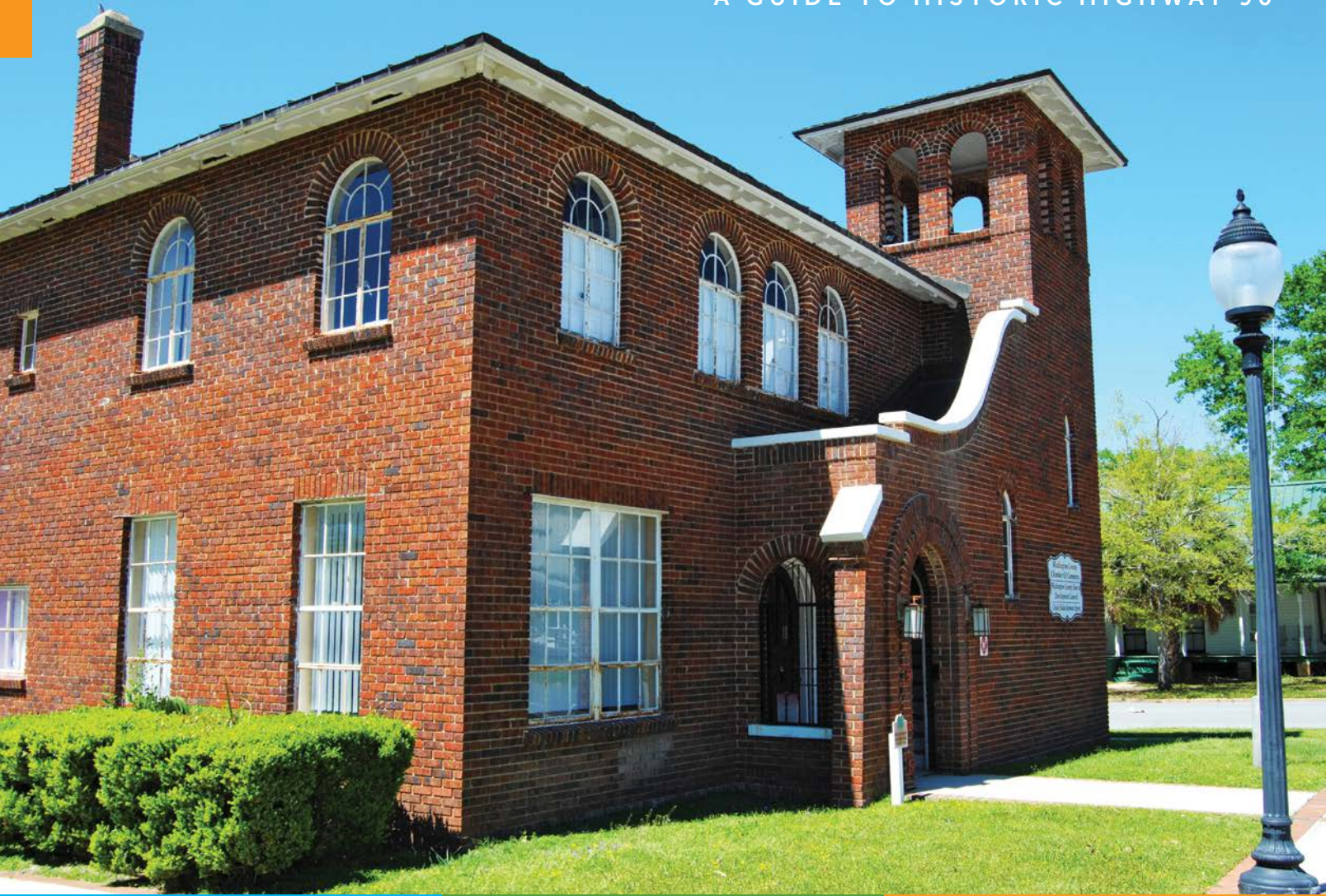


EXPLORING WASHINGTON COUNTY'S

Old Spanish Trail

A GUIDE TO HISTORIC HIGHWAY 90



CARYVILLE • CHIPLEY • EBRO • SUNNY HILLS • VERNON • WAUSAU

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On the Cover:
Old City Hall located in Downtown Chipley
Small photos: Caryville Bridge, Chipley Train Depot and Downtown Vernon
Photos by Washington County Tourism Development Council, Library of Congress, State Archives of Florida, Vernon Historical Society

On the Back:
Old Spanish Trail - 1929 Motorcade Map courtesy of St. Mary's University, Old Spanish Trail Association Records

Produced by the Washington County Tourism Development Council
P.O. Box 450, Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-6013 | VisitWCFla.com
director@visitwcfla.com

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WE'VE GONE DIGITAL!

The Washington County Tourist Development Council launched a digital story map to help you explore all the heritage that Washington County has to offer along the Old Spanish Trail and beyond. You can explore each location using the geographical map feature or scroll through the story map for expanded narratives and historic imagery. We hope you enjoy our county's colorful history and visit often.



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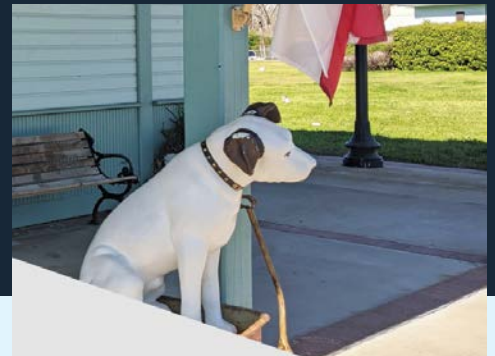
To view our story map, scan the QR code above or visit our website at VisitWCFla.com and click on the Historical Tour icon.



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Old Spanish Trail

Spanish accounts from 1674 to 1677 describe a pathway across today's Washington County, Florida. While not as well-traveled as the better-known Mission Road or El Camino Real that linked Mission San Luis (Tallahassee) with St. Augustine, it was part of a network of roads and trails through Northwest Florida that constituted the Old Spanish Trail (or trails) used by Native Americans and fur traders.

The best account of this path was provided by the leader of an Apalache Christian militia that led Mission San Luis in 1677 on a military expedition against a Chisca Indian fortification west of the

Choctawhatchee River. According to his report, the Apalache Christian soldiers, many of whom carried firearms as they marched behind the banner of Our Lady of the Rosary, followed a trail that led them down a stream that they crossed many times as they slowly approached the coast. This stream was Econfina Creek. The soldiers subsequently struck a second trail that took them to a large spring one league (about three miles) from the "Napa Ubab." The last two landmarks coincide well with Washington (Ebro) Blue Spring and the Choctawhatchee River. Based on the report, it is likely that the Apalache soldiers crossed the river at



A CROSSING OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

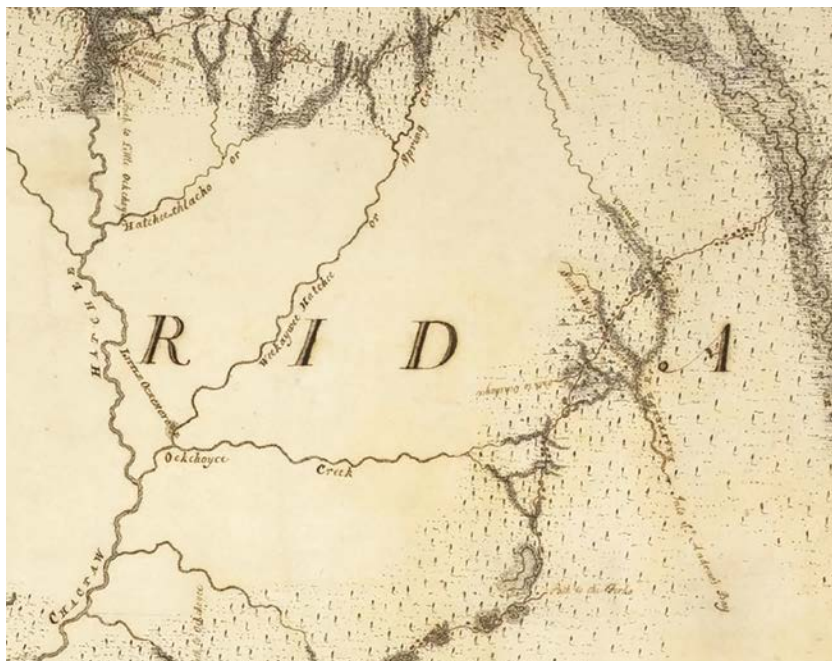
This is an original crossing point of the original Old Spanish Trail on Hard Labor Creek near Washington Church. Photo by Dale Cox

the well-known Cowford before striking the Chisca fortification.

This same path remained in use nearly 100 years later when Great Britain gained control of Florida in 1763. A British officer described it as a route from East Pass (today's Destin) to the Apalachicola River. He mentioned that the trail crossed the Econfina at its now collapsed Natural Bridge before continuing up the creek to today's Orange Hill and turning east to the Natural Bridge of the Chipola River. This trail is preserved in the Purcell-Stuart Map that is on display in the National Archives of Great Britain. There is a draft version of this map that is more detailed and shows more of the landmarks described as being along the original trail in the National Archives of the United States in Washington, D.C.

The original trail began at Pine Log Creek at the southern tip of Washington County. It continued north between Rattlesnake, Whitewater and Porter Lakes, finally crossing the Natural Bridge on the Econfina Creek. The trail took this path, likely to avoid the vast swamplands of the Deadening. Reaching Hard Labor Creek in the northern segment of Washington County, around Washington Church, it crossed over to the community of Orange Hill before continuing into Jackson County.

The route of the original trail was adapted through generations and finally became a single east-west route at the end of the Second Spanish Era (1783–1821). Entering from Jackson County, the set route crossed through Orange Hill to Hard Labor Creek near Washington Church (today's Hard Labor Creek Church) through Holmes Valley to Washington Blue Spring on the Choctawhatchee River. It then crossed the river at the Cowford and continued west into Walton County. This route was used heavily from this point forward, designated as the original "Old Spanish Trail," and was the basis of some of the road systems put in place during the early days of the county.



PURCELL-STUART MAP

Purcell, Joseph and Col. John Stuart. "A Map of the Road from Pensacola in W. Florida to St. Augustine in East Florida." *National Archives of Great Britain*, CO 700/Florida54, 1778.

