Ocala Black History Mural

1501 W Silver Springs Blvd.

Preface

The City of Ocala has a rich, diverse history that often goes unknown or unrecognized. The Ocala Black History Mural was originally created in 2005, inspired by a summer art program. By revisiting this project, we hope to educate the community and bring awareness to the leaders and heroes that helped shape our city throughout its history.

The concept for this mural came about after the College of Central Florida's Brick City Center for the Arts partnered with the Hampton Center to create a summer art program for children in the community. The program and the art style for the mural were inspired by well-known artist Jacob Lawrence, whose work had recently been exhibited at the Appleton Museum of Art. Lawrence is best remembered for "Migration," a 60 panel series depicting the migration of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. His images represent the everyday life and the trials and tribulations of the Black experience.

While encouraging Ocala's young artists to explore their connection to community, the staff realized how little they knew about those who came before them. Thus, the idea for the Ocala Black History Mural was born. The mural, which is divided into 14 panels, serves to educate current and future generations about the remarkable accomplishments made by past members of this community.

Each panel serves to explore an aspect of the Black community's history in Ocala, from the importance of spiritual community to the outstanding achievements in music, commerce, medicine and education. By the 1900s, not only did Ocala have the first Black-owned bank in the state of Florida, but it also had multiple successful

Black-owned businesses; the first Black female doctor; and Black educators, lawmakers and inventors.

In 2019, the mural restoration project brought together many of the original collaborators, as well as current community stakeholders. The goal was to clean and invigorate the existing mural and add a new panel celebrating the developments in the community since the mural's creation fourteen years ago.

As we approach a time of growth and renewal in the community, we must not let the rich history upon which it was founded be forgotten. As the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Complex and Webb Field both undergo revitalization improvements, it is imperative to maintain the Ocala Black History mural and to recognize the achievements and importance of the West Ocala Historic Community.

Both the City of Ocala and the College of Central Florida continue to support the future growth and enrichment of our community while honoring the varied accomplishments of the past. Through art and education, we can continue to strive for excellence and inspire greatness.

"Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness." – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Panel 1

WELCOME TO WEST OCALA

The History of West Ocala is an account of vision, perseverance, revival and opportunity. It has been expressed through its citizens, its sense of community and its landmarks.

From 1880-1900, Ocala began to expand outside of its original city limits. During that period, the majority of Black residents began to settle west of the downtown core. Ocala's main east-west thoroughfare, Broadway, was the commercial heart of downtown. The street was home to many of Ocala's most prosperous Black businessmen and leaders.

In 1989, the first survey to solely concentrate on the West Ocala area was undertaken with funds from the City of Ocala and its Community Development Block Grant Program. Recommendations from the report included a nomination of part of the area to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2000, the City of Ocala undertook a study of West Ocala that expanded upon the 1989 survey. Over 350 historic resources located in the West Ocala area were surveyed and a National Register nomination was prepared for the core of the historic neighborhood.

West Ocala's history continues to be written with community programs, new landmarks, emerging opportunities and community champions. This history has its roots in the foundation of its rich culture and heritage and is an unfolding of this community's vision for being a dynamic, diverse, friendly, safe and connected community with vibrant residential, business, governmental, cultural, educational and entertainment centers.

Please take a journey through this mural and walk the history of Ocala's Black residents and that of West Ocala.

CITY OF OCALA
GOD BE WITH US
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA
CFCC
Welcome to West Ocala

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1862 - EMANCIPATION
1866 - HOMESTEAD ACT
1867 - OCALA FREEDMANS BUREAU OPENED
1870 - 1885 - CITRUS BOOM

Panel 2

THE BEGINNING OF THE TIMELINE

On January 10, 1861, Florida seceded from the Union. The Emancipation Proclamation of September 23, 1862, did not lead to a large-scale exodus from plantations since many slaves were unaware of the event. After the Civil War ended in 1865, Blacks continued to live in Marion County as free persons.

During the Reconstruction period, 1866 1879, lawlessness and chaos reigned. Intimidation tactics by former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers throughout Florida caused the Federal Government to dispatch troops to the region. The Freedmen's Bureau was created in 1865 to assist the former slave population. Many remained on plantations and retained a small portion of shares for their employment. Most left and migrated to Florida's more populated areas.

Ocala's local Freedmen's Bureau opened in 1867. The Freedmen's Bureau encouraged former slaves to submit applications to receive land under the Homestead Act of 1866. This law ended all cash sales of land in five public land states of the South and reserved the land for homesteaders. Ex-Confederates were not eligible. Over 3,000 Blacks filed claims in Florida, but they were often intimidated by the white population and many times abandoned the land. Such efforts were begun to ensure enfranchisement of the Black population but were diluted by the enactment of the so-called "Black Codes" laws specifically intended for Blacks. Restrictions upon the former slave population included vagrancy laws, regulation of weapons and provisions for schools to be paid for by a tax on Black males. Due to these actions, the Federal Government again put Florida under military rule until July 25, 1868, when it was officially re-admitted into the Union.

