. Willis, took off from Paxon Field (site of Paxon Senior High School) for a test flight on April 30, 1926. Flying in an older, poorly maintained airplane, Bessie Coleman was surveying possible landing spots for her planned parachute jump. During the flight, a long handle wrench came loose in the cockpit and jammed the gear box causing the pilot to lose control. At approximately 500 feet, Bessie Coleman was thrown out from the cockpit with the pilot suffering fatal injuries when he hit a tree while attempting to land the plane.

In Jacksonville over 5,000 were in attendance for her services at Bethel Baptist Institutional Church which were followed by another one at St. Philips Episcopal Church. After a service in Orlando, Bessie Coleman was buried in Chicago at the young age of 33.





~ Bessie Coleman Plaque located at Paxon School for Advanced Studies, 3239 Norman Thagard Blvd., Jacksonville, Florida ~

Inscription:

The first African American Female Pilot, on April 29, 1926 visited the local schools in Jacksonville, FL to encourage young individuals to explore aviation. While rehearsing for her well-renowned aerobatics show held at Paxon Airfield, which today is Paxon School for Advanced Studies, a few miles away from the airfield her plane crashed. Bessie Coleman's last day was in Jacksonville Florida, on April 30, 1926.

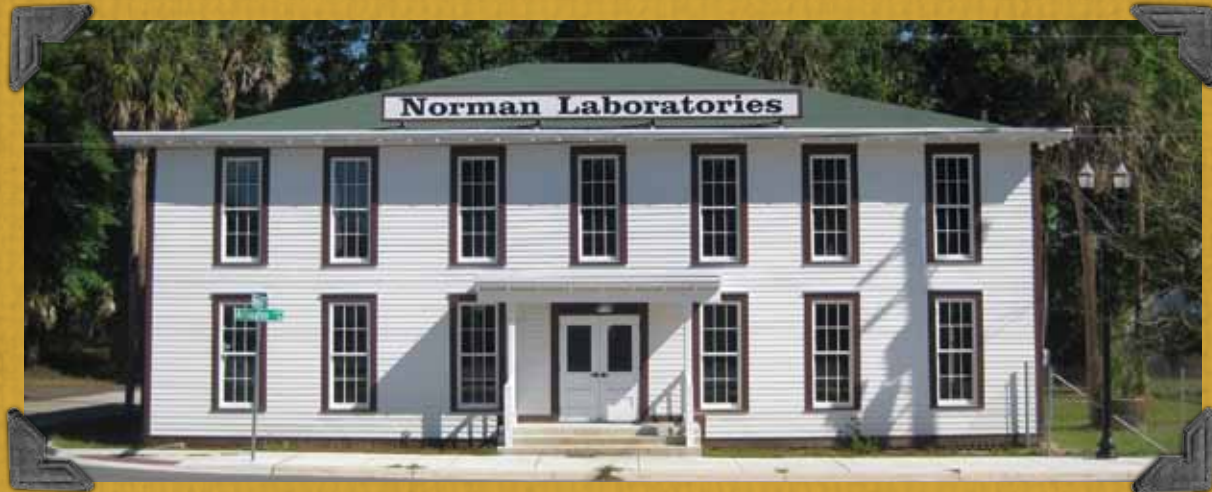
The Bessie Coleman Black Heritage Postage Stamp was issued on April 27, 1995.



~ Photo above is a News story about airplane wreck in which African American aviatrix Bessie Coleman and William D. Wills were killed, Florida Times-Union, 1926 ~

Norman Film Studios

1908–1922 | 6337 ARLINGTON ROAD



Billed as the “World’s Winter Film Capital”, Jacksonville was home to over thirty silent film studios from 1908 – 1922. The Eagle Film City, which opened in 1916 in the Arlington community of South Jacksonville, was purchased in 1922 by Richard E. Norman, Sr. The property consists of a production building, generator building, a small cottage for visiting actors, a prop storage building, indoor sound stage, and an outdoor pool for water scenes. Norman was one of the first independent movie producers to recognize the commercial potential of making films featuring an all black cast for viewing in African American communities. Although completing several of his productions before moving to Jacksonville, Norman produced eight feature films between 1920 and 1928 including *The Green-Eyed Monster* (1920), *The Crimson Skull* (1921), *The Bull-Dogger* (1921), *Regeneration* (1923), *A Debtor to the Law* (1924), *The Flying Ace* (1926), and *The Black Gold* (1928). Contrary to most movies made during the silent screen era, Norman’s films were free of racial stereotypes and depicted African Americans in a more positive light. Although only one of Norman’s films, *The Flying Ace*, is known to exist, the five buildings that formed the studios remain.

Photo bottom, left is an interior shot of the generation building. The building still houses the original 1906 Meitz & Weiss engine and 1910 generator used to power lights, cameras and other film equipment, including a pump for a now-buried pool used to film water scenes.

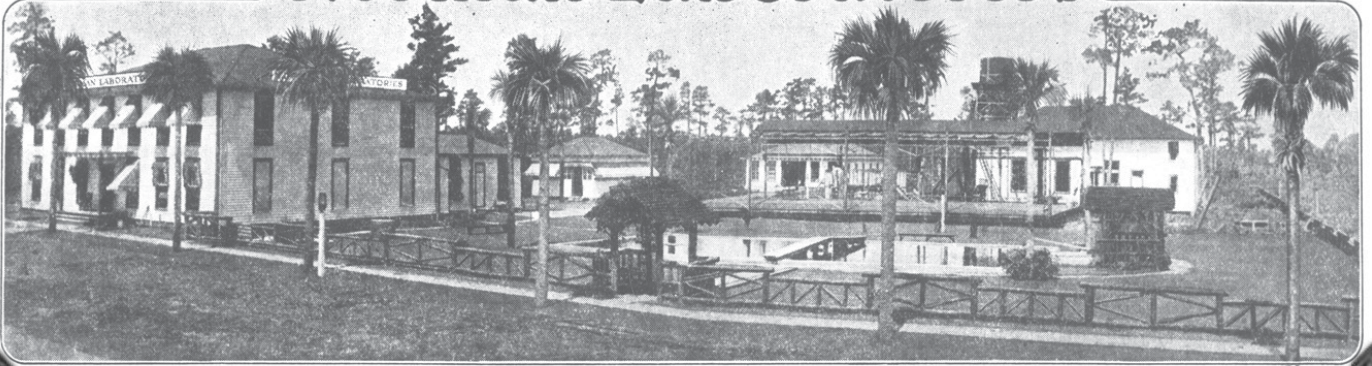


~ Capt. Dick Norman, son of the film producer Richard E. Norman, Sr. is picture above in the prop storage building that still houses several pieces of century-old equipment, including a GE generator ~

TALKING PICTURE
EQUIPMENT

Norman Laboratories

CHEMICAL SPECIALTIES
MOTION PICTURES



ARLINGTON, FLORIDA

~ Norman Studios circa 1922 on rural Arlington Rd. ~

Tucker—"Ruth, for the hundredth time, I again ask you to marry me!"

THE FLYING ACE, SENSATION OF THE YEAR

Captain Wm. Stokes, World War Hero and Flying Ace, is called upon to solve the most baffling mystery of his career. As head of the Intelligence Department of one of the Big American Railroads he is called upon to clear up the disappearance of Passenger Kimball with the \$25,000 reward of the Railroad Division. As a part of his duties the passenger fell through a window and left no trace. All clues point to the south of Thomas Junction, the small Station Master of the little station at Mayport. Ruth, the Station Master's daughter, firmly believes in the innocence of her father and the ability of Captain Stokes to clear him. Fisher Tucker, an aviator who is in love with Ruth, tries to cast suspicion upon himself to save Ruth's father, by selling Captain Stokes to go to the Dismal Swamp, and there he will see insane things above it, and find the body of Passenger Kimball. Captain Stokes goes to the swamp and finds hundreds circling over it and also finds there the key to the mystery.

A tiny vial, a small white stain on a man's hands, the smell of fresh paper among an aviator's hands, all Captain Stokes to solve an innocent man from prison.

BIG FIGHTS ON LAND AND IN AIR

See Tucker's plane loop three times in the air when he is struggling with Ruth, burst into flames, Tucker's flying into a parachute and Ruth's dramatic climb up a slender rope ladder to safety in Captain Stokes' plane.

DON'T MISS THE SENSATION OF THE YEAR

"The FLYING ACE"

THRILLS!
ACTION!
Punch!

A SUPER FEATURE
with an all star Colored Cast
Six Reels of Love! Thrills! Romance
- AT -

BILL PICKETT
'THE BULL-DOGGER'
Thrills! Laughs Too!

The Flying Ace (1926) was billed as "the greatest airplane movie ever filmed," although it was filmed entirely on the ground. It was Norman's most profitable film grossing almost \$20,000.

For more information on Norman Studios go to www.normanstudios.org

THE STORY OF BLACK GOLD

Since oil had been discovered on the Oklahoma Range, around the little town of Tatum, nothing had been abandoned. Matt Ashton, owner of the little Circle Ranch, was the first to start on the Black Gold Fever. The oil drill was boring a hole to wealth or poverty, into which he had sunk all his cash and even mortgaged his farm and home to raise more money to sink the first well on his ranch. On an adjoining claim, the Ohio Company brings in a well and this forces Ashton to drill an offset well within 30 days or lose the permit to drill on his own ranch. Pete Barkley, Ashton's oil duffer, refuses to drill further until he is paid \$2,000 down.