Old Spanish Trail National Highway

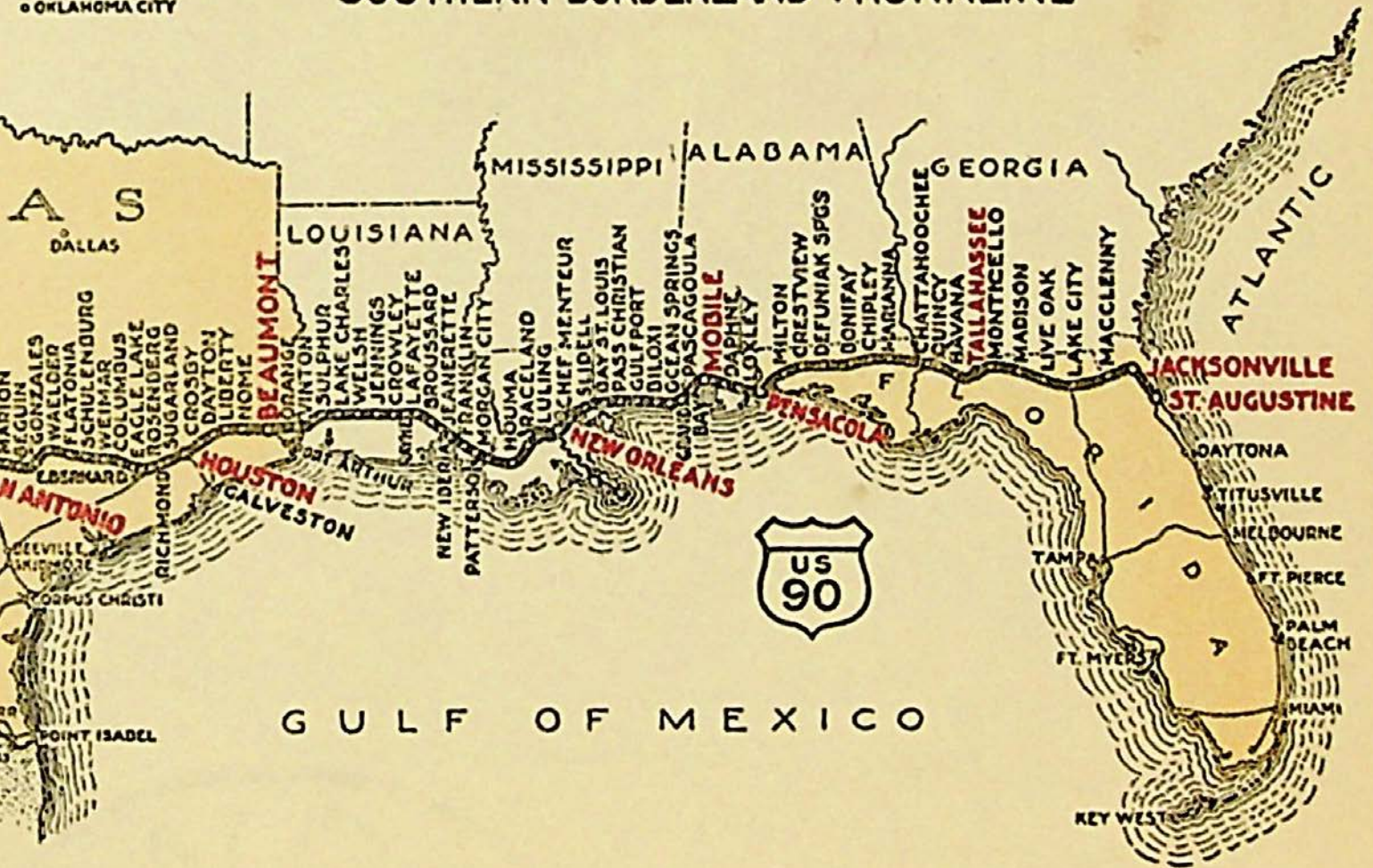




OLD SPANISH TRAIL

SOUTHERN BORDERLAND TRUNKLINE

OKLAHOMA CITY



GUNTER HOTEL, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

The Old Spanish Trail Association created this trunkline map to promote their transcontinental highway from St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, California. The highway was created to spur local development in the cities along the route. The association headquarters was at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. *St. Mary's University, Old Spanish Trail Association Records*

Historic Highway 90 Corridor

The dream of a paved highway linking St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, California, began with a meeting in Mobile, Alabama, on October 27, 1915. Just seven years earlier, Henry Ford had rolled his first Model T off the assembly line in Detroit, and the automobile was transitioning from a novelty toy of the rich to a product that every American could aspire to own.

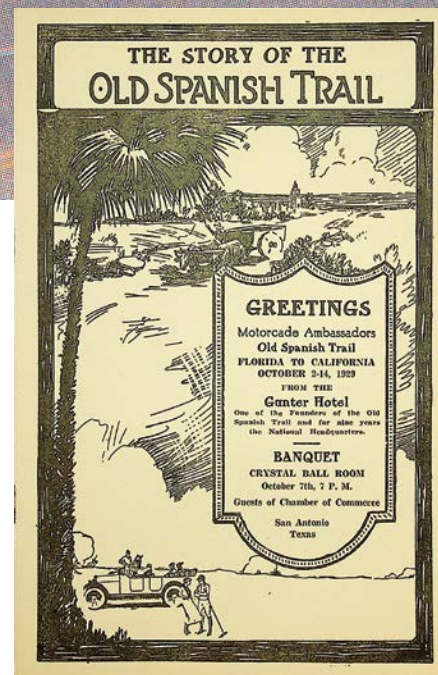
With the development of the car came expanded travel opportunities across the continent. Attendees at the Mobile meeting sought to capitalize on this opportunity by proposing the development of a motor trail that would stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. To be called the Old Spanish Trail in recognition of the shared Spanish heritage of Florida, Texas and California, the road later became Historic Highway 90. Until the completion of Interstate 10 in 1990, it was the southernmost transcontinental highway in the United States.

Although the road crossed or followed portions of the routes of Florida's original Old Spanish Trails, it was a new highway built to provide improved travel conditions. While commemorating the earlier roadways, it does not always align with them. The original Spanish trail through Washington County led from Orange Hill southeast through Holmes Valley to the so-called Cowford in Ebro. The modern highway, called the Old Spanish Trail since its inception, generally runs within sight of the railroad in the northern section of the county.

Washington County was involved in the development of Historic Highway 90 from the date of its inception.



Representatives from Chipley were among the enthusiasts who gathered for the 1915 meeting to discuss their mutual dream of a highway stretching from coast to coast, ultimately resolving to advocate for an improved road initially extending from Florida to Texas. Although the promoters hoped the road would eventually extend to California, Historic Highway 90 ends today in Van Horn, Texas. The official dedication of the project soon occurred on January 21, 1916. Chipley and Caryville, with the Holmes County town of Bonifay in between, took part in the inaugural celebration. Children sang in each community as dedication ceremonies took place. Over the following decade, Florida invested heavily in its section of the Old Spanish Trail. Governor Sidney J. Catts had an avid interest in the automobile as the first gubernatorial



GREETINGS FROM GUNTER HOTEL! This brochure was produced for guests participating in the 1929 motorcade by the Gunter Hotel, the National Headquarters for the Old Spanish Trail Association. *St. Mary's University, Old Spanish Trail Association Records*



THE CHIPLEY MOTEL CIRCA 1950

This motel, located on the Old Spanish Trail National Highway, was denoted in the Old Spanish Trail Travelog as an overnight destination for those traveling the highway through Chipley. *State Archives of Florida*

Old Spanish Trail project was launched from 1915–1916, this improved road was identified as a segment of the new national highway. Goods and raw materials could now be transported to the Chipley rail depot on the new hard roads.

As cars began to travel the Florida sections of the Old Spanish Trail, the crossing of the Choctawhatchee River at Caryville was by wooden ferry. Cables pulled it across the river with its deck about ten inches above the water's surface. Safety was of concern when the weight of a Model T was added to the flat.

The need for a modern bridge was apparent. In 1921, Florida's State Road Department authorized the expenditure of nearly half of its total road and bridge construction budget for the project. The U.S. Congress followed with authorization to build the bridge, constructed by the Pensacola Ship Building Company, over waters of the United States. Even as major construction moved forward in 1922, thousands of people in the era of "Tin Can Tourists" were using the Florida sections of the new highway. H.B. Ayres, the managing director of the Old Spanish Trail Commission, drove through Washington County in April of that year and reported dramatic improvements.

With its completion in 1925, the entire section of the Old Spanish Trail (today's Historic Highway 90) through Washington County was opened. By 1929, the entire highway through Florida was connected as thousands of Americans poured into Florida, resulting in considerable economic and demographic growth.

candidate to stump the state in a car. Catts asked the legislature to use the labor of state prisoners to build state roads and highways. In 1917, the legislature created the State Road Department and the State Convict Road Force. Thus began the inhumane abuse of state prisoners in road construction.

Washington County, like many North Florida counties, had no paved roads when the project began in 1915. Several years earlier, most of its roads were little more than trails through the pine woods. Railroads provided the only means of fast transportation. The Louisville & Nashville alignment even formed the center of Chipley, named for Col. William D. Chipley, the prime developer of the railroad in West Florida. The city's business district faced not a major highway but the railroad line, as seen today.

In 1911, however, the need for improved roads became a major issue in the county as the Model T was changing the South. County commissioners realized that Washington's economic future depended on implementing a large-scale road construction project. The result was the approval of a bond issue that allowed for the construction of improved roads linking all the major communities in the county.

The roads built using the bond funds were widened, straightened, packed and machine-graded, but not paved. Built at around \$775 per mile, two of the construction projects covered the entire length of the segment of Historic Highway 90 through Washington County. From Chipley, the road went west to the Holmes County line at Holmes Creek while running east to the mill town of Aycock on the Jackson County line. When the



Caryville

Originally called Half Moon Bluff, Caryville was established as a sawmill community around 1882 as the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad (later the L&N) was completed across the Choctawhatchee River. The community quickly became a construction camp for the railroad's development. The workers used the bluff as an operation base, with materials transported up the Choctawhatchee River from Pensacola on steamboats. The town was named after the railroad executive R.M. Cary.

The town grew to become a major industrial center, noted for its sawmills that used the river and its tributaries as transportation routes to bring timber downstream from adjoining Holmes County as well as nearby areas of Alabama. At its peak, Caryville was the largest sawmill community in the nation. In 1900, one of the largest timber and mill companies,

Sanford Lumber Company, began operations. By 1904, construction of a rail line connecting the company with Godwin's Turpentine Still to the southeast was underway. This route was one of the original logging routes before the introduction of the railroad when logs floated down the Choctawhatchee River. The mill had the capacity to produce 100,000 board feet of lumber per day and employed around 400 laborers. The mill was sold several times by 1925 and had acquired approximately 125,000 acres of land as the Henderson-Waits Lumber Company. The Great Depression forced a halt in operations until around 1933 when the mill opened back up at half-capacity. Operations ceased around the late 1930s due to exhausting the timber resources, the effects of the Economic Depression and federal regulation. The last of the sawmills was dismantled and gone by World War II.