Panel 3 & 4

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

On April 20, 1867, a meeting of 1,000 former slaves was held in Ocala. There, Reverend Samuel Small appealed to the crowd to educate themselves and use their freedom wisely. As early as 1868, Blacks were serving in public office. In 1868, M.A. Clouts was appointed Sheriff. In 1869, a Republican appointee, Edward Barker, took the office of Judge of Probate and head of the local Freedmen's Bureau. Barker organized a company of Black militia to enforce his rulings, and former slaves were quickly appointed and elected to county offices.

In Ocala, and throughout Florida, Blacks made significant advances during the Reconstruction period. In 1872, 65% of registered voters in Marion County were Black. By the end of the Reconstruction period in 1879, Marion County had sent seven Black representatives to the Florida House including Reverend Small, Scipio Jasper, Birch Gibson, J. Simpson and Singleton Coleman. One distinguished representative, Tom Long, who had helped organize Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, introduced a bill establishing free public schools in Florida.

A voter registration of freed men from the Ocala Freedmen's Bureau around the time of its creation included the surnames Alexander, Hampton, Taylor, Moseley, Gadsden, Gardner, and Owens. In 1888, Gadsden was elected City Treasurer and Tax Collector, serving for four years. In 1903, he was elected to City Council. Gadsden made his home in West Ocala in a large home in the 400 block.

However, in 1920, only one Black in the state still held an important office, City Treasurer, in Ocala. From 1921 1928, the political power of Blacks continued to wane in Ocala. Democrats gradually assumed power from the Republicans. In 1936, only 500 Blacks were registered to vote due in large part to the poll tax and continued Jim Crow laws.

James C. Cunningham, elected to City Council in 1975, was the first Black man to win a City Council election in 86 years and the second Black councilman since Harry W. Chandler. After Mr. Cunningham's tenure, three more members of the Black community have served on the Ocala City Council: Reverend Lorenzo Edwards, Mary S. Rich and Ire Bethea. Strong voices continued to rise in West Ocala, fighting for the importance of place for Blacks in Marion County. Pinkney Woodbury, a local activist and historian, co-authored the book, "The Struggle for Survival: A Partial History of the Negroes of Marion County, 1865 to 1976." Reverend Frank Pinkston, Pastor of Covenant Baptist Church, was also a leading activist voice for civil rights in Marion County. The Marion County branch of the NAACP and the Fishing and Hunting Club of Marion County were voices in the collaboration.

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POPULATION HISTORY
1850-38 %
1860-62 %
1870-73 %
1900-61 %
1930-40 %
1980-16.4 %
1990 - 12.6 %
2000-11.3 %