Barkley is scheming with Walter Warden, Cashier of the Bankers National Bank to secure Ashton's account for delaying work on his well. Ashton manages to borrow the money to force Barkley to continue drilling, but Warden and Barkley stage him in a plot and accuse him of robbing the Bank. As Beard, Ashton's foreman, knows he is innocent, but is unable to prove it. Alice Ashton, daughter of the President of the Bankers National and in love with Ashton, who's innocent, but in love with Ashton in jail, his well idle, and only 7 days left to finish it or to be sold by law. Alice and Peg Reynolds, the one-legged one-eyed oil duffer, the one-legged one-eyed oil duffer, the one-legged one-eyed oil duffer.

As to how they do this, through super-human effort, and without sleep for 48 hours, fighting a band of rascals—only to discover it is a dry hole—with agonizingly awaiting last word—Ashton, in all—mean an absorbing story of action and thrills—with a great surprise at the end and when everything is cleared up—Tom Matt Ashton discover **BLACK GOLD** on his Ranch!

Black Gold

ALL COLORED CAST
Action!
Thrills!

A SUPER FEATURE

J.P. Small Memorial Stadium

A.K.A. DURKEE FIELD



James P. Small Memorial Stadium, A.K.A. Durkee Field, has served as the epicenter of organized baseball in Jacksonville. Located at 1701 Myrtle Avenue, the field has hosted spring trainings and exhibition games of the major league teams, as well as home to several minor league teams such as the Jacksonville Tars (Jacksonville Braves) and the Jacksonville Red Caps of the Negro League. In 1953, the Jacksonville Braves broke the color line of the South Atlantic League by bringing in three African American players. One was nineteen year old, Henry "Hank" Aaron who played at Durkee Field for one year before being moved to the Milwaukee Braves. Also Known at different times as Barrs Field, the Myrtle Avenue Ball Park, Joseph H. Durkee Athletic Field, and currently James P. Small Memorial Stadium, this block of property at the southeast corner of West Eighth Street and North Myrtle Avenue has been the site of organized professional, semi-professional, and amateur baseball since 1911. The current steel and brick grandstand has the same basic appearance as originally designed and constructed in 1935 and as expanded in 1937.



~ Jacksonville Redcaps ~



~ Hank Aaron, 1953 Jacksonville Braves ~



~ Pictured left: Jacksonville Braves uniform shirt,
Pictured below: J.P. Small Memorial Stadium ~



Life in Jacksonville

CIRCA 1940s & 1950s



~ Pictured above Mrs. Marva Louis 1945
Heavy weight champion Joe Louis' wife ~



~ Pictured above Bride & Groom, 1950s;
Pictured below Mr. E.L. Weems, pioneer
African-American photographer ~



~ Photos courtesy of the
Ritz Theater and Museum ~

The Ritz Theater & Museum

829 N. DAVIS STREET

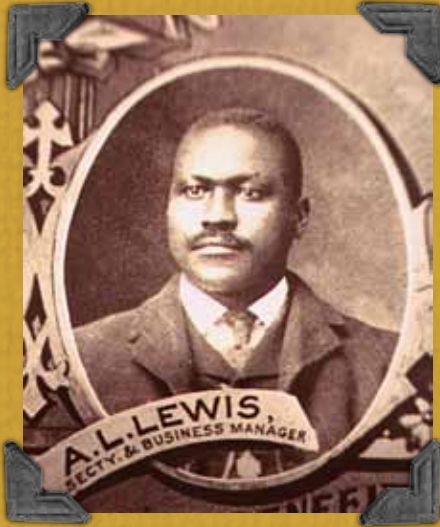


Prominently located at the corner of West State Street and North Davis Street, the Ritz Theatre operated for nearly thirty years as a movie house catering to the African American community. Constructed in 1929 from plans by Jacksonville architect, Jefferson D. Powell, the theatre had a unique and delightful design that incorporated elements of the Egyptian Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Art Deco styles. The richly detailed corner entryway was incorporated in the design of the current Ritz Theatre.



Abraham Lincoln Lewis

1865 – 1947



Born in Madison County, Florida, Abraham Lincoln Lewis

grew up in East Jacksonville where he took a job as a water boy at Cashen Sawmill, eventually working up to foreman. Responding to the need for health and burial insurance, A.L. Lewis joined with six other founders to organize the Afro-American Industrial and Benefit Association in 1901, one of the earliest insurance companies in Florida. In addition to serving as treasurer, A.L. Lewis became the President of the company in 1919 and continued in that position until his death in 1947. Under his leadership, the Afro American Life Insurance Company grew to be one of the largest black owned companies in the Southeast and by 1937 was the state's only million dollar African-American business.



~ Photos are courtesy of the Ritz Theater and Museum ~

Afro-American Life Insurance Company



*~ Original building at 101 E. Union Street,
photo courtesy of the Ritz Theater and Museum ~*

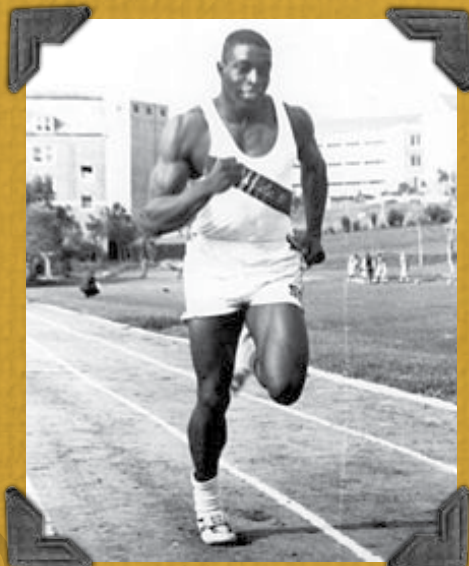


The company opened agencies across the state and eventually expanded into Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas. In 1956, the company invested over a million dollars to construct a new headquarters to replace the first home office constructed in 1910. Under his direction, the Pension Bureau of the **Afro-American Life Insurance Company** established three large cemeteries off Moncrief Road, as well as American Beach on Amelia Island recognized as one of the most successful beach resorts for African-Americans during segregation.

A.L. Lewis was active in numerous civic and social organizations such as the Masons and Odd-Fellows, the National Negro Insurance Association and worked with Booker T. Washington to help found the Negro Business league. Long-time member of Mount Olive A.M.E. Church, A.L. Lewis served as Sunday school superintendent for fifty-four years. He was active in the establishment of the Lincoln Golf and Country Club, one of the first such facilities owned and used by African Americans. A.L. Lewis also served as a trustee and treasurer of Edward Waters College.

Robert Lee “Bullet Bob” Hayes

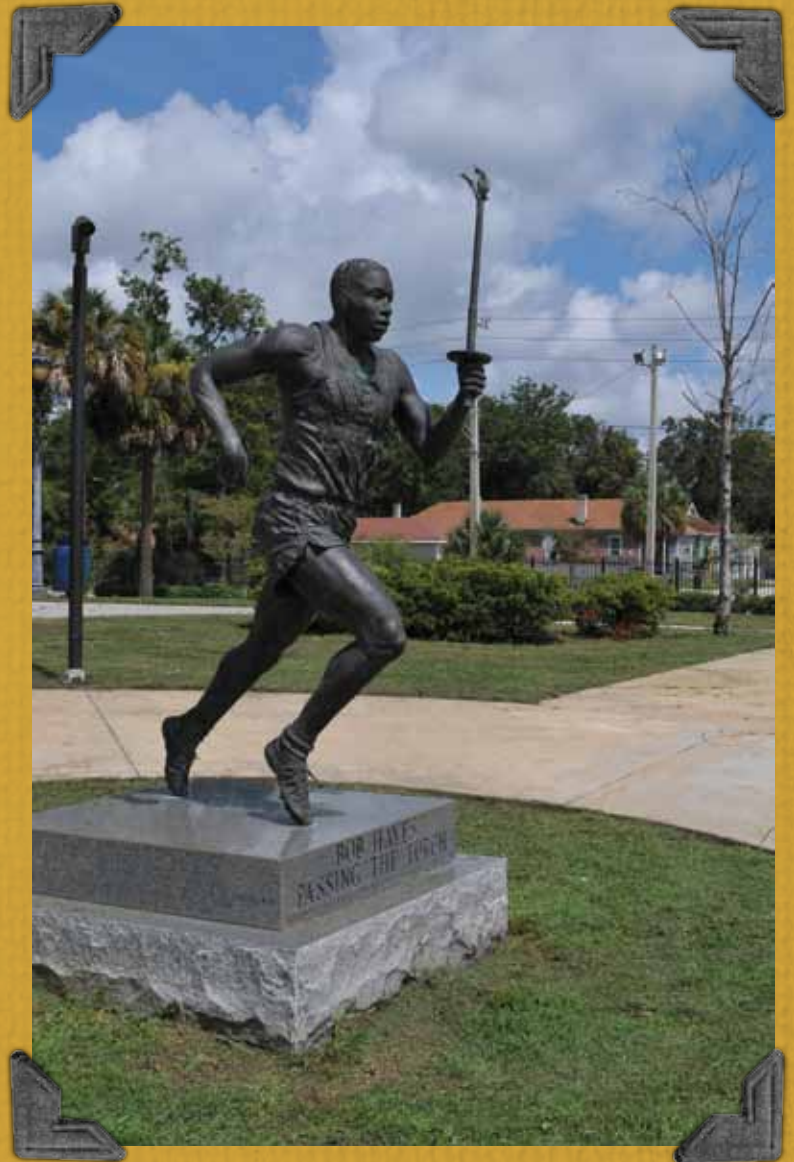
1942 – 2002



Born and raised in East Jacksonville, Robert “Bob” Hayes, played football and ran track at Matthew Gilbert High School. After his significant athletic achievement at Matthew Gilbert, Bob Hayes went on to play football at Florida A & M University under legendary coach Jake Gaither. While at Florida A & M University, he also became nationally recognized for his successes in track. During college and afterwards, Bob Hayes participated in track events across the country and in Europe where he broke or tied numerous world records. By 1963, He was being called the “World’s Fastest Human”. At the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, Bob Hayes won a gold medal in the 100 meter race tying the existing world record of 10.0 seconds. He received another gold medal as the anchor of the U.S. 400 meter relay team, which set a world record of 39 seconds.