1. AFTER THE FLOOD
Houses and other structures rest where the receded river left them, as seen here, seven days after the flood. *Photo by T. Hope Cawthon*

2. CARYVILLE ON MARCH 17, 1929
The waters rose during the Great Flood of 1929. Before the Choctawhatchee River receded, the rooftops of Caryville were submerged. *Photo by T. Hope Cawthon*

3. CARYVILLE RAILROAD BRIDGE
The 1882 arrival of the railroad spelled the eventual end of commercial river traffic on the Choctawhatchee. *Photo by Dale Cox*



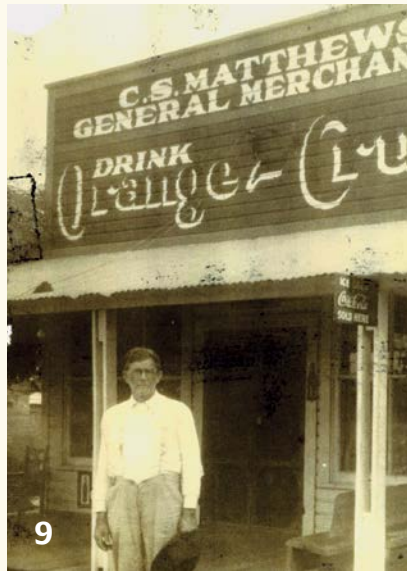
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4. LAST SIGNS OF A FORGOTTEN INDUSTRIAL GIANT

Caryville's days of industrial importance were rapidly closing when this photograph was taken in 1937. Today, little evidence remains of the great sawmills. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

5. CARYVILLE TELEGRAPH SERVICE

The Western Union Telegraph and Cable Office was located at the Caryville Railroad Depot. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

6. CHILDREN WAITING FOR THE TRAIN

In 1943, a group of school children waited patiently for the train at the Caryville Train Depot, which had been constructed around 1882. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

7. CARYVILLE POST OFFICE CIRCA 1951

The first Caryville Post Office opened in 1883, one year after the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad line was completed in the area. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

8. THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER

A taxidermied specimen of an ivory-billed woodpecker shows the enormous bird as eyewitnesses say it appears on the Choctawhatchee. *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*

9. C.S. MATTHEWS GENERAL STORE

This general store operated in Caryville during the sawmill boom. This photo was taken in 1927. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

In 1903, as a sign of early prosperity, Caryville became the first community in Washington County to receive electric power and was incorporated ten years later in 1913. A major boom was forecast when the Old Spanish Trail (today's U.S. 90) bridged the Choctawhatchee in 1925, thus ceasing the ferry service. The original Caryville Bridge was designed and fabricated by the Pensacola Shipbuilding Company, which was a principal bridge builder in the state, and one of the few surviving bridges in the state constructed by the Pensacola Shipbuilding Company.

Optimism sank when devastating floods swamped the community in 1928 and 1929. The flood of 1929 proved to be the most destructive with the Choctawhatchee River cresting an astounding 15 feet above damage stage forcing a steamboat into a cornfield and a frog infestation. "It must of rained frogs 'cuz Chipley was on the hop," recalled a resident. The completion of I-10 and subsequent floods in the late 20th century caused more devastation for the town, forcing nearly all of Caryville to pick up and move to higher ground.

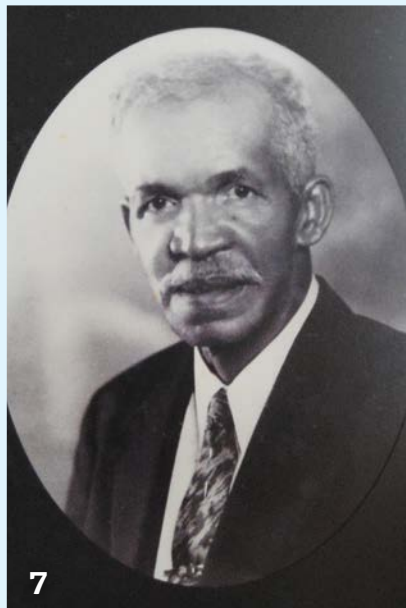
The Development and Growth of Chipley

The first U.S. settlers of the Washington County area depended on existing trails and waterways for transportation. Unlike Holmes Valley, Vernon and Orange Hill, the future site of Chipley was isolated from both, slowing development. Although early maps suggest the presence of a fort or blockhouse in the vicinity during the first years of the Seminole Wars (1817–1818), the modern city of Chipley was not founded until the building of the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad, or P&A, in 1882.

Initially operating as the P&A, the railroad that built Chipley was best known for much of its life as the L&N, or Louisville & Nashville. An east-west rail line across Northwest Florida was a long-time dream of agricultural and commercial interests west of the Apalachicola River. For the sake of travel, the railroad was needed. Before the line's construction, it took days, if not weeks, to travel from Pensacola Bay to Apalachicola or its tributary, the Chattahoochee. Settlers believed that the lack of a railroad hindered West Florida's development, which depended on poorly graded roads and waterways for travel. Indeed, inadequate transportation impeded the economic development and population growth of a county whose residents largely relied on subsistence agriculture. Cash crops, such as cotton, lumber and tobacco, were marginal due to impractical shipping options. Ensuing frustration heightened West Florida's desire to annex into Alabama, whose leaders offered a resolution. Ultimately, the Florida legislature approved the chartering of the P&A in 1881. With federal assistance, the legislature authorized a 2.2 million acres land grant, nearly one-fifteenth the size of the entire state.

Col. William D. Chipley, who became known as "West Florida's Mr. Railroad," operating as the L&N's vice president





1. CHIPLEY RAILROAD DEPOT

The original railroad depot no longer stands. During its active era, it was a major shipping point for farm products, naval stores, brick and timber products. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

2. W.D. CHIPLEY

Chipley is named for the controversial former Civil War officer who led a successful effort to build a railroad from Pensacola to Apalachicola. *State Archives of Florida*

3. CHIPLEY WATERMELON HARVEST

Local farmers loading the train with their watermelon harvest in Downtown Chipley. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

4. KUDZU DEVELOPED HERE

A Florida historical marker on U.S. 90 at the Washington County Ag Center in Chipley notes the city's distinction where Kudzu was propagated. *Photo by Dale Cox*

5. CHIPLEY'S RAILROAD DEPOT CONSTRUCTION

This image of workers amid the construction of the Chipley Railroad Depot was taken in 1896. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

6. LESTER RHYNES GROCERY STORE

Lester & Paralee Rhynes operated Lester Rhynes Grocery Store for over 69 years in Chipley, making it one of the oldest African American businesses in Washington County. *Carla Rhynes-Campbell*

7. T.J. ROULHAC

Thomas Joseph "T.J." Roulhac, 1872-1941, was a 49-year distinguished educator of Washington County's African American school system. Roulhac Middle School and the T.J. Roulhac Enrichment & Activity Center in Chipley bear his namesake in honor of his dedication and service. *T.J. Roulhac Enrichment & Activity Center*

and general superintendent, first planned a town a few miles east in Jackson County. However, influential friends such as Major W.J. Vankirk, principal developer of DeFuniak Springs, persuaded him to select Washington County to increase the chances of the community becoming the county seat. The site that ultimately became Chipley was selected as a coal and water stop between Milton and Marianna. The steam locomotives of the day needed water to operate. Thus, the abundant springs west of today's downtown Chipley contributed to a body of water called "Tank Pond" used to refill boilers.

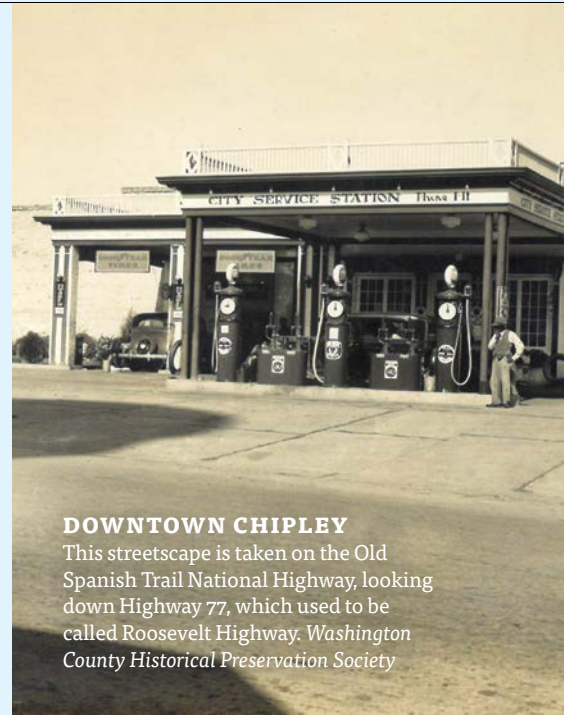
Although many county residents and business owners hoped the line would run closer to existing population centers, Chipley selected a less expensive route along the northern edge of Washington County, where the terrain was more level and less populated. Bypassing established settlements lowered railroad construction costs and rights-of-way acquisition. Crushing dreams of a new town at Orange Hill, he selected a route north of the older land route connecting Marianna with Vernon, located on 80 acres Major Vankirk had acquired.

Originally called Orange or Orange Station for nearby Orange Hill, the name was changed to Chipley to honor the community's benefactor. The town ultimately achieved its goal of taking the

county seat designation from Vernon in 1927 by carving off the southern half of the county to create Bay County in 1913 and adjusting the eastern border in 1915 to accommodate Chipley's growth, which had spread into Jackson County.

Established in 1882, a post office was assigned to Chipley the following year and grew as an important stop on the P&A before incorporation in 1900. As planned, the town became a significant manufacturing and shipping point for timber and agricultural products. Lumber, naval stores and cotton had become the primary economic drivers in Washington County. Early buildings were constructed from the abundant supply of dimensional lumber. The town plat was recorded in 1907 after several early fires. Subsequently, the business district was constructed of brick and other masonry materials that still stand today. Chipley's downtown district faced the tracks, paralleled by North and South Railroad Avenue. In 1925, the construction of U.S. Highway 90, known as the "Old Spanish Trail," added another important transportation artery and spurred further development. By 1926, Chipley had a concentrated residential district surrounding the downtown commercial district. The elegance of the historic structures of this era belies their history, which was often as wild as those in any railroad town of the Wild West.

Downtown Chipley Walking Tour



DOWNTOWN CHIPLEY
This streetscape is taken on the Old Spanish Trail National Highway, looking down Highway 77, which used to be called Roosevelt Highway. Washington County Historical Preservation Society

1 CHIPLEY FARMER'S MARKET COMPLEX

Built in 1989, this building closely resembles the original train depot, which once stood closer to the tracks where the Bill Lee Bus Station stands today. The Washington County Historical Society Museum, Washington County Veterans Wall and Chipley Farmer's Market all utilize this community space.

2 SOUTH RAILROAD AVE. EAST BETWEEN 7TH STREET & HIGHWAY 77

The railroad's warehouse and loading docks were located on this site. In the row of buildings behind the warehouse was Whitey's Pool Hall. Note that many significant edifices are oriented toward the railroad line, which is the reason for Chipley's establishment.

3 HIGHWAY 77 EAST BETWEEN SOUTH RAILROAD AVE. EAST & U.S. 90

This row of buildings has seen many changes through the decades. They housed the Blue Bird Café, a bakery, Cain's Pool Hall, the Suwanee Store, Kolmetz Hardware and Watford Drugs. At the end of the row was the location of the Jitney Jungle Meat Market and grocery store, built c. 1913. Just across the alley is a two-story building that was Dr. Harper and J. Rubenstein's Dry Goods Store and Davis's Drug Store in the early 1930s.

4 HIGHWAY 77 WEST BETWEEN U.S. 90 & SOUTH RAILROAD AVE. WEST

The two-story corner building in this row has parcel abstracts dating back to the original patent filed on November 20, 1888. The present building was constructed around 1901 by John B. Farrior and was originally owned by William Williams. It housed a doctor's office upstairs and a drug store below, later becoming the Palms Restaurant in the 1940s. To the left of the Williams building was the c. 1905 Wells

Mercantile Store operated by... T.L. Wells and Angus Lee Wells, with the "Sanitary Grocery Store" next door operated by "Sanitary" Godwin. Proceeding south, the next two storefronts were constructed c. 1911 contained the Rand McGeachy Grocery Store, then most famously Carlisle Jewelers for decades. The end building, constructed around 1918 and originally owned by W. R. Gainer, housed a movie theater, a hardware store in the 1920s and a grocery store in the 1930s.