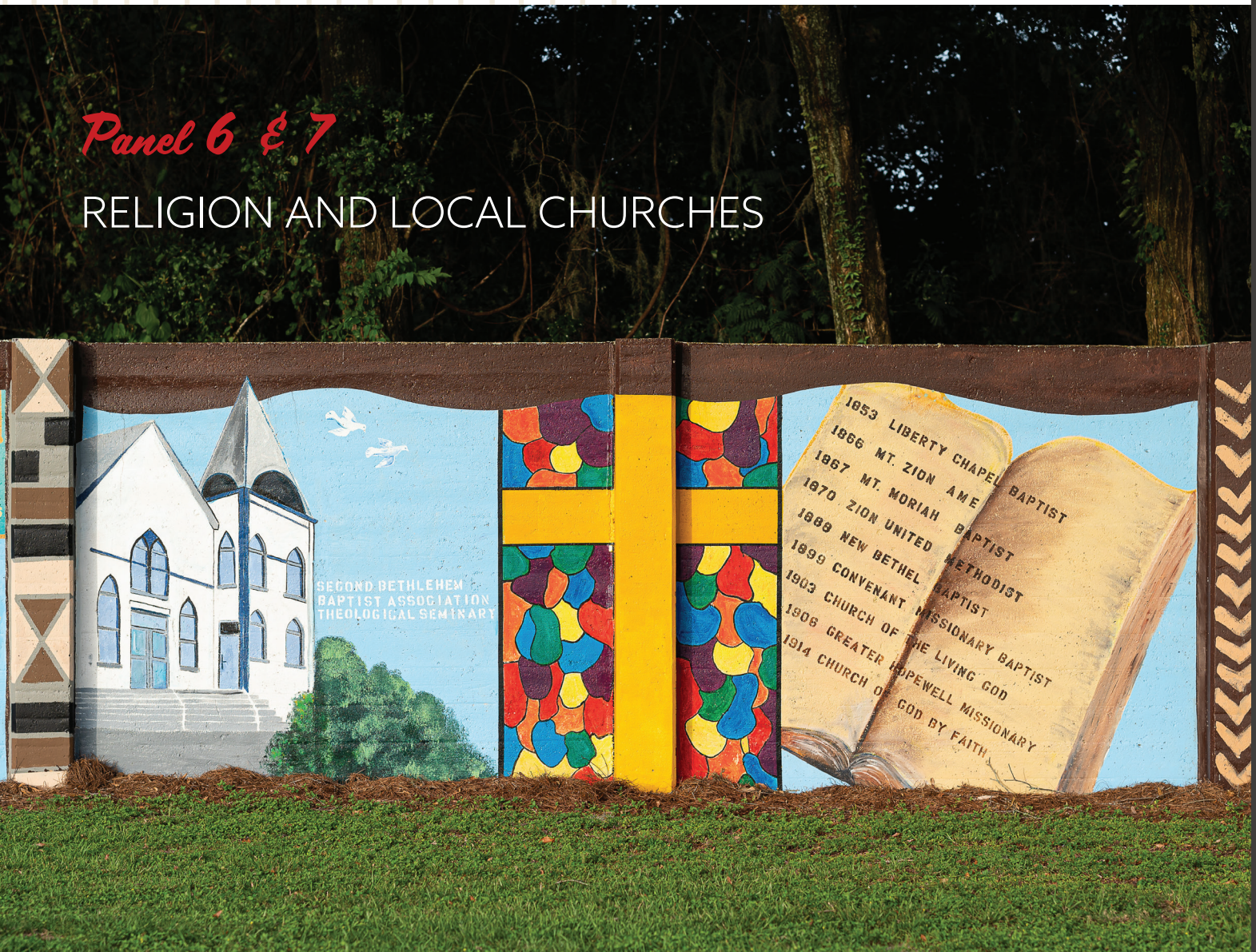
Panel 5

A POPULATION OF BLACKS IN MARION COUNTY

The 1850 Census indicates that Blacks accounted for 38% of the population of Marion County. By 1860, this percentage had jumped to 62%. In 1870, the Black population made up 73% of Marion County, establishing an unquestionable majority. In 1921, even though Blacks continued to make strides, their population in Marion County had decreased. At that time, Blacks made up around 40% of Ocala's population and about 50% of the county population. The Black majority in the county continued to decline. By 1930, the Black population accounted for only 40% of the population.

Panel 6 & 7

RELIGION AND LOCAL CHURCHES



Blacks in Ocala began to organize separate churches shortly after the Civil War. In 1866, the entire Black membership of the Baptist Church, some 90 persons, withdrew to form the Mt. Moriah Baptist Church. The Church's first pastor was Reverend Samuel Small, who had been a slave on the Osceola Plantation. Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Chruch was also organized during this period by Tom Long, a circuit rider who traveled by horseback through Florida for the A.M.E. Church.

In the late 1880s, Levi Alexander, a native of Virginia, moved to Ocala and started his contracting business. When his son Levi Jr. graduated from college as an architect, the business name was changed to L. Alexander & Son. In 1886, Levi Alexander Sr. designed and built the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church located on South Magnolia. The building still stands today and is the only surviving brick nineteenth century religious building in Ocala.

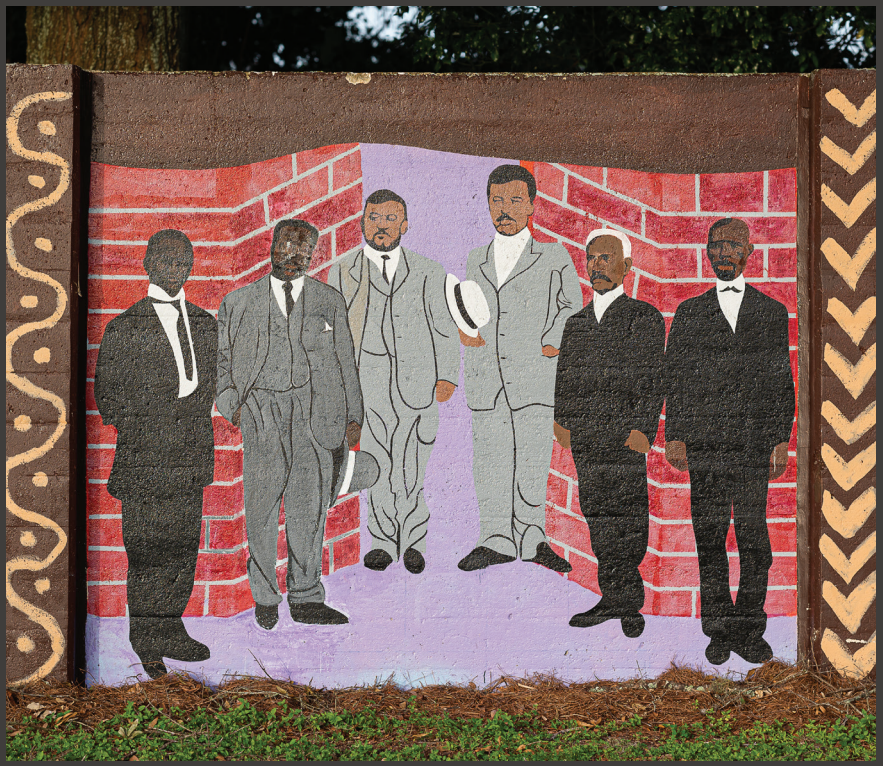
At the turn of the century, West Ocala's population grew, and churches further grew to serve the local community. In 1899, the Covenant Missionary Baptist Church opened and was located at 606 W. Broadway, and in 1906, the Great Hopewell Baptist Church opened and was situated at 515 NW Sixth Terrace. By 1928, Ocala had 11 Black churches with members totaling 1,079. The largest churches were Mt. Zion and Mt. Moriah. The Mt. Zion Church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Panel 8 & 9