After an outstanding college football career, including the honor of being the first African-American to play in the Senior Bowl, Bob Hayes played for ten years with the Dallas Cowboys under Coach Tom Landry. During his pro career with the Cowboys, Bob Hayes played in two Super Bowls and four Pro Bowls and later was enshrined in the Dallas Cowboys Ring of Honor in 2001. Because of problems off the field following his retirement, Bob Hayes was not elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame until 2009 which was twenty-eight years after his eligibility for selection. Unfortunately, this high honor was not bestowed upon this gifted athletic until seven years after his death in 2002. The only athletic to win both an Olympic gold medal and a Super Bowl ring, Bob Hayes was the only second Olympic gold medalist to be inducted into the Hall of Fame after Jim Thorpe.

The Bob Hayes statue is located in the A. Philip Randolph Heritage Park, 1096 A. Philip Randolph Boulevard.



A. Philip Randolph Park

1096 A. PHILIP RANDOLPH BOULEVARD



The four-acre A. Philip Randolph Park is located at 1096 A. Philip Randolph Boulevard.

The park was named for labor leader, A. Philip Randolph, one of America's most notable figures of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s. Randolph's efforts eventually led to the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He was a strong ally of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

A life-size bronze statue of Olympic Gold Medalist and Dallas Cowboy star, Bob Hayes, was added to the park in November 2002. Hayes grew up in East Jacksonville, less than a mile from the park. Park amenities include playscapes, an amphitheater, picnic tables, benches and restrooms.





"Salvation for a race, nation, or class must come from within. Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is exacted. Freedom and justice must be struggled for by the oppressed of all lands and races, and the struggle must be continuous; for freedom is never a final fact, but a continuing evolving process to higher and higher levels of human, social, economic, political and religious relationships."
 A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

Honorable John A. Delaney, Mayor
 Honorable Terry L. Fields, District 7 Councilman
 A. Philip Randolph Heritage Park Association Members

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| John Andrews | Noel G. Lawrence |
| Grady Braddock | Erwin Lax |
| Tim Brooks | Brenda Leak |
| Cheryl L. Brown | Lenora Lee |
| Pat Lockett Fielder | Mark Little |
| John Paul Terry Fields | Jacqueline Mitchell |
| Ola Fields | Reva Oliver |
| Paul Fields, Sr. | Helen Ridley |
| Jerry Hinton | Earl Sims |
| Wendy Hinton | Arnold Tritt |
| Thelma Jackson | L. Emory White |

Inscription:

"Salvation for a race, nation or class must come from within. Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is exacted. Freedom and justice must be struggled for by this oppressed of all lands and races, and the struggle must be continuous; for freedom is never a final fact, but a continuing evolving process to higher and higher levels of human, social, economic, political and religious relationships"

A. Philip Randolph



Oakland Park

657 EAST UNION STREET

Oakland Park is located in the Oakland neighborhood east of downtown Jacksonville, at the northeast corner of East Union Street and Ionia Street. The residential community of Oakland emerged during the 1870's and was oriented toward working-class families. West of the park lies the Old City Cemetery established in 1852, and along the park's northern boundary is the Old St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery. The park has historical significance as the first playground established by the City of Jacksonville for African-American children. The one-acre park opened on July 4, 1918, through the efforts of noted Jacksonville humanitarian, Eartha M.M. White (1876-1974), and for ten years was under the direction of pioneer recreational leader Florida C. Dwight (1886-1977).

Even before being officially opened, Oakland Park was the site of a large patriotic meeting in April of 1917 organized by local African American leaders to rally support for the war effort.



Florida C. Dwight Park

1154 W. BEAVER STREET



~ Florida C. Dwight
(1886-1977) ~

Opening in 1929, LaVilla Park was the second playground and recreational facility established to serve Jacksonville's African American community. This 3.40 acre park is bounded by West Beaver Street, Eaverson Street, West Church Street, and Cleveland Street and is located across from the site of the old A.L. Lewis Elementary School, at 600 Eaverson Street (LaVilla Grammar School) that opened in 1917. The development and use of LaVilla Park as an early municipal recreational facility is closely associated with the thirty-five year career of recreational director, Florida C. Dwight. In addition to serving at Oakland Park and LaVilla Park, Florida C. Dwight went on to work at Wilder Park before retiring in 1950 as Supervisor Emeritus of the Negro Section of the City Recreation Department.

In 1983, the Jacksonville City Council passed a resolution honoring and commending Mrs. Dwight for her many years of service, and renaming the LaVilla Park to the Florida C. Dwight Memorial Playground.

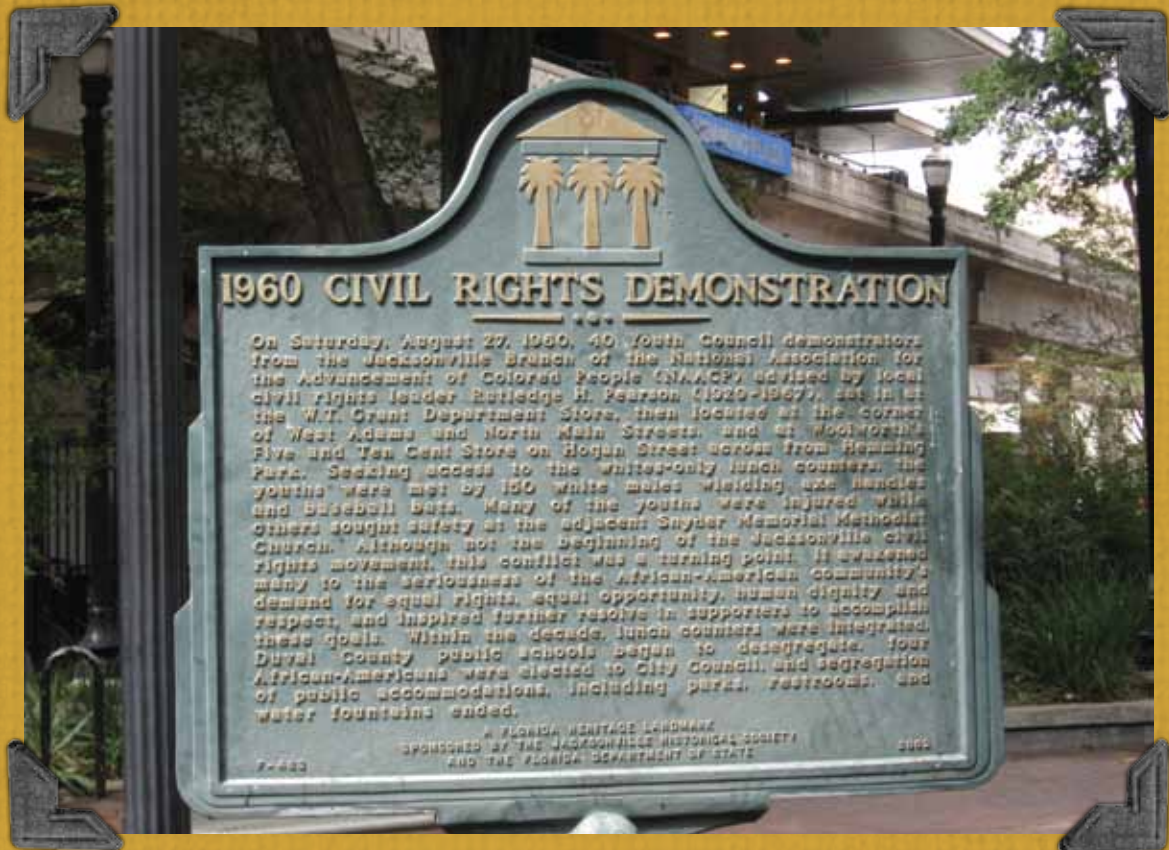


Hemming Plaza

Axe Handle Saturday • August 27, 1960

Racial unrest began to grow in the late 1950s and early 1960s throughout the South in reaction to the extremely slow progress being made in addressing segregation of public facilities, schools and businesses. In addition, anger was also directed at the continued lack of economic equality. The use of non-violent demonstrations and sit-ins many times resulted in a violent response by those in support of maintaining the status quo. In Jacksonville, civil rights demonstrations were first organized and initiated by members of the Youth Council of the Jacksonville branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) under the direction of local social studies teacher, Rutledge Pearson. After numerous sit-ins at the lunch counter of several downtown department stores, members of the Youth Council were brutally attacked by segregationists armed with axe handles and baseball bats. This event, which occurred on August 27, 1960, is known as “Axe Handle Saturday”. The notoriety of “Axe Handle Saturday” and later demonstrations in 1964 did much to end segregation and improve race relations in Jacksonville.





~ Acquired by the city in 1866, the block containing Hemming Plaza was first called "City Park" and later "St. James Park" before being renamed for Charles C. Hemming in 1899. ~

Bethel Baptist Institutional Church

1058 BETHEL BAPTIST WAY • ESTABLISHED 1838

Bethel Baptist Institutional Church, dates back to 1838 as the first organized Baptist church in Jacksonville. During this early period, the congregation of Bethel Baptist Church included both white and black members. After the Civil War, white members went to court in an attempt to dispossess the black members. The court ruled in favor of the black members which resulted in a settlement in which the black members retained the name Bethel Baptist Church, as well as received a cash settlement. Completed in 1904 from a design by New York architect, M.H. Hubbard, the sanctuary built after the Great Fire of 1901 is dominated by an ornate bell tower and octagonal steeple that defines the main entry behind which is a central mansard roof with detailed cupola. Bethel Baptist was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 6, 1978, and was designated a local landmark on March 11, 1997.