5 SOUTH RAILROAD BETWEEN HIGHWAY 77 AND 5TH STREET

The first building in this row, circa 1895, was Dunn and Coleman Hardware. Next door was the Speight and Costner Pontiac Dealership that operated in the 1930s and 1940s. At the center of the block was Mitchell Drug Company, built by W. E. Coleman around 1913.

6 THE WATTS/DUNN BUILDING

In 1910, the building at this location advertised "Everything the Best in Buggies, Wagons and Automobiles." The present building was constructed in 1916 by Tom J. Watts, whose name can be seen above the center entrance and who owned the local phone company. Occupants included the Leader Store, owned by Tom Leader and operated by J. Rubenstein; Faulk and Company dry goods, operated by John Huey Faulk in the 1930s; Chipley Furniture Company in the 1940s; and then Dunn Furniture Company.

7 FIRST NATIONAL BANK

On the corner is Chipley's first bank, The First National Bank, constructed in 1905, a date visible on the entrance step to the building. First National failed after the stock market crash of 1929 and consolidated in 1930, becoming Southeast Bank. Remaining a bank until 1967, the Second Empire-style building has lost its signature mansard roof, but the façade is preserved.

8 NORTH RAILROAD AVE. BETWEEN 5TH STREET & HIGHWAY 77

The corner storefront was built in 1900 by Dekle and Company, as indicated on the entrance plate. Originally the Big Store, a general mercantile operated by Elijah Neel Dekle, it later became McGeachy's grocery store. The next storefront was also constructed by Dekle and Company in 1901. It operated as J.R. McGeachy Drug Store and the post office until becoming Northcutt Drugs from the 1920s to the 1940s and then Kings Drugs until the 1970s. The two-story building with the decorative parapet at the center of the block, known as the Porter Building, has a plate across the entrance reading "A.R. Wells 1900." Camp Hardware operated here until the 1920s, followed by Standifer Millinery Store, Standifer Jewelers and Jack Shiver's Variety Store in the mid-1930s. The next building housed The Washington County News, which was originally named The Banner, from 1927 to 2023. The corner building with "Bank" in the tilework of the cutaway entrance is the former Chipley State Bank, constructed circa 1905. It later became the Bank of Chipley, as liquidation began in the early 1930s during the Depression with Sion Augustus "Gus" Alford as president. The building housed the U.S. Post Office from 1934 to 1960. In 1961, it was bought by Sion Alford II and operated as an insurance company. It is fondly called the Alford Building, as the Alford family had much



success in the naval stores industry. On the lower southern exterior of the building is a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Benchmark #110.564 M 11/1918. Sites for benchmarks were chosen arbitrarily, and this location was likely chosen because of its prominence and security.

9 HIGHWAY 77 WEST BETWEEN NORTH RAILROAD AVE. & CHURCH AVE.

This line of buildings was referred to in an 1899 deed as the “Farrior Brick Block” as constructed by W.L. Farrior. Although mostly covered today, these buildings were some of the first to use masonry in their construction, allowing them to withstand the fires of 1898 and 1901. They have housed a grocery store, beauty shops and other offices.

10 5TH STREET BETWEEN NORTH RAILROAD AVE. & CHURCH AVE.

On 5th Street, the 1955 Lee Wells Building on the corner to the south, once housed Gulf Power. The small wooden building further down the block is referred to as the “Little Library.” This circa 1905 structure was originally located on the corner of Highway 77 and Church Ave. Its various uses included a shed for potato shipments by rail, a cook’s house and storage for caskets. As early as 1934, it opened as the Washington County Free Public Library with the assistance of the Chipley

Woman’s Club and was likely moved to this location the following year.

On the corner of 5th Street and Church Avenue sits the Old Chipley City Hall, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Constructed in 1929 in the Eclectic style and designed by A.R. Moore of Tallahassee, the brickwork was completed by local mason W.C. Shumaker. Prisoners were once housed in two jail cells within the city hall, and the second floor provided quarters for the fireman and his family. The enclosed garage openings for the fire trucks are visible on the side of the building.

11 THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

This home was built circa 1913 and originally owned by Dan J. Jones, a circuit judge. The name derives from the spindle work and carved brackets that once graced the façade of the Frame Vernacular home.

12 RUSS DAVIS HOUSE

This house was originally built in the popular Colonial Revival style in 1935 by Tom Langston, Russ Davis and Dan Moore. Davis was a druggist who borrowed \$4,000 to construct the home before being foreclosed on in 1938. Dr. George W. Carter purchased the home in 1939 and operated an office from it. In 2021, it was renovated to its current appearance.

13 BLACKBURN FUNERAL HOME AND HOUSE

Built in 1922–1923, the Blackburn Funeral

Home was run by J.O. Blackburn, whose family lived above the funeral home. The home behind it on Church Avenue was later constructed in 1936 for the Blackburns.

14 HIGHWAY 77 EAST BETWEEN CHURCH AVE. & NORTH RAILROAD AVE.

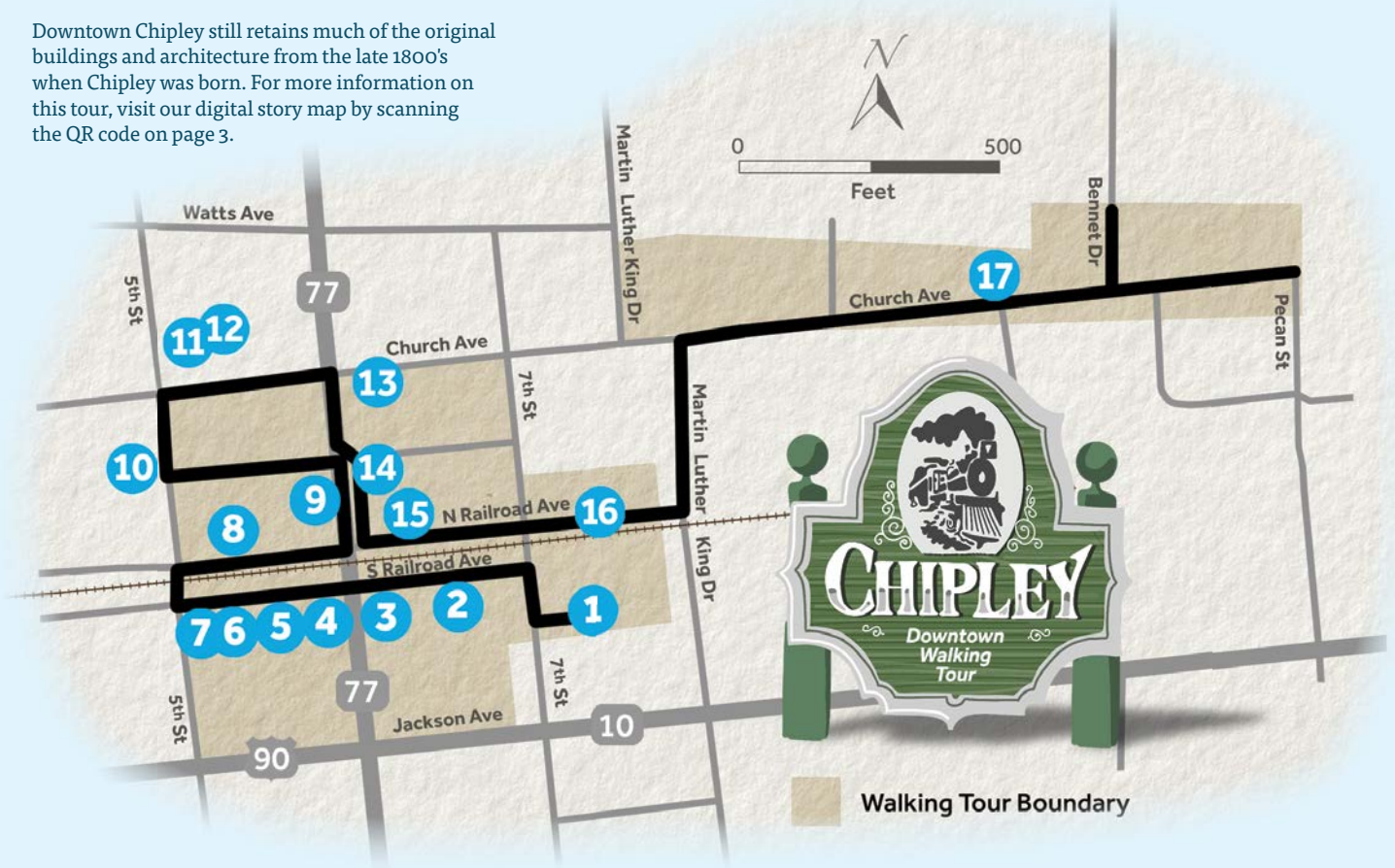
This second building was the Richardson Millinery Shop, built in 1904 by Mr. Richardson for his daughter. The Vance Theater was constructed in 1932 by J.C. Blackburn. Originally named the Manavista, the theater had living quarters on the second floor. The building on the south end was a furniture store with storage above. Crossing the alley, these storefronts housed an accountant’s office and beauty shop. The corner building, known as the S.A. Cook building, was constructed in 1904 as the S.A. Cook general merchandise store. Later bought by J.D. Blackburn in the 1930s, it was home to Watford Drugs in the 1940s, which had second-story doctor’s offices.

15 NORTH RAILROAD AVE. BETWEEN HIGHWAY 77 & 7TH STREET

The storefront next to the Cook Building and the two-story building next to it were built in 1930–1931 by J.C. Blackburn. The following building was constructed as the Dallas D. Bass Meat and Grocery Store during the same period. The Old Fire House, located at 1338, was a grocery

Chipley

Downtown Chipley still retains much of the original buildings and architecture from the late 1800's when Chipley was born. For more information on this tour, visit our digital story map by scanning the QR code on page 3.



store until 1950, when it became Trawick Construction. Toward the center of the block in the 1920s was the Spanish Trail Inn, although it no longer exists. The end building, a store, was built in 1925 by H.H. Morris. It later became a fish market and oyster bar until becoming a café in the 1970s.

16 NORTH RAILROAD AVE. BETWEEN 7TH STREET & 8TH STREET

The corner building was the long-time home to Godfrey's Auto Store. The following line of buildings was most remembered as a cabinet shop and paint store.