TRANSPORTATION & EMPLOYMENT

In the 1820s, steamboats were first introduced in Florida and by the 1870s they were the main mode of transportation. By this period, most of the steamboat pilots on the Ocklawaha River were Black. However, without railroads or the telegraph, Ocala was still fairly isolated. As the popularity of the steamboats grew, and other tourist centers in Florida prospered, visitors began moving to the state.

In 1876, the Atlantic Gulf West India Transit Company established a railroad between Waldo and Ocala. This led to a boom in commercial trade as well as easy access for visitors. By the 1880s, the expanding railroads were taking business away from the steamers.



The increasing number of railroads resulted in a population increase in Marion County and the development of railroad towns near train stops. The entire state benefited from this, and between 1880 and 1885, the state experienced a population growth of 25%.

In 1891, West Ocala residents celebrated a historic event when the Metropolitan Realty and Investment Company was organized by F. P. Gadsden and several partners. The company was originally a building loan corporation but later added a realty investment company. During the winter of 1894 95, the Big Freeze occurred. The brutally cold weather destroyed much of the citrus crop, and the following economic downturn was exacerbated by the failure of the much-anticipated phosphate boom in Marion County. However, other industries such as naval stores, turpentine and lumber were burgeoning and employed the majority of Marion County's large Black workforce. In 1912, the H.A. Fausett Planing Mill was situated at the corner of Broadway and 22nd Street (now NW 11th Avenue). The railroads also helped keep Ocala going during the down years. By the early 1900s, the rail line that ran east-west at NW Fifth Street was owned by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The Seaboard Air Line Railroad operated the line that ran north-south near Pine Avenue. The farthest north-south route to the west was operated by Ocala Southwestern.

COTTON
PEANUTS
ORANGES

Panel 10 & 11

AGRICULTURE

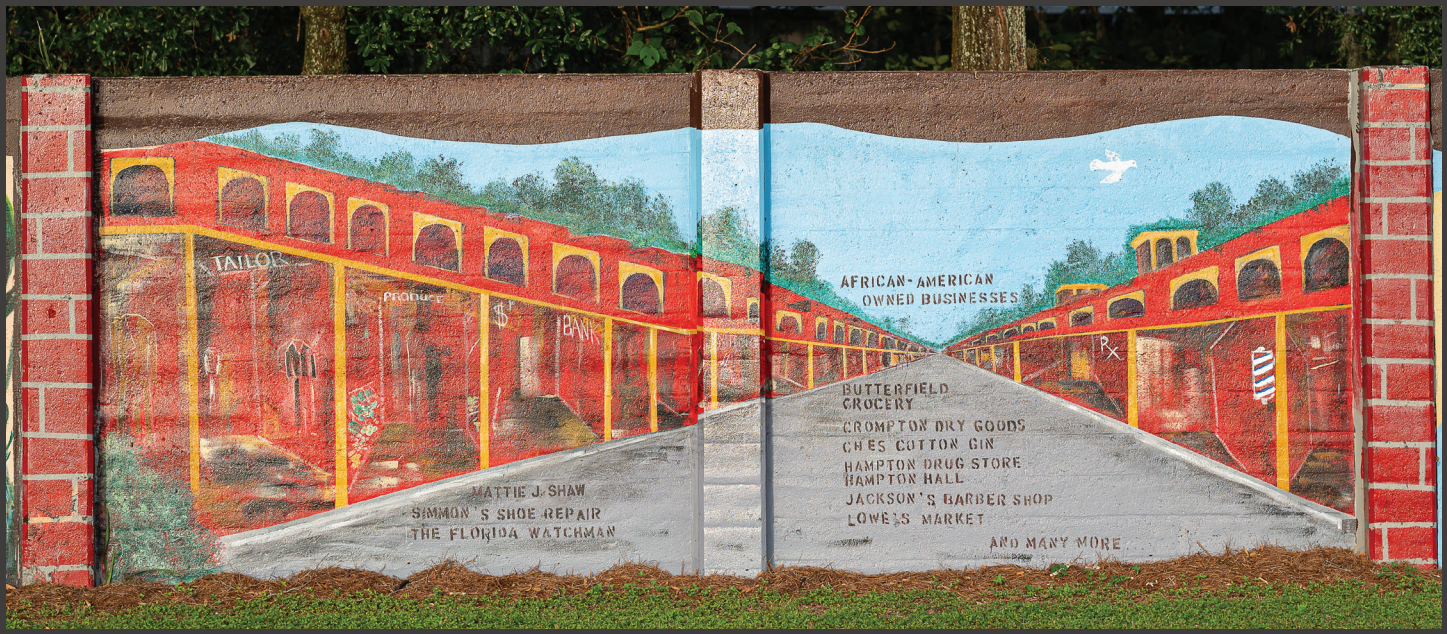
In 1860, slaves comprised the labor force that supported the antebellum plantation economy, and Blacks lived mainly on several large plantations. The majority of the crops were sugar cane, cotton, and tobacco.