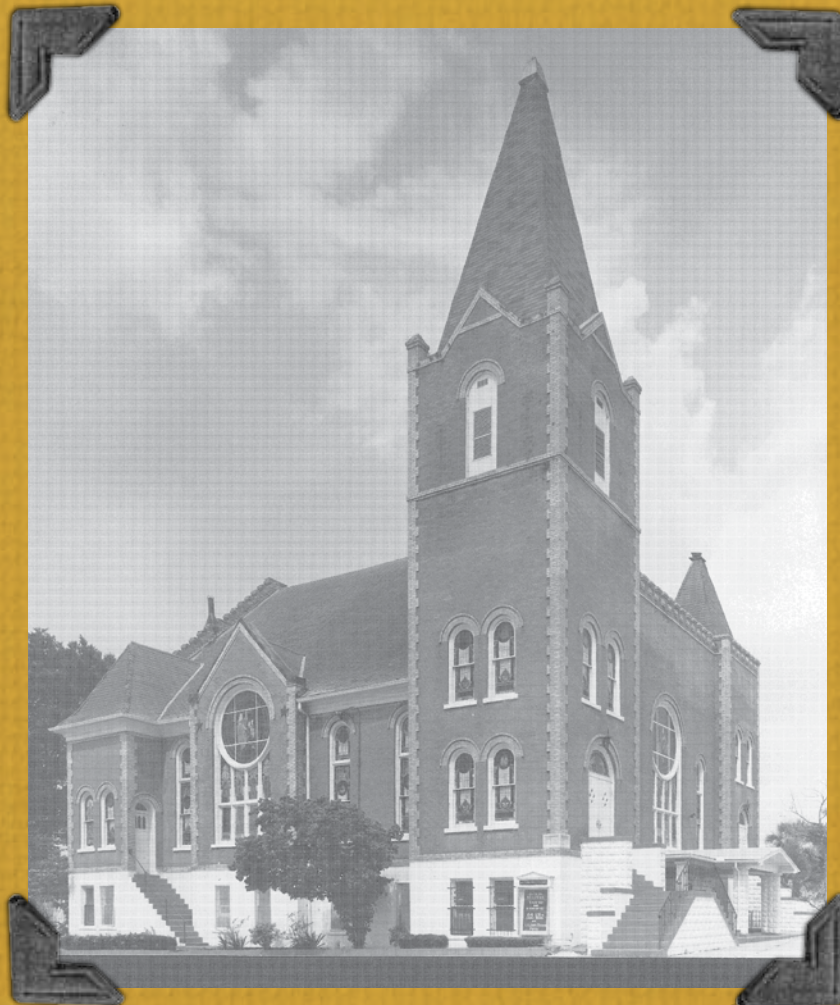
~ With its ornate bell tower and octagonal steeple,
the 1904 sanctuary is one of Jacksonville's most distinctive landmarks. ~

Mount Zion A.M.E. Church

201 E. BEAVER STREET

Established in 1866, Mount Zion A.M.E., 201 East Beaver Street, was organized by a group of Christians known as the “Society” which was comprised of Freedmen that settled in Jacksonville immediately after the end of the Civil War. This stunning red brick edifice sits at the intersection of East Beaver and Newnan Streets. The present structure (pictured) is the sixth built after the previous 1,500 seat church was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1901. Constructed of brick upon a stone foundation, the Romanesque Revival style church features arched windows and door openings, art-glass windows, and a prominent bell tower.

Mount Zion A.M.E. was added to the National Register of Historic Places on December 30, 1992 and designated a local landmark on May 10, 1994.



Mother Midway A.M.E. Church

1456 VAN BUREN STREET • ESTABLISHED 1865



During and immediately after the Civil War, many African American churches were formed in Florida usually independent community based congregations organized by a lay minister.

The first formal religious organization established by Freedmen under the umbrella of a national denomination was in June of 1865 when ex-slave, William G. Stewart, was appointed as pastor of Florida by the South Carolina Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The day after arriving in Jacksonville on June 9, 1865, Reverend Stewart met with a group from a small settlement east of Jacksonville known as Midway to organize **the first A.M.E. Church in Florida.**

Still located in East Jacksonville, the Mother Midway A.M.E. Church is recognized as the "mother" of both the Florida Conference of the A.M.E. Church organized in 1867 and the East Florida Conference established in 1877.



Mount Olive A.M.E. Church

841 FRANKLIN STREET • ESTABLISHED 1887



Pioneer African-American builder and designer, Richard L. Brown

resided and worked in Oakland and Campbell's Addition of East Jacksonville. In addition to serving two consecutive terms in the Florida House of Representatives, Brown also purchased land in Campbell's Addition, later deeding part of it to the Duval County School Board for the construction of an elementary school that was named in his honor. Employed by the school board during the early part of the twentieth century, Brown was probably responsible for the design and construction of some of the city's early school facilities. In addition to the construction of Centennial Hall at Edward Waters College in 1916, one of his most significant projects was the design and construction in 1922 of Mount Olive A.M.E. Church at 841 Franklin Street in Oakland.

~ Richard L. Brown
(1854 - 1948) ~

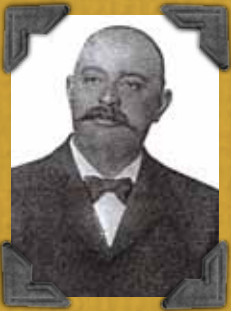


Jacksonville Local Heros



Joseph E. Lee 1849–1920

Jacksonville's first African American attorney was Joseph E. Lee who resided in East Jacksonville. A native of Philadelphia, Lee obtained a law degree from Howard University in 1873 before moving to Jacksonville. In 1874 he was elected to the Florida House of Representatives, where he served for six years before winning a seat in the Florida Senate. The Republican Party nominated Lee as a delegate to the Florida Constitutional Convention of 1885. In 1888, he was appointed as municipal judge, as well as later received federal appointments as customs collector for the Port of St. Johns (1890-1894 and 1897-1898) and Collector of Internal Revenue (1898-1913).



Joseph Haygood Blodgett 1858–1934

Although having very limited formal education or training, Joseph Haygood Blodgett became one of the most respected and successful African American business and community leaders in Jacksonville during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Born in Augusta, Georgia on February 8, 1858, Blodgett came to bustling Jacksonville in the 1890s, reportedly with only one dollar and ten cents in his pocket. By 1898, he had entered the construction and real estate business and had built numerous houses and businesses, many located on parcels under his ownership. Blodgett lost most of his buildings in the Great Fire of May 3, 1901, which destroyed most of Downtown Jacksonville including parts of the outlying neighborhood of LaVilla. Utilizing a five thousand dollar loan from the State Bank of Florida, Blodgett was able to revive his construction and real estate business, and by 1919 had constructed two hundred and fifty-eight houses, of which one hundred he owned. One of the more noted buildings designed and constructed by Blodgett was the 1915 Lawton Pratt (Hillman & Pratt) Funeral Home at 525 West Beaver Street in the LaVilla section of Downtown Jacksonville. With his death in 1934, the Florida Times Union proclaimed Joseph H. Blodgett as a leader among the African American community, as well as one of the wealthiest blacks in Duval County. This declaration was based not only on his business success, but also on his demonstrated community leadership and civic involvement.



William Marion Raines 1882–1950

Professor William M. Raines was one of Jacksonville's most well-known and respected educators who served as principal for twelve years at Matthew W. Gilbert Junior & Senior High School. Born in Monticello, Florida, William Raines came to Jacksonville in 1922. His academic background as an educator was extensive and included attendance at Florida Memorial College, Edward Waters College, Florida A & M University, Hampton Institute, and Columbia University. His long and dedicated service to education was recognized with the opening of William M. Raines High School in 1964.



Mary Singleton 1926–1980

Mary Littlejohn Singleton was one of the first African American women to be elected to the Jacksonville City Council. A Jacksonville native, Mary Singleton attended Boylan Haven School after which she received a degree in 1949 from Florida A. & M. University. After teaching at Matthew Gilbert Junior and Senior High School for several years, she left teaching to assist her husband, Isadore Singleton, in managing their five restaurants. With the death of her husband, Mary Singleton became active in the Democrat Party, and in 1967 successfully won the race to represent Ward Two on the City Council. During her time on the City Council, she concentrated on issues related to women and the low income, as well as public transportation and infrastructure. Mary Singleton was elected to the Florida House of the Representatives in 1972 where she became a champion for public education. In 1976, she left public office to serve as the Director of the Florida Division of Elections, a position she held until resigning in 1978 to run as Lieutenant Governor with former Governor Claude Kirk in his unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign. To recognize her years of dedicated public service to Jacksonville, the new senior citizens center opened by the city in 1981 was named in her honor.



Sallye B. Mathis 1912–1982

Sallye Mathis joined Mary Littlejohn Singleton as one of the first African American women to be elected to the Jacksonville City Council. A graduate of Bethune Cookman College, Sallye Mathis had a twenty-eight year teaching career retiring in 1962 following the death of her husband, Oscar Mathis. With her retirement, Sallye Mathis devoted her time to community service becoming active in the League of Women’s Voters, the Board of the Jacksonville YWCA, and helping in the organizing of the Jacksonville Opportunities Industrial Council. Elected to the City Council in 1967, Sallye Mathis actively campaigned for consolidation of the city – county government in 1968 and served on the Consolidation Study Committee ensuring that the needs of African Americans would be adequately addressed. With the passage of consolidation, she and Mary L. Singleton were both re-elected to the Jacksonville City Council. As a member of the City Council, Sallye Mathis focused on such issues as establishing a citizen police review board, equal job opportunities in public agencies, and reduced bus fare for senior citizens. To honor her years of dedicated service, the Jacksonville Chapter of the NAACP established the Sallye B. Mathis Award to recognize outstanding community service. A local elementary school was also named in her honor.