17 CHURCH AVE. BETWEEN 8TH STREET & PECAN STREET

Turning east onto Church Avenue is the former Price Wilson's Barber Shop (1244 Church Avenue). Opened in 1951, the barber shop served the community for 20 years. Mr. Wilson was a respected educator for 37 years, the first Black city councilman and a pastor. On the next block is Cooper Funeral Home, the oldest African American funeral home in Washington County, operating for more than 65 years. Across the street is Artis

Gilmore Park. Artis Gilmore was born in Chipley in 1949 and went on to become a record-breaking NBA basketball player and hall of famer. Proceeding east on Church at the corner of Bennett Drive is the former Tolliver Store. Constructed in 1932 by Captain Jenks, it is a modified shotgun home, a simple vernacular design with Haitian roots. Down Bennett Drive is Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, an African American church built between 1959 and 1962 for a congregation dating back to 1907. Note that the adjoining Bethel Lodge No. 524 Free and Accepted Masons was constructed in the same era. At 637 Bennett Drive was Rhynes Grocery Store, opened by Lester and Paralee Rhynes in 1932. It is one of the oldest African American-owned businesses in Washington County. Lester Rhynes owned and operated the store for more than 69 years, having lived until 100 years old. Nearby, Rhynes built ten rental houses and a street to access the properties. The City of Chipley later paved this street and named it 10th Street. In recent years, it was renamed Rhynes Avenue in his honor. Returning to Church Avenue, continue east to T.J. Roulhac Enrichment & Activity



JERUSALEM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The congregation of Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church in front of the original wooden church building constructed in 1909.

Center. Constructed in 1958, this complex was a school for Black students, unofficially named the "Roulhac School" or "Roulhac High School." T.J. Roulhac was supervisor of Washington County's Black schools in 1913 and later became principal of Chipley's first Black high school in 1938. The school was integrated in 1968–1969, then officially named Roulhac Middle School for its distinguished educator of 49 years, operating at this location until 2001.

South Third Street Historic District Tour



1 STEPHEN MITCHELL, JR. HOUSE (720 S. THIRD STREET)

This bungalow was built in 1913 by Thomas E. Langston in the popular Craftsman style of that era. The property was given to Flora Campbell and Stephen Mitchell, Jr. as a wedding gift. Stephen Mitchell was a pharmacist and owned Mitchell Drug Store on the southwest corner of Railroad Avenue and Third Street.



2 ALEXANDER DOUGLAS CAMPBELL HOUSE (724 S. THIRD STREET)

In 1894, Thomas E. Langston built the home, which originally belonged to Alexander Douglas Campbell, a telegraph and freight agent for Southern Express and the co-owner of a cotton gin with E.N. Dekle. The home's architecture reflects a more vernacular version of the Queen Anne style with patterned shingles on the steeply pitched roof gable and an asymmetrical facade.



WILLIAM OSCAR BUTLER HOUSE

3 WILLIAM OSCAR BUTLER HOUSE (731 S. THIRD STREET)

Built in 1898, this home has retained most of its original fanciful Queen Anne architectural features, including a turret, varying roofline with pedimented gables, corbeled chimneys and wrapped veranda. Thomas E. Langston built the home for William Oscar Butler and Alma Dekle Butler. Mr. Butler was a banker and merchant. The home remains in the family to this day.

store merchant. Note the sunburst motif on the porch gable and arched vents in the paired roof gables. The Queen Anne-style home is the only one known in town with a root cellar.



4 VALERY E. COLEMAN HOUSE (742 S. THIRD STREET)

Constructed in 1900 by Thomas E. Langston, the home was originally owned by Valery E. Coleman, a naval



5 J.B. FARRIOR HOUSE (743 S. THIRD STREET)

Construction of this home occurred around 1916. The original owner, J.B. Farrow, was a local merchant of bricks and general merchandise. His brothers, J.M. Farrow, owner of farm feed and cures, and Dr. J.R. Farrow, were also owners. The Frame Vernacular home was later altered with stucco covering the original wood exterior.



**6 DR. JAMES SHERWOOD
MCGEACHY HOUSE
(748 S. THIRD STREET)**

This home was built in 1920 as a rental house by a prominent Chipley doctor. Dr. James Sherwood McGeachy was not a resident of the neighborhood. The Frame Vernacular home features a hip tower-like second story. The numerous gable extensions indicate that the home was likely constructed in stages.



**7 W.L. MERCHANT HOUSE
(754 S. THIRD STREET)**

This Frame Vernacular home was constructed around 1938. A grocer with the Carlisle Grocery Store, W.L. Merchant, purchased the home in 1944.



**8 R.E. ARMSTRONG HOUSE
(755 S. THIRD STREET)**

This bungalow home is attributed to local building contractor William Lafayette Farrior. Constructed



ROBERT E. COOK HOUSE

around 1917, it displays Craftsman-style features, including knee braces and exposed rafter tails within the wide roof overhang.



**9 JAMES D. FORRESTER HOUSE
(768 S. THIRD STREET)**

This home was built by and for James D. Forrester, a contractor and developer responsible for the addition of a portion of this neighborhood. The 1890s-style home was owned by Levi W. Crow, a lumber mill operator from Iowa. Unusual for Florida's residential architecture, this home reflects Folk form of the late Gothic Revival style expressed by a steeply pitched cross gable roof, a bay window with paired brackets and a veranda.

**10 ROBERT E. COOK HOUSE
(782 S. THIRD STREET)**

Robert E. Cook built his Queen Anne-style home in 1909. It features an asymmetrical façade and varied roofline. Cook was a local lumber mill foreman.



**11 GEORGE M. MYERS HOUSE
(790 S. THIRD STREET)**

Built in 1909 for George Myers, a naval stores operator and businessman of early 20th-century Chipley, the home's Queen Anne-style includes a pinnacled turret, scalloped wood shingles within the gables of a steeply pitched roof and a bay window.

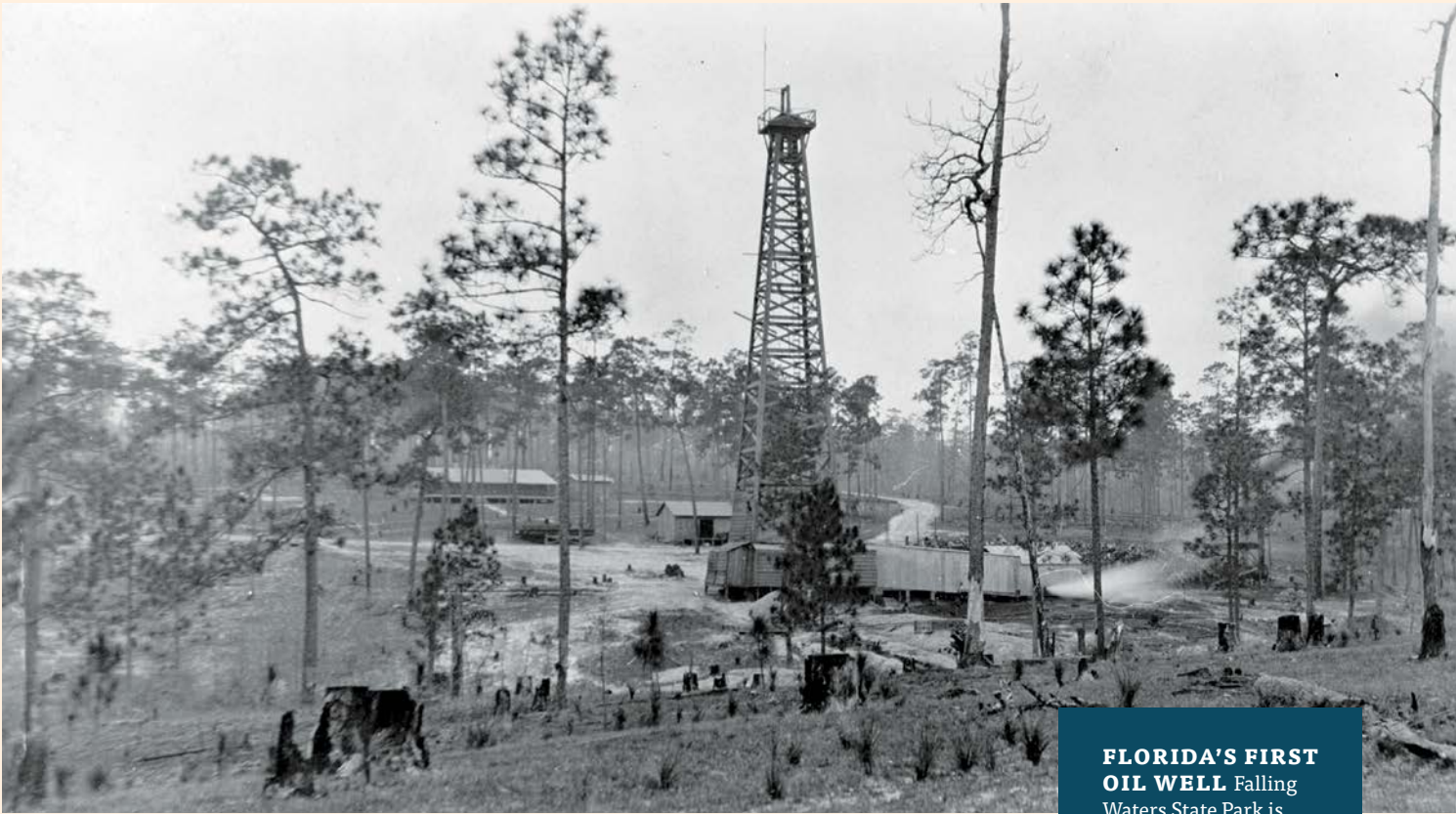
Notable due to the array of late 19th and 20th century homes which served as residences to many of Chipley's most prominent citizens. The district appears today essentially as it has since the late 1930s. For more information on this tour, visit our digital story map by scanning the QR code on page 3.



FALLING WATERS STATE PARK

Home to Florida's tallest waterfall, this state park houses evidence of early inhabitants that goes back 5,000 years. The waterfall was used as a grist mill during the Civil War and ran a legal whiskey distillery beginning in 1891, serving the railroad workers during construction of the P&A Railroad.





FLORIDA'S FIRST OIL WELL Falling Waters State Park is home to one of the first oil wells in the state. It was capped in 1921 and can still be viewed in the park. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

Falling Waters, High Hills & Disappearing Lakes

1 BLUE LAKE
Blue Lake is one of Florida's unique "disappearing lakes." This unusual phenomenon is caused by the unique karst topography that underlies the state. Water passing through underground limestone slowly erodes caves and caverns, some of which eventually collapse to form sinkholes. One such sinkhole is located at the bottom of Blue Lake, and the large bottom of water has been known to disappear overnight. The sink then becomes plugged with debris, and the pond slowly refills.

2 MAGNOLIA MEMORIAL LANE
This lane of Magnolias was intended to connect Chipley with the then-proposed Falling Waters State Park. The trees were planted with the assistance of the Chipley Kiwanis Club in 1960 to honor the men of the 13th Artillery

Brigade who died in Europe and Africa during World War II. The original planting of 1,000 three-year-old magnolias was the idea of journalist, historian and World War II veteran E.W. Carswell, who had seen similar plantings in Europe.

3 FALLING WATERS STATE PARK
This beautiful park is home to the tallest waterfall in Florida, descending into a 100-foot-deep and 20-foot-wide cylindrical sinkhole. The park protects the Falling Waters Sink State Geological Area, an area of sinks and limestone caves created by Florida's karst topography that is crucial in recharging the Floridian aquifer. Native American habitation has been traced back 5,000 years on Falling Waters Hill, the fourth highest point in Florida. Remnants of a pre-Civil War grist mill powered by the waterfall and a capped oil well from 1921, evidence of

the first site for oil drilling in the state, are present at the park.