After the Civil War, Marion County became the center of the growing citrus industry in Florida. Two varieties of oranges, the Parson Brown and the Pineapple, were developed in Marion County groves during the 1870s.

After the Big Freeze, Marion County began to diversify its crops. To boost the growing agricultural prospects of livestock, vegetables, and other goods, the Marion County Fair was established at the western edge of Ocala. The fairgrounds included a racetrack, exhibition buildings and livestock sheds. The fair also attracted national figures including Booker T. Washington who gave a speech there in 1912.

Panel 12 & 13

EMPLOYMENT, BUSINESS AND BROADWAY AVENUE



By 1914, Black residents were said to be some of the most prosperous in the South. Black businesses lined West Broadway from Magnolia to 16th Avenue, but Black-owned businesses were not limited to the West Ocala area. George Giles's cotton gin was located downtown from around 1906 through 1912. West Ocala had become so populated that the Sanborn Map Company mapped out large portions of the area from

Pine Street past the Seaboard Air Railroad to the Ocala Southwestern Railroad. Some areas north of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad were also included. Also noted were a few important buildings in the West Ocala area that were excluded from previous indices including Howard Academy, Covenant Baptist Church, Emerson Industrial Home and School, Hopewell Baptist Church, and the Primitive Baptist Church. As one traveled along Broadway and headed west, many of the houses were very large. Even side streets and those near the main thoroughfare were characterized by two-story residences. Across from Howard Academy to the east, houses were also two-story. As one traveled several blocks north and south of Broadway, the houses became smaller and more widespread. In fact, at least one farm including ancillary barns and hay houses was located north of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.

The year 1914 was another landmark year when the (original) Metropolitan Realty and Investment Company was incorporated in the State of Florida. The (now) Metropolitan Savings Bank was organized with a capital stock of $25,000 and was located in Ocala's Central Business District. Its president was West Ocala resident F.P. Gadsden. Ocala's "Merchant Prince," Gibbs Crompton also began Crompton's Dry Goods Store located on West Broadway.

Mattie J. Shaw started The Florida Watchman newspaper in 1925. Mrs. Shaw ran her own printing presses and reported on local community and church activities of West Ocala. At the time, Mrs. Shaw was the only Black woman in the state who solely owned and operated a printing business. The newspaper was originally housed in a building located to the north of 4th Street, across from Howard Academy.

The Great Depression resulted in a severe decline in property values. Local governments went bankrupt and unemployment skyrocketed. Black-owned businesses in Ocala also suffered. The Metropolitan Savings Bank and the Metropolitan Realty and Investment Company closed their doors in 1928. The 1940s, particularly after WWII, brought in a new era for Ocala. War preparations resulted in an economic boom bringing Florida and the rest of the country out of the Great Depression. In 1941, a primary flight training school was opened at Ocala's municipal airport, and the relocation of soldiers boosted the local economy.

Panel 14

FIRE AND YELLOW FEVER

Tragedy struck in 1883 when a downtown fire destroyed most of the major buildings in Ocala. By 1887, buildings were reconstructed using brick, granite and metal. Within five years, Ocala was being dubbed, “The Brick City.“

In 1888, Ocala suffered another setback when a yellow fever epidemic raged in Tampa and Jacksonville. Visitors were forbidden in the city.

Panel 15

TOURISM AND RECREATION

Beginning in the 1820s, the Ocklawaha River was not only the main commercial shipping line but also brought tourists to Marion County. The famed Ocklawaha run to Silver Springs was a “must-see” for tourists visiting Florida.