Johnnie Mae Chappell 1929–1964

Mrs. Chappell, a mother of 10, was murdered as she walked along a roadside. Her killers were white men looking for a black person to shoot following a day of racial unrest.

In 2000, Johnnie Mae Chappell was recognized as a Civil Rights Martyr and was added to the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama (pictured below). The martyrs include activists who were targeted for death because of their civil rights work; random victims of vigilantes determined to halt the movement; and individuals who, in the sacrifice of their own lives, brought new awareness to the struggle. The inscription on the memorial wall is a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and it reads: “Until Justice Rolls Down Like Waters and Righteousness like a Mighty Stream.”



Jacksonville Local Heros



Wendell Holmes 1922–

While serving as chair of the Education Committee of the Jacksonville Branch of the NAACP, Wendell Holmes became an early leader in the movement to end the segregation of Duval County's public schools. He went on to become the first African-American to be elected to a school board in Florida, and later served as Chair of the Duval County School Board.



Rutledge H. Pearson 1930–1967

A Jacksonville native and local teacher, Rutledge H. Pearson played a major role in the advancement of civil rights in Jacksonville and Florida. As advisor to the Youth Council of the Jacksonville Chapter of the NAACP, Rutledge Pearson organized and directed the first sit-in movement in the city to end racial segregation of local restaurants and lunch counters. On August 27, 1960, these young demonstrators were attacked in Hemming Park by a white mob carrying axe handles and bats. The violence of "Axe Handle Saturday" was instrumental in creating community support for improving race relations. After serving as president of the both the local and state chapters of the NAACP, Rutledge Pearson became an agent for the Laundry, Dry Cleaning, and Dye House Worker's Union in 1966. While on a trip from Atlanta to Memphis where a strike was planned, Rutledge Pearson died in a car accident on May 1, 1967 at the age of 37. Because of his courageous leadership in the civil rights movement, Rutledge Pearson was honored in 1992 with a Mary L. Singleton Award for Social Harmony presented by the Jacksonville Chapter of the NAACP.



Eddie Mae Steward 1938–2000

Eddie Mae Steward was one of Jacksonville's leading advocates for civil and human rights throughout her life. As president of the Jacksonville branch of the NAACP and subsequently as State NAACP President from 1973 to 1974, Eddie Mae Steward single-handedly launched the efforts that led to the court-ordered desegregation of Duval county's public schools.

United States congresswoman Corrine Brown introduced legislation enacted by the Congress to dedicate the United States Post Office at 1601 Main Street as the "Eddie Mae Steward Post Office."



Dr. Adam W. Herbert 1943–

Dr. Herbert had a stellar career as an academic administrator. He served as President of the University of North Florida from 1989–1998, Chancellor of the State University System of Florida from 1998–2001, and as President of Indiana University from 2003–2007. Adam Herbert was the first African American to hold any of these positions.



Corrine Brown 1946–

Representative Corrine Brown was elected to Congress in 1992. A native of Jacksonville, Florida, Congresswoman Brown served in the Florida House of Representatives for ten years before coming to Washington.

Congresswoman Brown attended the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University where she earned a Bachelor of Science Degree. She also received a Master's Degree and an Education Specialist Degree from the University of Florida and an Honorary Doctor of Law Degree from Edward Waters College. She has been a faculty member at Florida Community College of Jacksonville, the University of Florida, and Edward Waters College. Brown was reelected to the U.S. House of Representatives for an eleventh term in November 2012.



Edward Waters College

1658 KINGS ROAD



~ B.F. Lee Theological Seminary Building, built in 1927. ~



~ Centennial Building, Built in 1916. ~



~ Henry Y. Tookes Library Built in 1945 ~

Edward Waters College is recognized as the oldest of four colleges formed during Reconstruction to provide needed educational opportunities and teacher training for Florida's African American citizens recently emancipated from slavery. In addition, Edward Waters College along with Florida Memorial College and Bethune-Cookman College, reflected the leadership of church and church organizations who played significant roles in creating and supporting higher education opportunities for African-Americans in Florida. Although originating in the late 1860's under different names and locations, Edward Waters College acquired its current name in 1891. At that time located in a school building owned by Mount Zion A.M.E. Church in Downtown Jacksonville, the trustees of the college purchased the first parcels of the current site along Kings Road in 1904 with the first building, Salter Hall, being built in 1908.

Nat Glover

1943 –



Following a successful career in law enforcement, Nat Glover was elected in 1995 as the first African-American sheriff of Duval County. After leaving office, Nat Glover became the 29th President of Edward Waters College.



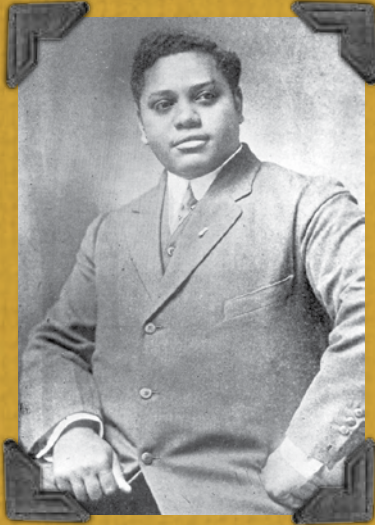
~ Pictured above: standing (l to r) Anthony "Tony" Hill, Sr., Cynthia Austin, Mayor Alvin Brown, Nathaniel Glover, Mrs. Wendell Holmes; Seated (l to r) Wendell Holmes, Congresswoman Corrine Brown, Frances Bradley ~



~ Pictured left: Mayor Alvin Brown (l), and Nat Glover (r) ~

Lawton L. Pratt

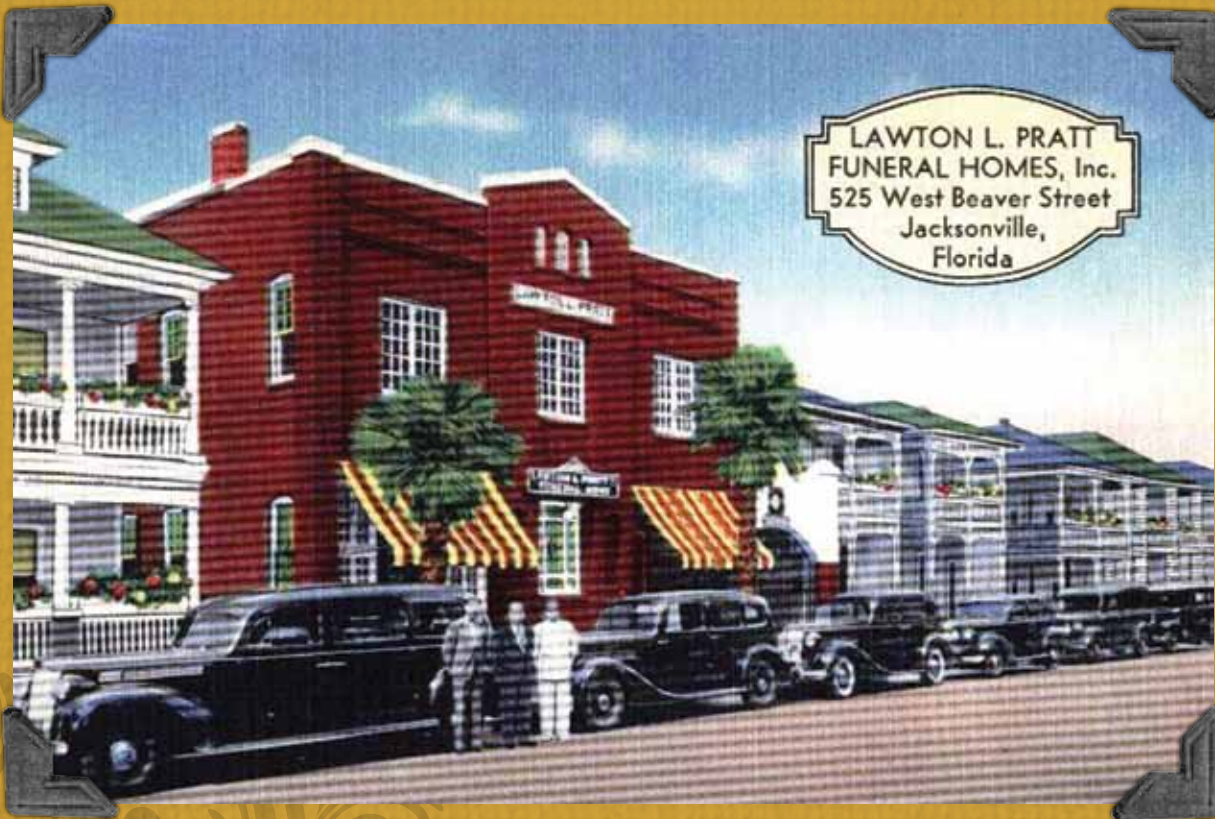
1886 – 1943 • 525 WEST BEAVER STREET



Opening his business in 1900, Lawton Pratt (1886 – 1943) is recognized as the second licensed black funeral director in Florida. A graduate of the Cincinnati School of Embalming, Lawton Pratt was one of the organizers of the Florida Negro Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association. In 1915, Lawton Pratt built a new funeral home building.