4 ORANGE HILL
Orange Hill is one of four hills in Washington County and is believed to rank among the twelve highest elevations in Florida. The hill rises to just over 300 feet above sea level. The sudden ascent up the rugged ridge was so dramatic that Rt. Rev. Michael Portier, the Catholic bishop of Florida, believed he had reached a mountain when he arrived at Orange Hill in 1827. He described Orange Hill, then called Hickory Hill, as "this grand mountain peak by the finest trees in the world." Orange Hill is not a mountain, nor is it a foothill of the Appalachian chain, as many believe. It was formed by the surrounding area being weathered down and is what geologists call an "outlier." Orange Hill, one of the earliest territorial settlements



ORANGE HILL RD MID 20TH CENTURY Orange Hill Road connects the old community of Orange to Chipley and crosses over Orange Hill, one of the highest points in the state. *Washington County Historical Preservation Society*

in the county, was pioneered by former residents of Georgia and Alabama, who relocated for the excellent soil quality, pines and freshwater springs to cultivate cotton and subsistence crops.

5 ORANGE HILL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH/SAND HILL SCHOOL

Orange Hill Missionary Baptist Church is the oldest surviving African American congregation in Washington County. The church and cemetery were founded in 1870. The land was also the site of an African American school called Sand Hill School, which started operating in 1875. A Masonic lodge was also set up to the left of the church structure.

6 ORANGE HILL ACADEMY

The Orange Hill Academy was an Antebellum-era predecessor of Florida's well-known Stetson University and Baptist College of Florida in nearby Graceville. Rev. David Porter Everett owned a large plantation on Orange Hill. A graduate of what is now Mercer University in Georgia, he dreamed of establishing a similar Baptist-affiliate institution of higher learning at this site. A boarding school existed at Orange Hill



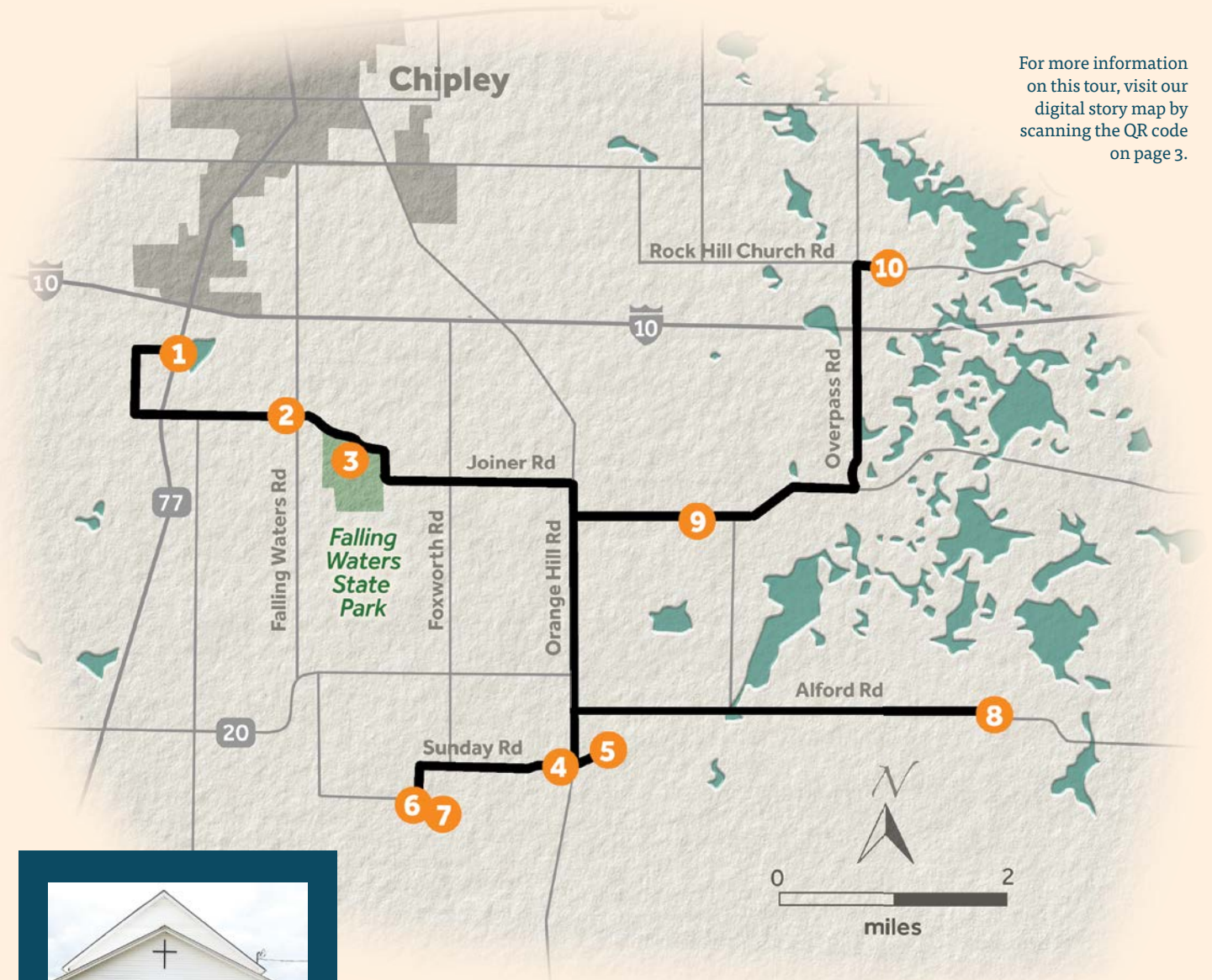

as early as 1847, but in 1851, the Orange Hill Male and Female Academy was founded here. The Orange Hill Academy operated until the outbreak of the Civil War, and it never reopened.

7 THE EVERETT PLANTATION

Before the Civil War, Washington County never developed a cash crop plantation-based economy like that of nearby Jackson County. Unlike most

area subsistence farms, these grounds were once part of the Everett Plantation, the largest antebellum plantation in Washington County, Florida. The Everett family arrived as frontier settlers in the 1820s. By 1827, they had built a rectangular log home on top of the hill. The size of the plantation grew over the following decades. By the eve of the Civil War, it was a large operation that produced cotton and other crops for the export market.

For more information on this tour, visit our digital story map by scanning the QR code on page 3.

ROCK HILL CHURCH & CEMETERY
 Established in 1884, this church and cemetery are nestled within what used to be the center of the county's citrus belt. *Washington County Tourist Development Council*

8 OAK HILL
 This intersection is on the northern slope of Oak Hill, the second highest elevation in Florida. South of Alford Road, the Hill rises to a peak of 331 feet above sea level. Second only to Britton Hill in Walton County, Oak Hill is the highest point in Washington County.

9 HIGH HILL
 To your north are the slopes of High Hill, the third highest elevation in Florida. Rising to a peak at 323 feet above sea level, this hill is a geological outlier like nearby Oak, Orange and Falling Waters Hills. The limestone beneath the hill was more resistant to erosion and dissolution than that beneath the surrounding area. As a result, the land surrounding the hill eroded

over thousands of years, leaving High Hill as a unique Florida landmark.

10 ROCK HILL CHURCH
 This historic church stands near another of the tallest points in Florida. Rock Hill rises to an elevation of more than 300 feet and is known for its massive natural stone formations. Rock from the hill was used to build many of the stone buildings in Chipley. Rock Hill Methodist Church is in the center of what was once the citrus belt of Washington County. The church congregation was founded in the 19th century, and the adjacent cemetery includes marked graves dating back to the late 1800s. After the road was relocated in about 1938, the men of the community used logs and mules to rotate the building, orienting it to the north.



WASHINGTON CHURCH & CEMETERY

Organized in 1848 as Washington Church, this primitive Baptist church later became known as Hard Labor Church.

Photo by Dale Cox

Possums & Pioneers Tour

1 WASHINGTON OR HARD LABOR CHURCH

This historic Primitive Baptist Church was organized in 1848, just three years after Florida gained its statehood. It stood near the old Marianna to Vernon Road, which crossed Hard Labor Creek nearby. The Battle of Vernon, a Civil War skirmish, was fought at the creek crossing on September 28, 1864, when the Vernon Home Guard battled a large Union column returning from the Battle of Marianna. The battle here is often described in the accounts of the Union raid that crossed Washington County from Pensacola to Marianna by Brig. Gen. Alexander Asboth. It was the deepest penetration of Confederate Florida by Union forces

during the Civil War and covered more land miles than Sherman's "March to the Sea." One of the casualties of that skirmish, Stephen Pierce, is buried in the adjacent cemetery. The existing church structure was completed in 1931.

2 GRAVE OF STEPHEN PIERCE

Stephen Pierce was born in 1818 and lived as a farmer in Washington County before the Civil War. He served in the Confederate Army as a private in Company H, 4th Florida Infantry. This unit, nicknamed the "Washington County Invincibles," was raised by men from the county and included many of Pierce's friends and neighbors. Discharged from

the army due to disability, Pierce was at home in 1864 when a call went out for all available men to assemble with the Vernon Home Guard in response to the reported attack on Marianna by Union troops. On September 28, 1864, he was with this unit when it fought the Federal cavalry column at the nearby Battle of Vernon. Pierce was killed in action and buried here after Union soldiers continued on their way.

3 BATTLE OF VERNON

This is the site of the Battle of Vernon, a Civil War skirmish fought on September 28, 1864. The encounter took place when a column of 700 Union soldiers reached the Hard Labor Creek crossing on its way back to Pensacola from the Battle of Marianna. The Vernon Home Guard, unaware that it was heading for Marianna on the same road being used by the returning Federals, reached the crossing from the opposite direction at the same time. The lead units in the Union column were from the 1st Florida Cavalry, a regiment formed from Confederate deserters and Southern



THE COX BUILDING

Unionists. Recognizing many of the men in the Home Guard as former friends and neighbors, the Union soldiers urged them to return to their homes. As Captain W.B. Jones was deliberating the situation, one of his men, Stephen Pierce, said something that angered the Federals. A shot rang out, followed by a volley from the Union cavalry. Captain Jones and his men returned fire. Pierce was killed, and one other Confederate was wounded before the Federals stormed the crossing, capturing Captain Jones and several of his men. The others engaged in a fighting retreat as far west as Vernon.

4 THE COX BUILDING

Originally built in 1928, this historic structure began as a mercantile store owned by James Cox. Eventually, the Wausau Post Office operated in the structure for several years. The Masonry Vernacular building features Flemish bond brickwork in alternating colors, creating an unusual basketweave pattern.

5 THE POSSUM MONUMENT

One of the most unique monuments in the United States, this quaint memorial honors the Opossum. A marsupial and distant relative of the kangaroo, the possum, as it is known in the South, is memorialized here for its role as food for area families during the dark days of the Great Depression. The monument inscription notes that the first Saturday of each August has been declared Possum Day in Florida by resolution of the state legislature. It was placed by the Wausau Community Development Club on August 7, 1982.