From 1949 to 1969, Silver Springs operated a segregated area called, “Paradise Park” for its Black guests. It was about a half mile southeast of the main spring and included a bathing area, glass bottom boats, a petting zoo, a dance pavilion with a juke box, a softball field and a horseshoe toss. One tourism study recommended that Silver Springs erect housing for its Black visitors to help boost visitation. At the time, it was one of three beaches open for Black visitors in the State of Florida. Admission was free. Swimming cost 35 cents which provided a towel and clothing storage. Silver Springs began admitting Black patrons in 1967. During Paradise Park’s last season, 1968-69, it was only open Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. It closed quietly in 1969.

CLUB
Bali
ED CROSKEY
BARBARA WASHINGTON
ADULT ACTIVITY CENTER
LILLIAN F. BRYANT

Panel 16 & 17

TOURISM AND RECREATION CONTINUED

Club Bali, a popular spot in Ocala that is no longer standing, was part of a circuit of night clubs and ballrooms that booked Black singers and musicians. Club Bali had an alliance with other Florida clubs such as the Blue Note, the Cotton Club and the Brown Derby so that the musicians that played one venue usually played all of them.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Complex is a living example of the community's passion, perseverance and revival. By the early 1990s, despite a valiant community effort to save the deteriorating Gerig Fields historic structures, the facility was transformed into the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Complex, including several playing fields, The E.D. Croskey Recreation Center and the Barbara Gaskin Washington Adult Activity Center.

The E.D. Croskey Recreation Center, previously named the War Memorial Auditorium/Recreation Center, was constructed in 1951 as a joint venture between the City and the Marion County School Board. In February 2000, it was renamed the E.D. Croskey after Edward Croskey who worked for the Recreation and Parks Department for 35 years. The facility is currently utilized as an open recreation facility, hosting after-school programming, summer camp, fitness programs and a gym. It is also utilized for public rentals and is the designated rain location for the Levitt AMP Ocala Music Series.

The E.D. Croskey Recreation Center is situated in the MLK Jr. Recreation Complex which also houses Webb Field. Webb Field is a visible, historic landmark along State Road 40, one of Ocala's most traveled gateways. After Dark in the Park (a free movie series), Cops and Fire Fighters Day, the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, Back to School Bash, Drayton Florence's Make It Happen (a sports day), the African American Heritage Festival and Ocala Seafood Festival all take place here.

Panel 18

EVERGREEN AND CHESTNUT CEMETERIES

Evergreen Cemetery is the oldest public cemetery in Marion County. Established in 1850 as the first burial site, a marker for the cemetery reads as follows:

"Reserved on July 8, 1850 as the first public burial ground for Ocala. Here are graves of those who founded the county seat, of others here during its early years and of confederate and union veterans of the Civil War. Nearby are interred Negro residents both slave and free. They too in loyal service shared in the upbuilding of the city."

The Chestnut Cemetery, which has more than 200 graves recorded in it, is named for Charles Chestnut Jr., who operated Hughes and Chestnut Funeral Home with Matthew E. Hughes during the early and mid-1900s in Marion County. While there is little known about the history of the cemetery, it is believed that it was established between 1940 and 1944 and closed in 1969. Chestnut Cemetery is the final resting place of many of West Ocala's most prominent historical citizens. The cemetery suffered from neglect over the years, but civic groups now tend to its care.

Panel 19

THE OCALA BAZAAR

In 1881, F.P. Gadsden organized the Ocala Bazaar store, which was located on South Magnolia Street near the courthouse. The Ocala Bazaar thrived downtown as did a new Black-owned hotel nearby. The Ocala Bazaar became the largest store of its kind in Ocala, at one point employing 20 clerks to serve both Black and White customers. The Ocala Bazaar closed in 1929.

Panel 20 & 21

DR. CARRIE HAMPTON, THRIFT HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Howard Academy educated many of Florida's Black leaders including Effie Carrie Mitchell, who was the first Black woman to practice medicine in Florida. She operated a drug store until her marriage to Dr. Lee Royal Hampton, another Howard Academy graduate. Dr. Hampton, the first Black dentist in Marion County, practiced from 1913 1935. The Hampton Center is named in his honor. The couple, one of Ocala's most highly respected, lived on Magnolia Street. Dr. Effie Carrie Hampton was the first licensed female physician in

Florida and one of the founders of the Florida Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association. She was licensed from 1906 to 1935.

The 1920s saw a rise in the number of Blacks entering professional fields. In 1925, Dr. R.S. Hughes opened the American National Thrift Association Hospital, which was the only facility to treat Blacks for hundreds of miles. Located on West Broadway and Pine Street, the hospital not only served residents of West Ocala but those of greater Marion County and beyond. Sadly, in 1943 the Black hospital on West Broadway was closed after the death of Dr. Hughes. Blacks could be treated at the main hospital in town but were segregated until the 1960s.