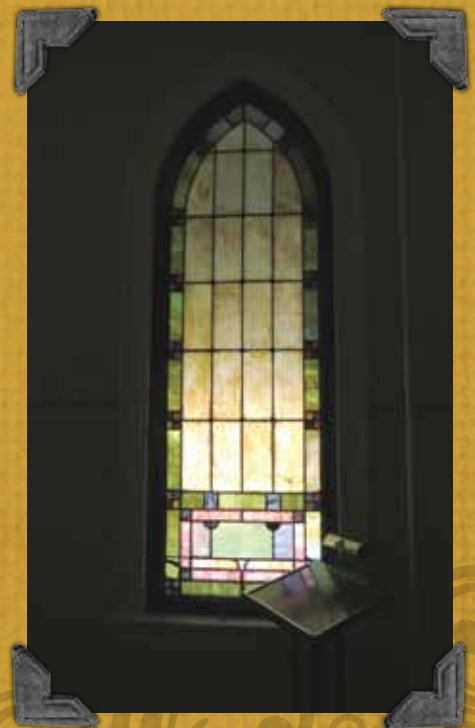
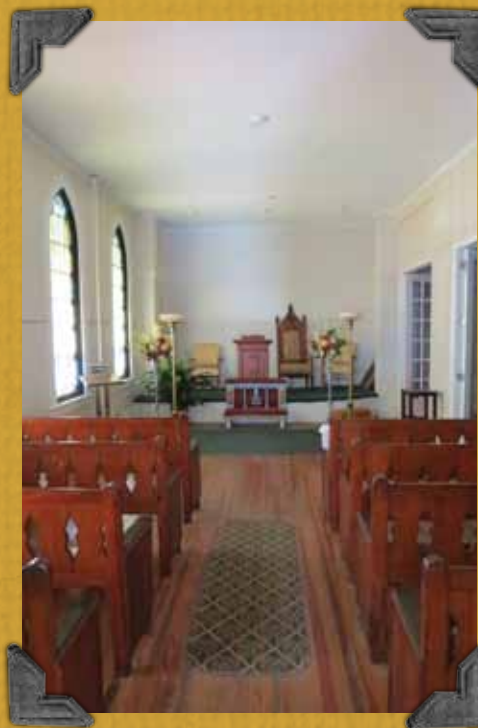
The attractive two-story brick building was designed and constructed by Joseph Haywood Blodgett (1858 – 1934), one of Jacksonville's pioneer African American contractors. The business operated on the ground floor, while the mortician and his family lived on the second floor.

The funeral home was the meeting place of the First Organization Meeting of the Florida Negro Embalmers & Funeral Directors Association. Mr. Pratt was well beyond his time and included women in the field of embalming.





~ The building pictured above (525 W. Beaver Street) has contained a black-owned business for nearly over 100 years. Photos below and right showing existing and original chapel benches, stained glass windows and business sign are courtesy of Hillman-Pratt & Walton Funeral Home. ~



Noted African American Performing Artists Associated with Jacksonville



Inez Bivens

Born in Tifton, Georgia, but raised in Jacksonville, Inez Bivens was a graduate of Edward Waters College and later attended New Century Business School. While serving as secretary to A.M.E. Bishop G. E. Curry, Inez Bivens started a successful career as a promoter of gospel performers. Several of the noted gospel singers she promoted were local youths such as Lucious Larkins, later a member of Archie Bell and the Drells, Glenn Jones noted for his 1984 RCA hit, "Bring Back Your Love", and Jacquelyn I. Fort who became a member of the Clara Ward Singers. Inez Bivens also organized and managed her own groups that included the Gospel Echoes, the Biven Specials, and Mrs. Jacquelyn Inez Fort, and the Gospel Echoettes. As a gospel promoter, she constructed a large house on Fairfax Street near Edward Waters College that included eight bedrooms, three bathrooms, and chapel. Due to segregation, many gospel performers could not find accommodations in Jacksonville and stayed at her house during their visits to the city. Some of the noted gospel singers she booked in Jacksonville included Sam Cook (Sam and Dave), James Cleveland, the Staples Singers, Clara Ward Singers, Bobby Womack, and The Mighty Clouds of Joy.



William Boone Daniels, "Billy Daniels"

Growing up in East Jacksonville, Billy Daniels received his first musical training outside of the city at St. Emma, a Catholic military school near Richmond, Virginia. At a young age, he was employed in a ship galley before starting work in a New York restaurant. With recommendations from several of his former classmates at St. Emma, Daniels was hired as a club singer. Leaving his club job, Billy Daniels went on tour with band leader Erskine Hawkins in the 1920s. During the 1930s and 40s, he continued to compose songs and performed in many clubs including the legendary, Cotton Club. One of his most popular songs was "That Old Black Magic" written by John Herndon, "Johnny Mercer". Daniels was a television pioneer hosting his own show, "The Billy Daniels Show" on NBC, as well as a guest on other programs such as Ed Sullivan. His diverse career also included appearing in seventeen movies. Eventually making his permanent home in Laurel Canyon, California, Billy Daniels died in 1988 and is buried in LaJolla, California.



Jackson "Jackie" Davis

Growing up in the Durkeeville area, Jackson "Jackie" Davis began playing the piano at five years old, and as a teenager was performing in local churches. While still in high school, he played with Henry Washington, the leader of the house band at the Two Spot. After a brief stay in New York performing with great bands of the era, Davis returned to Jacksonville to complete his education at Stanton High School, Edward Waters College, and Florida A&M University. After military service, he resumed his career as a jazz organists and recording artist, playing with Count Basie and Louis Jordan. Jackson Davis went on to have a successful solo career as a renowned jazz organist and singer and performed in numerous movies and TV shows featuring Johnny Carson, Ed Sullivan, and Jackie Gleason. Jackson "Jackie" Davis returned to Jacksonville in later years where he died in 1999.



Frank Benjamin "Frankie" Manning

Born on May 26, 1914 in Jacksonville's Campbell Hill south of LaVilla and west of Brooklyn, Frankie Manning left the city in 1917 for Harlem at the age of four. As he grew up, Frankie Manning was attracted to the Lincoln Theatre that featured the performances of such legendary Vaudeville acts as Noble Sissie, Bert Williams, Paul Robeson, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Developing his skills as a dancer, he performed at the Alhambra Ballroom and the Renaissance Ballroom before becoming a legend at the Savoy Ballroom as a dancer, innovator and choreographer of the Lindy Hop air step. Frankie Manning was an original member of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers founded in 1935 by Herbert "Whitey" White, and later toured with Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, and others. In charge of the Whitey's Lindy Hoppers gig at the Cotton Club and later the European and Australian tours, he was instrumental in spreading the popularity of the Lindy Hop across three continents during the 1930s and 40s. He was involved in numerous movies over the years including *Jittering Jitterbugs* and *Hot Chocolate*, and more recently in *Malcolm X* and *Stomping at the Savoy*.



Ray Charles (R.C. Robinson)

R.C. Robinson was born on September 23, 1930 in the small North Florida town of Greenville. Raised in poverty by his loving mother, Aretha Robinson, R. C. Robinson began going blind at the age of five from glaucoma. At the age of seven, R. C. Robinson was sent to the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine where he took his first formal piano lessons. Shortly after the death of his mother in 1945, fifteen year old Robinson left the school and headed for nearby Jacksonville where he moved into the residence of Lena Mae and Fred Thompson on West Church Street in LaVilla. With the goal of becoming a professional musician, Robinson began hanging out at the office of the Jacksonville Local 632 of the American Federation of Musicians. A daily visitor to the union office housed in the Clara White Mission, he began honing his playing and singing skills by joining jam sessions with the professional. With his growing reputation as a talented jazz performer, R.C. was called on occasions to play with the house band at the famous Two Spot club. Eventually changing his name to Ray Charles in order to avoid confusion with boxing champion Sugar Ray Robinson, sixteen year old R. C. Robinson left Jacksonville to continue his long and successful career and became one of America's greatest and most popular entertainer, song writer, and piano player.



Charlie "Hoss" Singleton

Born on September 17, 1913 in Gainesville, Florida, song writer, Charlie "Hoss" Singleton, moved with his family to Jacksonville at the age of three. A graduate of Stanton High School, Charlie Singleton had a strong interest in developing and promoting the artistic talents of local youth. In 1945, he auditioned numerous Jacksonville students to form an ensemble of young singers, musicians, dancers, and comedians. The group performed two shows a year, the April Follies and the Twentieth Century Revue, at Durkee Field (James P. Small Park), as well as took the show on the road with performances in such cities as Miami and Atlanta. The group also performed at the famous Two Spot club joining noted musicians and singers such as Nat King Cole, Winona, "Mr. Blues", Harris, Dinah Washington, and Count Basie. In 1950, Charlie Singleton moved to New York where he was soon working with several recording companies including Decca, MCA, and Marks Music. Although his big break came with, "Momma You Treat Your Daughter So Mean" recorded by Ruth Brown, his most well-known song was "Stranger in the Night" that won him six Grammy Awards, and was the theme song for the movie, "A Man Could Get Killed". Charlie Singleton also wrote "Spanish Eyes" recorded by Al Martino, Nat King Cole's "If I May" and "Don't Forbid Me" sung by Pat Boone. Other notables who performed his songs included Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Johnny Mathis, Bill Haley, Joe Turner, Wayne Newton, and Andy Williams. In 1984, he was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. After retiring, Charlie "Hoss" Singleton returned to Jacksonville in 1973 and passed away in 1985.

Multicultural Historical Timeline

Before the establishment of the United States, people of African descent had been shaping the history of Florida. From the Age of Exploration and European colonization; through slavery and the Civil War; to Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement; free Africans, Africans held in captivity and their descendants have been *Lifting Ev'ry Voice* to make major contributions to the building of this city, region, state and the nation.

Northeast Florida's rich cultural history shows influences from European, African, and Native American cultures. It is this rich diversity that defines the region today.