6 GAP LAKE

Gap Pond or Lake is one of a string of large, beautiful lakes stretching across the southern half of Washington County, Florida. Described by noted Florida historian and folklorist E.W. Carswell as being "unlike any other lake in Florida," Gap Lake is more than one mile long. This area was settled by Henry Hamilton Wells and his wife, Prudence Catherine Reaves Wells, in 1846. The Wells family operated a water-powered mill patronized by their neighbors and engaged in cattle ranching, sheep herding and other pursuits.



WAUSAU POSSUM MONUMENT Erected in 1982, this monument serves as an honor to the marsupial that saved starving early settlers of the Wausau community. Photo by Dale Cox (left)

7 PORTER LAKE

Another of Washington County's magnificent large natural lakes, Porter Lake or Pond, is a popular recreation spot today. In the 19th and 20th centuries, however, it was part of an important cattle ranching area. These were the days of "free range" livestock in Florida. Ranchers would brand or otherwise mark their cattle and then turn the animals loose to freely range and feed themselves. Pristine bodies of water like Porter Lake provided water for the herds, while the natural grasses on the surrounding hillsides provided food. The state began to change this method of ranching in the 1920s by requiring ranchers to "dip" their livestock in concrete vats filled with chemical-laden water to eradicate ticks. One of these vats was located near Porter Lake.

8 WALSINGHAM BRIDGE & ECONFINA CREEK

This historic little bridge has long served to cross Econfina Creek, a beautiful spring-fed stream that flows from its head in nearby Jackson County south to St. Andrew Bay. This stream, called a river by some early settlers, was crossed by Christian Apalachee Militia from Fort San Luis (Tallahassee) during a 1677 raid on a village of Chisca (Yuchi) Indians then living west of the Choctawhatchee River in what is now Walton County. In their account of the campaign, the Apalachee leaders mentioned crossing the creek several times and likely passing near this spot. In later years, before Florida became part of the United States in 1821, the region's first settlers used pole boats and small barges to carry cotton, sugar, timber and other commodities down the creek for shipment out to waiting markets. General Andrew Jackson and his Army crossed Econfina in Northwest Florida en route to Pensacola. The word "Econfina" means "natural bridge" in several of the Creek Indian dialects. It was named for a now collapsed natural limestone arch crossing downstream from this point.

9 GAINER FAMILY CEMETERY

This cemetery was established around 1837 by William Gainer, a surveyor and mathematician, who came to the

area in 1824 or 1825 and established his homestead and plantation on the west side of Econfina Creek. Gainer had served as a scout and surveyor in the U.S. Army during Andrew Jackson's 1818 invasion of Florida. During his service in West Florida, Gainer surveyed the Econfina area, ultimately bringing his family back to settle. They were prominent figures in 19th-century Washington County. William was appointed the first county surveyor in 1847 for a decade, and his son was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1857. These burials of these early Washington County settlers were originally marked with wooden crosses or memorials that have been lost to the elements over time. Thus, the oldest graves are unmarked. The oldest existing marked graves are those of James Brown and his wife, Annie Brown, who died in January 1858. James served as an adjutant of a regiment of Florida-mounted militia during the Second Seminole War.

10 DANIEL'S LAKE

Another of the beautiful natural lakes that characterize the terrain of southern Washington County, Daniel's Lake is the focus of an old legend about Creek Indian leader Holms and the First Seminole War of 1817–1818. Holms was the leader of a band of Red Stick families, so named because they posted a Red War club or "red stick" in a prominent place in their village when they were at war. The chief led his people to Florida after the Creek War of 1813–1814 and joined the Creek and Seminole towns that went to war against the United States in 1817–1818. U.S. troops attacked his town on the Choctawhatchee River under Captain Thomas H. Boyles in 1818. The chief was reported killed and his town destroyed, but legend holds that he survived and escaped with a handful of followers to an island in Daniel's Lake. The truth of the legend is unclear, but it preserves the history of a war that soon led to the cession of Florida from Spain to the United States.

11 GRAVE OF JOHN DAVID DYKES

Within the cemetery is the headstone of Greenhead Postmaster John Davis Dykes. His was among the first graves

in the cemetery near Greenhead on land given by G.W. Dykes, the village postmaster's father. John David Dykes was a well-known businessman and political leader during the early 20th century but met his fate at the hands of a lynch mob on April 15, 1916. The incident took place during an outbreak of fury that followed the ambush murder of turpentine company foreman S.A. Walker. Dykes and Walker had been engaged in disagreements for some time, and Dykes accused the turpentine company man of attempting to shoot him on April 14, one day before his own death. He escaped injury by hiding behind a tree. Within 24 hours, however, someone shot and killed Walker. Suspicion focused on Dykes, the postmaster of Greenhead and a well-known speaker at meetings of the Populist-party allied Farmers Alliance. A coroner's inquest was convened, and the finger was pointed at Dykes, who responded with pleas of innocence, pointing out that he had been fishing with family members at the time. Arrested and charged with murder, Dykes was taken to the county jail in Vernon, which was then the county seat. A mob entered the jail at 1:30 a.m. on April 16, 1916, took Dykes by force, dragged him a short distance from the jail and killed him with a volley of gunfire.

12 MOSS HILL CHURCH

This beautiful old sanctuary was built in 1857 by a congregation rooted in an 1820s Methodist mission in the area. Services were originally held in a blockhouse-fort that stood nearby Moss Hill, named for the moss-shrouded trees on the surrounding elevation that was then public land with two-horse stages trundling past four times a week in the 1830s. Igdaliah "Eagle Eye" Wood obtained title to 40 acres, which he deeded to the church. In a unique footnote of history, Wood's land patent was issued on the order of President Abraham Lincoln on December 5, 1861, even though Florida was then part of the Confederacy and at war with the United States. The simple Frame Vernacular church was built by its members, some of whom were enslaved Blacks, using lumber cut from the virgin pines of the surrounding area. A unique architectural



MOSS HILL CHURCH & CEMETERY

This simple Frame Vernacular church, built in 1857, is one of the oldest surviving church buildings in Florida. The adjoining cemetery contains many graves of the members of the Vernon Home Guard who fought in the Battle of Vernon of 1864. *Washington County Tourist Development Council*

feature of the church is the footprints on the ceiling. When the lumber was stacked on the ground during construction, people, bears, raccoons and other animals walked along the pine boards, leaving their footprints behind. The footprints remain visible on the sanctuary ceiling. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the church remains a rare example of unaltered frontier construction complemented by an undeveloped setting.

13 MOSS HILL CEMETERY

This large historic cemetery predates the 1857 church structure. Early settlers established this burial ground on a hilltop that is part of the elevated Holmes Valley Escarpment. Many of its oldest graves are unmarked today, as the original wooden crosses and markers were destroyed by the elements over time. Of

special note is the row of markers that commemorate some of the local men captured by Federal troops at the Battle of Vernon on September 28, 1864.

14 FORT AT MOSS HILL

This mysterious fort was one of the first structures ever built in what is now Washington County. Likely constructed by the early settlers who drifted into the Holmes Valley area in 1819 when Florida was a Spanish colony, the small log fort or blockhouse was a prominent landmark. The danger of attack by Red Stick warriors was still very real, so small forts or blockhouses stood at opposite ends of the valley. One was near the site where Moss Hill Church was built in the 1850s. The other, called the "Back Station," protected settlers who lived near the Big Spring. Tradition holds that Moss Hill Church first met in the fort.

15 EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH

This historic Baptist church was formed in Vernon prior to the Civil War, but the original sanctuary was destroyed by a hurricane in 1856. Meetings were held in the courthouse at Vernon for a short time and then in 1857 at the new Moss Hill Methodist Church. Services

continued at Moss Hill until after the Civil War when they were moved to a one-room schoolhouse on the present site. The school continued to double as a church until 1894, when a new sanctuary was completed. This structure was replaced by a new, larger structure in 1918 that can still be seen today.

16 VERNON CEMETERY

This historic cemetery was established during the 19th century as a settlement of Roche's Bluff and began to grow atop a bluff overlooking beautiful Holmes Creek. Among those buried here is Stephen J. Roche, a Washington County delegate and signer of the first Florida Constitution at St. Joseph, Florida in 1838–1839, who built a trading post on the creek, calling it "Roche's Bluff." The town of Vernon subsequently developed near this trading post. Veterans of the Second Seminole War, the Civil War and 20th-century wars are buried here, including Captain William B. Jones, one of the men captured during the Battle of Vernon.

17 VERNON SQUARE & VERNON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

This square, now greatly reduced in size by the expansion of Main Street/



HISTORIC IMAGE OF VERNON

This downtown scene, captured in 1900 on what is now Highway 79 (Main Street) through Vernon, also includes a glimpse of the original county courthouse. *Vernon Historical Society*

Moss Hill Church during the Reconstruction years that followed the Civil War. After gaining their freedom from slavery in 1865, these men and women began considering forming a church of their own. The Freedmen's Bureau, an office of the U.S. Government, recommended that African Americans separate themselves from the churches they had previously attended. The result was the founding of churches such as Sylvania. The church was represented at meetings of the AME denomination in the 1870s. Sylvania also served as a school for the education of African American children. The graveyard contains markers that commemorate the early members of the church.

State Highway 79, was the center of life in Vernon for many years. On December 9, 1825, Washington County became the third county in West Florida, and Vernon was named as the first permanent county seat of Washington County in 1851. Located at the intersection of a military road and Holmes Creek, Vernon became a natural crossroads for travelers and commerce between Tallahassee and Pensacola. Stagecoaches and small steamships transported passengers, mail, and merchandise through the town. A courthouse was built here around 1850, and Vernon remained the county seat until it was moved to Chipley in 1927. Holmes Creek was a navigable stream and paddlewheel steamboats regularly made their way up to Vernon, taking on cargoes of cotton, lumber, sugar and even