Dr. Nathaniel Hawthorne Jones opened his practice in Ocala in 1926 and was the first Black doctor to become a staff physician at Munroe Memorial Hospital. Dr. N.H. Jones Elementary School is named in his honor. Dr. Jones and Dr. E.E. Lamb had their offices on West Broadway during the 1920s.

Panel 22 & 23

EDUCATION IN WEST OCALA

The Ocala Freedmen's Bureau promoted education among the former slave population and opened 87 schools around Florida. James H. Howard, a former slave owner, donated a parcel of land on the corner of Osceola and Third Street for the first Black school in Ocala. Financial support for Howard Academy, as well as teachers, came from the North. Up until that time, there had been no public and almost no private education for Blacks in Florida. Education for slaves was prohibited by law and free Blacks were made to feel unwelcome and encouraged to leave the state.

Schools for Blacks in Marion County continued to grow and prosper in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1880, Howard Academy was run by Black teachers. In 1886, Wesley Wilkerson was appointed Supervisor of Marion County Negro Schools and served in that post until 1914. Tragedy struck when Howard Academy was destroyed by fire in 1887. A new school was built at the corner of Adams and Bay, now

Northwest Second Street and Northwest Seventh Avenue. The two-story building was constructed at a cost of $1,600.

By 1891, Marion County had 38 Black schools with a total of 2,476 students. In 1893, the Emerson Memorial Home and School, described as an "Industrial School for Colored Girls," was located at the corner of Madison (now NW Fourth Street) and 23rd Street (now NW 12th Avenue). By 1927, it had become the Baptist Theological Seminary. At Howard Academy, enrollment was up and space was desperately needed. Students received their textbooks secondhand from Ocala public schools. A separate elementary school was planned and the contract given to Levi Alexander.

Howard became a high school in 1927. In 1935, the building was badly damaged by fire and was torn down. A new brick building was constructed a year later near the site of the old building.

The high school at Howard Academy closed in 1955, when the students were moved to Howard High School, which is now Howard Middle School. That was still more than 10 years before county schools were integrated. The school building is currently the Howard Academy Community Center and houses the Black History Museum of Marion County.

THE HAMPTON CENTER
CFCC 2010
CF
HAMPTON JUNIOR COLLEGE 1959
WILLIAM H. JACKSON . 1st PRESIDENT
MERGED WITH CFCC 1966

Panel 24

EDUCATION IN WEST OCALA CONTINUED

Hampton Junior College opened its doors in 1958. It was one of 11 Black community colleges which were founded, at the urging of the Florida Legislature, to show that a "separate but equal" educational system for Blacks existed in Florida. The Legislature wished to avoid the integration mandated by the Supreme Court's Brown vs. Board of Education decision of 1954. At the time, the closest public college that would accept Blacks was Florida A&M University - 175 miles away. It operated under the direction of the Marion County Board of Public Instruction with support from adjacent Citrus and Levy counties. Three representatives from each county made up the college's advisory committee. Its original name, Howard Junior College, was changed during its first year of operation to Hampton Junior College in honor of Dr. L. R. Hampton, a local dentist who had advanced Black education in Marion County.

It began operations using the facilities of the Black Howard High School (today Howard Middle School), which meant classes had to be held in the late afternoon and evening. In 1960-61, its own facilities were completed. They consisted of a classroom building, a library shared with the high school, an industrial building and an administrative building which housed faculty offices and the student lounge. The only president of the college was its founding president, William H. Jackson. Like most of the Black community college presidents, he was also principal of a high school, in this case Howard High School, on which campus the junior college was located. However, in contrast with most of the other principal/presidents, in 1961 he became full-time President of the college.

Its peak enrollment was during the 1964-65 school year at 890 students. A total of 3,905 students studied there during its eight years of operation and 317 graduated. In 1966, the institution was merged with Central Florida Junior College, today the College of Central Florida, which was founded in 1957. It was the last of Florida's 12 Black junior colleges to be merged. Of the 778 students during its final year, 207 enrolled at Central Florida Junior College, and 10 of the 19 regular faculty members transferred to Central Florida.

1929 - 1940 - GREAT
DEPRESSION
1955 - 1960 - BROADWAY
WIDENED - HOMES
DESTROYED
1966 - SAMUEL THORNTON
INVENTED ORANGE PICKER
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Panel 25

GREAT DEPRESSION, BROADWAY WIDENED AND ORANGE PICKER

In 1925, a series of unrelated events combined to mark the beginning of the end of the Boom Period. Real estate speculation inflated prices, transportation services could not keep up with the need to move building supplies and Florida began to be depicted negatively in northern papers. When the Great Hurricane of 1926 struck South Florida in September, it sealed the fate of the period. Initially, the northern part of Florida was not as severely affected by the economic crisis. However, the onslaught of the Great Depression resulted in a severe decline in property values, local governments went bankrupt and unemployment skyrocketed.