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| 1513 | Don Juan Ponce de Leon of Spain landed in Florida in search of gold, glory, and the fabled Fountain of Youth. |
| 1562 | Jean Ribault, a French Huguenot, explored the St. Johns River and made contact with the native Timucuan Indians. |
| 1564 | The French Huguenots under Rene Goulaine de Laudonniere built Fort Caroline along the river at St. Johns Bluff, the first attempt to establish a permanent colony in Florida. |
| 1565 | St. Augustine, which is the oldest continually occupied settlement in the United States, was founded by Spanish leader, Pedro Menendez de Aviles. The Spanish settled St. Augustine as a base to attack and capture Fort Caroline. At the time, both the French and Spanish brought in African slaves as laborers. |
| 1683 | The first black militia company had been formed in St. Augustine. |
| 1693 | The Spanish king began freeing Florida slaves who converted to Catholicism and provided four years of service to the crown. |
| 1738 | Garcia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, later known as Fort Mose, was founded as the first free legally sanctioned settlement for blacks in North America. |
| 1796 | General Jorge Biassou-Caudillo, leader of the Black Auxiliaries of Carlos IV in the slave revolt of Santo Domingo in Haiti, found exile in St. Augustine. Spanish land grant of 350 acres was made to John Johnson that later included the location of the historic black neighborhood of LaVilla |
| 1801 | Spanish land grant of 350 acres was made to John Johnson that later included the location of the historic black neighborhood of LaVilla |
| 1817 | Zephaniah Kingsley, who married his African slave, Anna Madgigiane Jai, established a plantation on Fort George Island where he raised cotton, sugarcane and other cash crops. |
| 1821 | Florida becomes a United States territory. |
| 1822 | The town of Jacksonville is founded |
| 1838 | Reverend James McDonald organized a group, including two African American slaves, Peggy and Bacchus, in the founding of Bethel Baptist Church, the first organized Baptist Church in Jacksonville. Reverend McDonald sold his plantation west of town to his successor, Reverend Joseph S. Baker who renamed it LaVilla, the namesake of the community that later occupied the area. |
| 1855 | <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> , written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, was published and greatly influenced the growth of the abolitionist movement in the North. She and her Reverend Calvin Stowe were seasonal residents in the Mandarin area from 1867 to 1884. |

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| 1861 | Start of the Civil War during which Jacksonville was occupied four times by the Union army. African American soldiers composed the majority of the Union troops during the last two occupations of Jacksonville. The old Bethel Baptist Church in LaVilla was used as a makeshift hospital after the Battle of Olustee. |
| 1864 | Confederate troops defeated a Union force composed of black and white regiments at the Battle of Olustee, near Ocean Pond in Columbia County, Florida. Among the black units were the 54th Massachusetts volunteers featured in the movie, <i>Glory</i> . |
| 1865 | With the end of the Civil War and the start of Reconstruction, the Federal government began enacting sweeping political changes aimed at improving conditions for the recently freed African Americans. These actions allowed African American men for the first time to vote and hold public office. Branches of the Freedmen's Bureau were also established in Southern cities and towns to provide assistance and protection for these new citizens. The Thirteenth Amendment, which outlawed slavery, was added to the U.S. Constitution. |
| 1865 | Mother Midway church in east Jacksonville was established as the first African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida. |
| 1866 | African American families began settling in LaVilla on lots owned by Jacksonville lawyer, Francis F. L'Engle. Many of the men in these families were former Union soldiers. |
| 1866 | Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in downtown Jacksonville. |
| 1866 | Edward Waters College was founded. It is the oldest historical black college in Florida and is named for Bishop Edward Waters, the third bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. |
| 1868 | The Fourteenth Amendment, granting citizenship to African Americans and all people regardless of ancestry or national origin, was adopted. |
| 1868 | Named after President Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, Stanton Institute was founded by local African Americans with the support of the Freedmen's Bureau. It was the first public school for African Americans in the state of Florida. Later, under the direction of James W. Johnson, it became the first public high school for African Americans in Florida. |
| 1868 | Jonathan C. Gibbs, Vice President of the Jacksonville Republican Convention, was elected as a delegate to the Florida Constitutional Convention that drafted the first state constitution following the Civil War. Gibbs was also the first African American appointed as the Secretary of State of Florida. |
| 1869 | The neighborhood of LaVilla was incorporated as a town with the majority of office holders being African American. |
| 1870 | The Fifteenth Amendment that extended voting rights to African American men was added to the Constitution. |
| 1871 | Noted educator, lawyer, journalist, writer, and civil rights leader, James Weldon Johnson, was born in the LaVilla neighborhood of Jacksonville. John Rosamond Johnson, the brother of James Weldon Johnson, was also born in LaVilla and went on to have a successful career as a song writer and composer. |
| 1874 | Joseph E. Lee, the first African American lawyer in Florida, was elected to the Florida Legislature where he served for six years before being elected to the senate. He was later appointed as a municipal judge, Custom Collector of the Port of St. Johns, and Collector of Internal Revenue. |
| 1875 | Shiloh Baptist Church was established. Reverend James Johnson, the father of James Weldon and John Rosamond Johnson, served as minister of the church from the late 1880s to 1901. |

Multicultural Historical Timeline (continued)

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| 1881 | Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church was founded. Mary Barton, the grandmother of James Weldon and John Rosamond Johnson, and her daughter, Helen Dillet Johnson were early members of the church. |
| 1882 | Harlem Renaissance sculptor Augusta Fells Savage was born in Green Cove Springs. |
| 1885 | Dr. D Watson Onley began his architecture and builder business and three years later opened the first steam saw and planning mill in the United States owned and operated entirely by African Americans. Dr. Onley later went to dental school at Howard University. |
| 1886 | Sponsored by the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, Boylan Industrial Training School for Girls was founded by Miss Harriet Emerson. Growing out of the school's training for the general care of the sick, Brewster Hospital and Brewster Hospital School of Nursing were established in 1900. First located in LaVilla, the school moved in 1910 to a new facility in East Jacksonville. In 1932 the school merged with Haven School of Savannah. It operated as Boylan Haven Boarding School until 1959. |
| 1887 | Five African-American men were elected to the Jacksonville City Council. LaVilla was incorporated into the City of Jacksonville, ending its status as an independent town. |
| 1889 | A. Philip Randolph was born in Crescent City, Florida and moved to Jacksonville in 1891. He organized the first black labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. |
| 1892 | Florida Baptist Academy was founded by Rev. Matthew Gilbert, Rev. J.T. Brown and Ms. Sarah Ann Blocker. The School was supported by Bethel Baptist Institutional Church and neighbors of the surrounding East Jacksonville community. After several years, the school moved to St. Augustine, FL, then relocated to Miami FL and is now known as Florida Memorial College |
| 1893 | Cuban revolutionary leader, Jose Marti rallied support in Jacksonville for the Cuban war of independence from Spain. |
| 1894 | James Weldon Johnson became principal of Stanton School, and added a grade each year, finally making it the first public high school for African Americans in Florida. |
| 1895 | Cuban-born Gabriel Hidalgo Gato managed and later owned the El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Co. with 15 factories in Jacksonville, cigar manufacturing was the city's second-largest industry. |
| 1896 | During Cuba's fight for independence, Duval County Sheriff Napoleon Bonaparte Broward delivered munitions and Cuban expatriates to the island in his ocean-going tug, <i>The Three Friends</i> . He later served as the 19th governor of Florida. |
| 1896 | The U. S. Supreme court decision <i>Plessy vs. Ferguson</i> established the principle of "Separate but equal". |
| 1898 | Jacksonville hosted over 32,000 soldiers at Camp Cuba Libre in Springfield during the Spanish American War. |
| 1900 | James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson composed <i>Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing</i> at their family home in LaVilla. The song was first performed by children in celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday. The poem is referred to as the black national anthem. |
| 1900 | Booker T. Washington formed the National Negro Business League. A.L. Lewis, Eartha M.M. White and several other local African American business owners were present at the official meeting when the organization was established. Eartha White was the only woman present at the meeting. |
| 1900 | Lawton L. Pratt opened his funeral home at 525 W. Beaver Street. Pratt was the second licensed African American funeral director in Florida. He was also one of the organizers of the Florida Negro Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association and worked to open the field of funeral service to women. After his death in 1943, the establishment operated as Hillman-Pratt Funeral Home. |

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| 1901 | Brewster Hospital, started under the direction of Harriet Emerson, opened its doors to African Americans in Jacksonville. At the time, it was the only hospital and nursing school available to African Americans in the city. Nurses from the school were well trained and highly recruited by hospitals all over the United States. |
| 1901 | The City of Jacksonville enacted a statute mandating the separation of blacks and whites on the city street cars. This measure was followed by other Jim Crow laws which established segregation as the rule in all areas of life. |
| 1901 | On May 3, a disastrous fire raged through 146 blocks of Downtown Jacksonville, destroying 2,368 buildings including ten hotels, twenty-three churches, city hall, courthouse, jail, and armory. The fire left 8,677 people homeless and caused 15 million in property damage. Although started at the Cleveland Fiber Factory in LaVilla, most of the neighborhood was spared. |
| 1901 | The Afro-American Life Insurance Company, the first insurance company in the State of Florida, was founded by seven local African American businessmen and ministers. It provided burial, medical, and life insurance and pension funds to the black community. The company became one of the most important African American businesses in the Southeast during the first half of the twentieth century. |
| 1901 | Ellie Lee Weems was born in McDonough, Georgia and moved to Jacksonville in 1929 where he established a portrait studio. Operating for nearly 50 years, Weems took thousands of photographs that recorded African American life in Jacksonville during the first half of the twentieth century. |
| 1902 | James Weldon Johnson resigned as principal of Stanton School and moved to New York. There he formed a musical collaboration with his brother John Rosamond and Bob Cole. This trio became one of the most successful song writing teams for early Broadway productions. |
| 1906 | President Theodore Roosevelt appoints James Weldon Johnson U.S. consul to Venezuela and in 1909 served in the same position in Nicaragua. |
| 1907 | The last year that African Americans served in Jacksonville's city government because of Jim Crow Laws. |
| 1909 | The NAACP was founded. |
| 1909 | The 48 room Richmond Hotel opened under the ownership and operation of Alice Kirkpatrick. This beautiful hotel had all the modern amenities of the day and was most famous for its "Tea Room". This building was the temporary home of such stars as Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holliday when they visited Jacksonville to play in the local clubs. |
| 1912 | James Weldon Johnson's first novel, <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man</i> , was first published anonymously. It was reissued in 1927 under his name. |
| 1912 | Frank Crowd opened the Globe Theatre. The building was later remodeled to become home to the Clara White Mission in 1932. |
| 1915 | The Strand Theatre, located at 703 West Ashley Street, opened. |
| 1916 | The Masonic Temple building was completed by the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge. The fire proof, five-story brick building had commercial and office spaces and became the address of choice for Jacksonville's African American professionals and business owners. The Masonic Temple housed several businesses, including the Anderson, Tucker & Co. Bank, Pedro Mendez Tailoring Shop and the law offices of Daniel W. Perkins. Because of its architectural and historical significance, the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. |
| 1917 | United States enters World War I |