West Ocala rapidly changed during this period. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 allowed the use of federal funds in acquiring right-of-ways for projects to be built in the next five years. Upgrading highway systems in the late 1950s was a priority for President Eisenhower. During this period West Broadway was widened and many businesses and residents were lost. Modifying this street into a faster thoroughfare bisected the neighborhood and drastically altered the character of the area. Some of West Ocala's most beautiful and prestigious homes were destroyed. The hospital was demolished along with other landmarks.

Panel 26

RICH, REED AND ADAMS

Mary Sue Rich, an Ocala native, graduated from Howard High School in 1957, during a time when much of the South was segregated. She earned a degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida and started working with the Florida Department of Corrections in 1972. She worked at Lowell Correctional Institution as a corrections officer and later in probation, retiring in 2003. Ms. Rich was first elected to the City Council in 1995, representing

District 2, which covers much of Northwest Ocala. She was the first Black woman and third Black citizen to serve on the council. In 2003, she helped establish the Racial Harmony and Cultural Awareness Task Force's REACH Program. REACH works to unite all cultures in the city. Ms. Rich continued to serve on City Council until she retired in 2019.

Ruth Reed is the longtime president of Neighborhood Citizens of Northwest Ocala. Ms. Reed and her watchdog group emerged when the Royal Oak charcoal plant was still operational and led efforts to hold them accountable for its effects on the environment and human health, especially in the West Ocala neighborhood. She fought for the closure of the plant and refuge from its soot and fallout for 10 years. After the plant closed in 2006, due in part to efforts by Ms. Reed and her group, the City of Ocala purchased the property for future City development. In April 2020, the Ocala City Council adopted a resolution to rename the property Reed Place. The City will be constructing a new community center at the site named after Mary Sue Rich.

Carolyn Adams is a nurse and hospital administrator who spent her career in South Florida after growing up in West Ocala. The Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness and Community Resource Center is the brainchild of Ms. Adams and her late husband Arthur. When the couple moved back to Ocala after retirement, Ms. Adams realized her childhood neighborhood had become a "health desert," and the dream for the Estella Byrd Whitman Wellness Center was formed. Named after Adams's grandmother, the clinic began as a few rooms in the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church on Seventh Street in Ocala and continued to operate for a number of years. Plans for a permanent building were put on hold when her husband's health declined, and he passed away in 2013. But it wasn't long before Ms. Adams was back working on the dream they shared. Today the center is a mobile health unit that provides care for low income citizens and a range of other services for the purpose of improving the quality of life regardless of health insurance or ability to pay. Today the Center has a free-standing, physical structure located across from St. Paul AME Church, providing free health services.

Panel 27

IN THE STYLE OF JACOB LAWRENCE (1917-2000)

Jacob Lawrence was considered an expressive, narrative cubist painter. He painted many pictures and compiled them to tell a story. Lawrence referred to his style as “dynamic cubism.” His primary influences were the shapes and colors of Harlem. He brought the Black experience to life using blacks and browns juxtaposed with vivid colors.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Mural Artists

- Michele Faulconer
- Valerie Fjalstad
- Bob Hazelden
- Leonard Palmer
- Jillian Ramsammy
- Trevor Ramsammy
- Robert Williams

Information

- City of Ocala Historic Preservation
- Florida Black Heritage Trail
- Visit Florida
- A Florida Heritage Publication
- Interviews and stakeholder meetings with local community members

Resources for Educators

- West Ocala History – https://www.ocalafl.org/living/historic-preservation/west-ocala-history
- Ocala.com – https://www.ocalafl.org/living/historic-preservation/west-ocala-history

This educational booklet meets Florida State Standards under Social Studies (American History, Civics and Government, World History, Sociology, and Geography), Music (Historical and Global Connections), and Visual Arts (Skills, Techniques, and Processes; Historical and Global Connections; and Critical Thinking and Reflection) for K-12.

Ref. C-Palms:

Social Studies

SS.912.A.7.6
SS.912.A.2.6
SS.8.A.3.16
SS.912.A.3.13
SS.912.A.5.12
SS.1.A.2.1
SS.4.A.1.1
SS.4.A.1.2
SS.4.A.9.1
SS.5.A.1.1
SS.5.A.1.2
SS.5.C.2.3
SS.6.W.1.4
SS.6.W.1.6
SS.8.A.4.3
SS.8.A.4.8
SS.8.G.6.2
SS.912.A.1.6
SS.912.W.1.6
SS.8.G.2.1
SS.912.S.6.7

Music

MU.3.H.2.1

Visual Arts

VA.4.S.1.3
VA.68.H.1.4
VA.912.C.2.4
VA.912.H.2.1
VA.912.H.2.4

WILDBILLS

Oncell Audio Tour

OCALA

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