Multicultural Historical Timeline (continued)

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| 1921 | The Florida Negro Funeral Directors & Embalmers Association was founded. Japhus Baker, one of the founders, was the first African American licensed embalmer in Florida. He was known as the “Father of Black Embalmers” because he trained many of the black embalmers in the state. As a teenager, Japhus Baker worked for his uncle, Wyatt J. Geter, who opened the first black owned funeral home in Jacksonville circa 1895. Geter & Baker Funeral Homes was located at 767 W. Beaver Street. |
| 1922 | The Norman Film Studio was opened by Richard Norman, one of America’s most successful producers of race movies that featured all black cast in roles free of racial stereotypes. Norman produced eight feature films between 1920 and 1928 including <i>The Green-Eyed Monster</i> (1920), <i>The Crimson Skull</i> (1921), <i>The Bull-Dogger</i> (1921), <i>Regeneration</i> (1923), <i>A Debtor to the Law</i> (1924), <i>The Flying Ace</i> (1926), and <i>The Black Gold</i> (1928). Located in the Arlington neighborhood of south Jacksonville, four of the five buildings in the studio complex were purchased and rehabilitated by the City of Jacksonville. |
| 1924 | The Hollywood Music Store, owned by local African American businessman Joe Higdon, was opened. The store was a popular hub of activity for people in the entertainment business. The structure was demolished in 2001. |
| 1926 | Bessie Coleman, the first African American woman to obtain a pilot’s license, died in an airplane accident in Jacksonville while practicing for an air show. In Jacksonville over 5,000 were in attendance for her services at Bethel Baptist Institutional Church which were followed by another one at St. Philips Episcopal Church. After a service in Orlando, Bessie Coleman was buried in Chicago at the young age of 33. |
| 1927 | Wilder Park Branch Library opened. It was the first branch library open to serve African American communities in Jacksonville. The library along with the rest of the thirty acre Wilder Park was removed for interstate construction. |
| 1927 | The Lincoln Golf and County Club opened. It was the only facility of its kind available to African Americans until the 1960s. |
| 1928 | Eartha M.M. White was an educator, entrepreneur, humanitarian, philanthropist and social activist. In 1928, she established the Clara White Mission in honor of her mother, Clara English White, a former slave. Located at 613 W. Ashley Street, the Clara White Mission became the center of Eartha’s humanitarian and social activities. Food, clothing, and a helping hand were provided to the indigent, homeless, transients, and others in need without regard to race, color, sex, age, national origin or religious belief. |
| 1929 | The Great Depression began with the stock market crash. |
| 1935 | American Beach on Amelia Island in Nassau County was founded by A.L. Lewis and the Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company as a vacation destination for African Americans during segregation. American Beach remains one of the only predominantly African American residential beach communities in the country. |
| 1935 | The current grandstand for Durkee Field, named for Dr. J. H. Durkee, was constructed. Originally called Barrs Field, organized sports have been played on the site of Durkee Field since 1911. The park was the home to the Red Caps of the Negro League, and later the field where baseball legend, Hank Aaron, started his professional career with the Jacksonville Tars in 1953. In 1980, the park was renamed the James P. “Bubbling” Small Park in memory of longtime coach and mentor at Stanton High School. |
| 1936 | Boy Scout pioneer David H. Dwight, Sr. became the first African American in the country to receive the Silver Beaver, scouting’s highest award. Dwight received the honor after he successfully led a campaign for African American boys to join the organization and to be allowed to wear the official Boy Scout uniform. |
| 1937 | Durkeeville Housing Project opened. It was the first public housing project for African Americans in Jacksonville and one of the earliest in the state. |

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| 1939 | Housed in the Willie Smith Building located at West Ashley and North Broad Streets, Florida Cut Price Pharmacy, owned by African American entrepreneur Willie J. Smith, opened for business. Willie Smith also owned and operated the Florida Pharmacy at 1230-1232 Florida Avenue for over 30 years. |
| 1940 | African American businessman, “Charlie Edd” Craddock, who operated numerous businesses in LaVilla, opened the Two Spot Club at 45th St. and Moncrief Road on Christmas Day, 1940. The Two Spot could accommodate 2,000 dancers with seating for an additional 1,000 on the first floor and mezzanine. It became the most prominent nightclub for African Americans in the city during the 1940s and 1950s. |
| 1941 | On December 7, the naval facility at Pearl Harbor was attacked bringing the United States into World War II. |
| 1942 | Blodgett Homes, the third public housing project in Jacksonville, was built for African Americans. The project was named after the wealthy African American building contractor and developer, Joseph Haygood Blodgett. |
| 1946 | After a successful legal battle led by local African American attorney D.W. Perkins and the plaintiff, Reverend Dallas Graham, African Americans in Jacksonville were allowed to vote in the state primary elections. |
| 1946 | The Roosevelt Barber Shop, one of the oldest businesses in LaVilla, opened. |
| 1954 | U.S. Supreme Court decision, <i>Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas</i> overturns the “separate but equal” principle. |
| 1960 | Forty African Americans, mostly from the Youth Council of the NAACP under the leadership of Rutledge Pearson, staged a demonstration in Downtown Jacksonville seeking access to “whites only” lunch counters. They were met by white men carrying axe handles and baseball bats that were used to injure many of the demonstrators with others seeking shelter at nearby Snyder Memorial Church. “Ax Handle Saturday” was a turning point in Jacksonville’s civil rights movement. |
| 1960 | Led by 16-year-old Rodney Hurst, the 450 member NAACP Youth Council staged a sit-in at F.W. Woolworth’s on April 5. Rodney Hurst and Youth Council Secretary Margaret Meeks have the distinction of being the first blacks served at Woolworth’s white-only lunch counter. |
| 1964 | Jacksonville native, Robert Lee “Bullet Bob” Hayes won two gold medals, one in the 100 meter race and another as the anchor in the US 400 meter relay team at the Tokyo Olympics. At the time, Bob Hayes was called the “World’s Fastest Human”, and later went on to have a professional football career playing for the Dallas Cowboys where he received two Super Bowl rings. |
| 1967 | Sally B. Mathis, Mary Singleton, Attorney Earl Johnson and Oscar Taylor became the first African Americans to be elected to the Jacksonville City Council since 1907. Mathis and Singleton were also the first women ever elected to the City Council. Charles E. Simmons, Jr. was elected to the City Civil Service Board after having been appointed to the position in 1966. |
| 1968 | Consolidation of Jacksonville and Duval County making the city the largest in land area in the lower 48 states. |
| 1992 | Warren Jones became the first black Jacksonville City Council president and went on to serve two terms in that position. |
| 1995 | Nathaniel Glover was elected as the first black Sheriff of the City of Jacksonville, and the second black Sheriff in the state of Florida. |
| 2011 | Alvin Brown was elected as the first black Mayor of the City of Jacksonville. |

Old City Cemetery

ESTABLISHED IN 1852



The Old City Cemetery is located immediately northeast of Downtown Jacksonville in the Oakland neighborhood. The cemetery property was donated by Captain Charles and Frances Willey in 1852 to the Town of Jacksonville. Originally a four acre square, the cemetery was expanded in 1869 by another two acres to the north to accommodate primarily African -American burials. Before the opening of Evergreen Cemetery in 1881 and Memorial Cemetery in 1911, this part of Old City Cemetery, known as the Duval Colored Cemetery or the “Freedmen’s Cemetery”, came to be the burial ground of choice for many of Jacksonville’s prominent African-American families. Dispersed throughout this part of the cemetery are the graves of fifty African American veterans, commonly referred to as Buffalo Soldiers, including several that served in the Union army.





Noted Jacksonville residents buried in the Old City Cemetery include nationally renowned humanitarian, **Eartha Mary Magdalene White** (1876-1974) and her mother, **Clara White** (1845-1920). **Sallye Mathis** (1912-1982), a former teacher, who served on the Jacksonville City Council from 1967 to 1982 is also buried along with her husband, Oscar Mathis.

The Old City Cemetery was designated a local landmark on November 23, 2010.



~ Photos above are examples of several graves that are weatherworn and show the signs of age. Although the cemetery has been maintained by the City since 1852, many gravestones, while still standing, do not easily reveal their inhabitants ~

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- Page 46 – 47 LL Pratt photo courtesy of State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, <http://floridamemory.com/items/show/896/> Interior of funeral home courtesy of Hillman-Pratt & Walton, postcard is from P&DD Historic Preservation Section archives
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