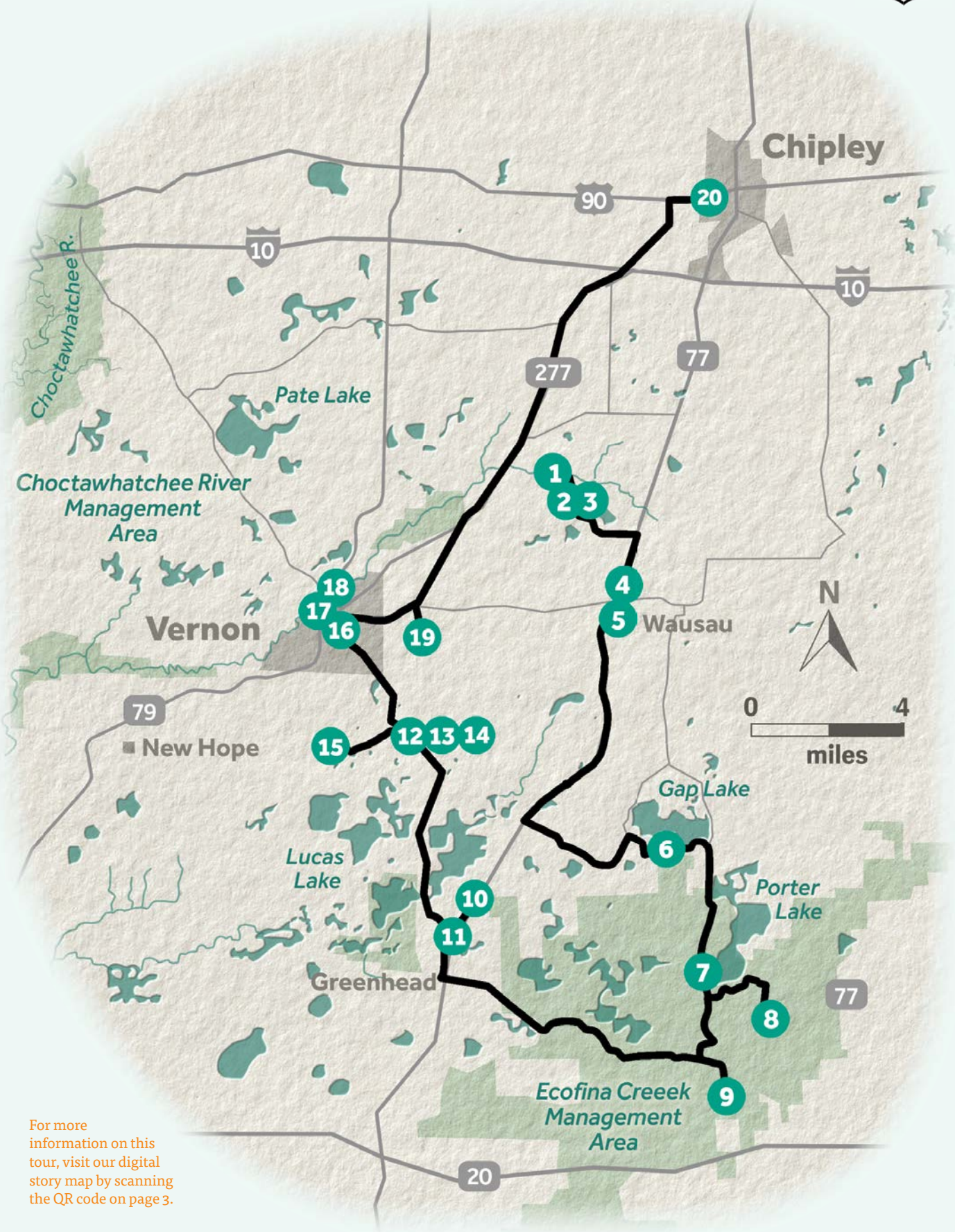
gopher tortoises. The latter were prized as a delicacy in northern markets and by ship captains who used them for fresh meat during long voyages. Vernon was the "World's Leading Gopher Tortoise Shipping Port" between 1885 and 1930.

18 HOLMES CREEK This beautiful spring-fed creek is one of the most pristine in Florida, containing a wide variety of wildlife species including freshwater fish, turtles, alligators, frogs, snakes and several species of waterfowl. It was originally called the Weekaywee Hatchee, "Spring Creek" or "Spring River," by Creek Indians, who were pursued into the valley and defeated by Federal troops. Holms' Town was a large Native American village where the Hoithlewaulee chief Holms and his Red Stick Creek followers lived. The name was changed to Holmes Creek during the early 1800s. The origin of the name is debated, with some believing it honors Creek Indian chief Holms, who migrated to the Florida Panhandle after the Creek War of 1813–1814. Recent research suggests that the name honors Dr. Holmes, an early settler of nearby Jackson County.

20 KUDZU MARKER Placed in 1967, this historical marker notes that kudzu, "the vine that ate the South," was introduced to the United States as a commercial crop at Chipley in 1902. It was first shown in the United States by Japan at the 1876 World's Fair and again at the 1893 "Great White City" Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Pleas of Chipley became big believers in the plant, which can be used as forage for livestock. Plantings of Kudzu soon made their way from Chipley to points throughout the Southeast, including other nurseries. When the Dust Bowl hit in the 1930s and 1940s, the Soil Conservation Service paid \$8 per acre to landowners who planted the vine, and the Kudzu boom was on.



19 SYLVANIA A.M.E. CHURCH This historic church was founded by African American members from nearby



For more information on this tour, visit our digital story map by scanning the QR code on page 3.

Springs, Creeks & the Choctawhatchee River Tour



THE COWFORD This section of the Choctawhatchee River was used by Native Americans and later the Spanish as a crossing point due to Cowford Island splitting the river in two. The island allowed herders to wade their cattle across the river at this point. *Washington County Tourist Development Council*

1 BURNT SOCK LANDING & BURNT SOCK SPRING

One of the more unusually named places in Florida, this landing and spring supposedly takes its name from the practice of hunters enjoying a warm fire after hunting trips in the floodplain swamps of Holmes Creek. On one such occasion, they allowed the warmth of the fire to lull them to sleep with their feet extended in the direction of the fire so their wet socks would dry. They awakened



HOLMES VALLEY (Top) This marker was placed on Native American reservation land to honor the rich Native American heritage of the valley, which served as a center of activity for thousands of years. *Photo by Dale Cox*

HOLMS TOWN (Bottom) This image is the archaeological dig site of Holms Town, a Red Stick village run by Chief Holms and raided and destroyed in 1818. *Photo by Dale Cox*

to the smell of their scorched socks, and the name Burnt Sock has been applied to the place ever since.

2 COTTON LANDING

This landing was an important shipping point for naval stores and other commodities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Brock & Company, a naval stores firm, operated a turpentine still here prior to the year 1900. The barrels of rosin were carried by barge from here downstream to Vernon, where they were transferred onto paddlewheel steamboats. This is one of the highest points on Holmes Creek ever served by regular commercial navigation. Captain Wyatt Parish operated barges as early as 1899.

3 HIGHTOWER LANDING & HIGHTOWER SPRING

Paddlewheel steamboats once churned past this point on their way to Vernon. Long before the first settlers arrived in the area, prehistoric American Indians hunted the forests around Hightower Landing and paddled on the creek in their dugout canoes. Adjoining the park is Hightower Spring, a third-magnitude spring flowing from active "sand boils" at the bottom of the spring pool bringing the water to the surface.

5 VALLOMBROSA

This site at the western end of the Holmes Valley escarpment provides a beautiful view of the lower lands that fade to the coast. Selected in 1821 by James Bright, a one-time North Carolina militia colonel, and his son-in-law, Nicholas H. Mitchell, as the place to develop their plantation, Bright built a massive three-story mansion here known locally as "Bright" or "Vallombrosa Mansion." Mitchell built the Mitchell Mansion nearby. They named their community Vallombrosa, a name that appears in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Stagecoach lines connected

Vallombrosa to Pensacola, where Bright and Mitchell maintained winter homes. Today, the community of New Hope sits in its place.

6 HOLMES VALLEY & HOLMS TOWN

Washington County was a center for Native American activity for thousands of years. It became the scene of military action during the Creek War of 1813–1814 and the First Seminole War of 1817–1818. A Red Stick chief named Holms (Holmes) left Alabama around the time of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814) and followed the Choctawhatchee River into Florida. Dr. Thomas G. Holmes of Alabama wrote that U.S. troops destroyed villages in the "Uchee and Holmes Old Fields" in 1815. Legend holds that the "Holmes Old Fields" were at today's Holmes Valley. The area was raided in 1818 during the First Seminole War. Captain Thomas H. Boyles reported that Holms was killed and his town destroyed. Boyles built a small fort near today's Moss Hill Methodist Church. The first American settlers arrived in



9 POTTER SPRINGS

Potter Springs is one of a series of natural springs that feed Mill Lake and Spring Run before flowing into the Choctawhatchee River. Over the years, its waters have powered the wheels of gristmills and sawmills.

10 CEDAR TREE LANDING & THE WRECK OF THE CAPTAIN FRITZ

Used by paddlewheel steamboats during the 19th and 20th centuries, Cedar Tree Landing has been a landmark for many years. It was here in 1936 that the paddlewheel steamboat Captain Fritz caught fire. Built in Mississippi in 1892 and named for her owner, Fritz Lienhard, she was 100 feet long, 21.6 feet wide and had a draft of 4.5 feet, shallow enough to travel on the Choctawhatchee River and Holmes Creek. She operated perhaps longer than any other vessel on the waterway. Carrying a large cargo of highly flammable pine rosin, the boat was cut loose from the shore and abandoned by her crew. Engulfed in flames and drifting down the river, she sank one mile north of Cowford Landing. The wreckage of the boat is still visible during periods of severe drought today.



BOYNTON CUTOFF & ISLAND

One of the most secluded spots in Washington County, Boynton Cutoff Landing was a hiding place for Creek Indians during the Creek and Seminole Wars, a rendezvous point for guerilla fighters, a hideout for deserters from both armies during the Civil War and a center of moonshine whiskey making during the Prohibition Era. [Washington County Historical Preservation Society](#)

1819. Most Muscogee (Creek) and other groups were removed from West Florida and sent west on the Trail of Tears in 1837–1838. A few remained by hiding in the woods, and their descendants still live in the area today.

7 MILLERS FERRY

This community grew around a ferry established on Holmes Creek by William Miller in 1824. Ferry service at the site continued to operate until 1951 when a modern bridge was built. At one point in the late 19th century, the community was home to the mercantile firms of F.W. Woodward, A.Q. Jones, Mobley & Brock and J.W. Cravey & Company. Paddlewheel steamboats stopped at Millers Ferry to take on cargo and commerce. The community's post office operated from 1879 to 1953.

8 BOYNTON CUTOFF LANDING & THE GHOST OF BOYNTON ISLAND

One of the most secluded spots in Washington County, Boynton Cutoff

Landing was a hiding place for Creek Indians during the Creek and Seminole Wars, a rendezvous point for guerilla fighters, a hideout for deserters from both armies during the Civil War and a center of moonshine whiskey making during the Prohibition Era. This area was the home of Moses "Mose" Boyington, who had relocated from Alabama decades before the Civil War. Moses served for a time in the Confederate Army but left military life without leave, returning to his home on Boynton Island. Largely isolated, the island became the hideout of a notorious gang of outlaws, mostly Confederate deserters, called Jim Ward's Raiders. They were responsible for carrying out several raids across Northwest Florida and South Alabama. After the war, Boyington resumed his trade as a logger. He often played the fiddle at night, and the sound became well-known to other loggers as they made their way down the river. After Boyington's death, these tough men of the woods claimed they could still hear old Mose fiddling and ghosts dancing as they passed the island.

11 EBRO

This town has existed as a community since the 19th century and is believed to be named for the Ebro River in Spain. It originated as a center for the timber and turpentine industries. Its post office was designated in 1897, and the community was later incorporated in 1967. The small rural community is unique among Northwest Florida towns in that Native Americans make up its second largest demographic group.

12 THE COWFORD

This spot gained its name because Cowford Island divides the Choctawhatchee River into two branches, making it possible for early herders to ford or wade their cattle over the river. It was an important crossing point for Native Americans long before the first Spanish explorers reached the area. The British noted the Cowford on a map prepared during the American Revolution. When Florida became part of the United States in 1821, it was a well-known crossing point on the route of the Military Road that led from Pensacola to St. Augustine. Cowford's usefulness as a crossing place ended with the construction of the State Road 20 Bridge, later known as the Ferguson Bridge.

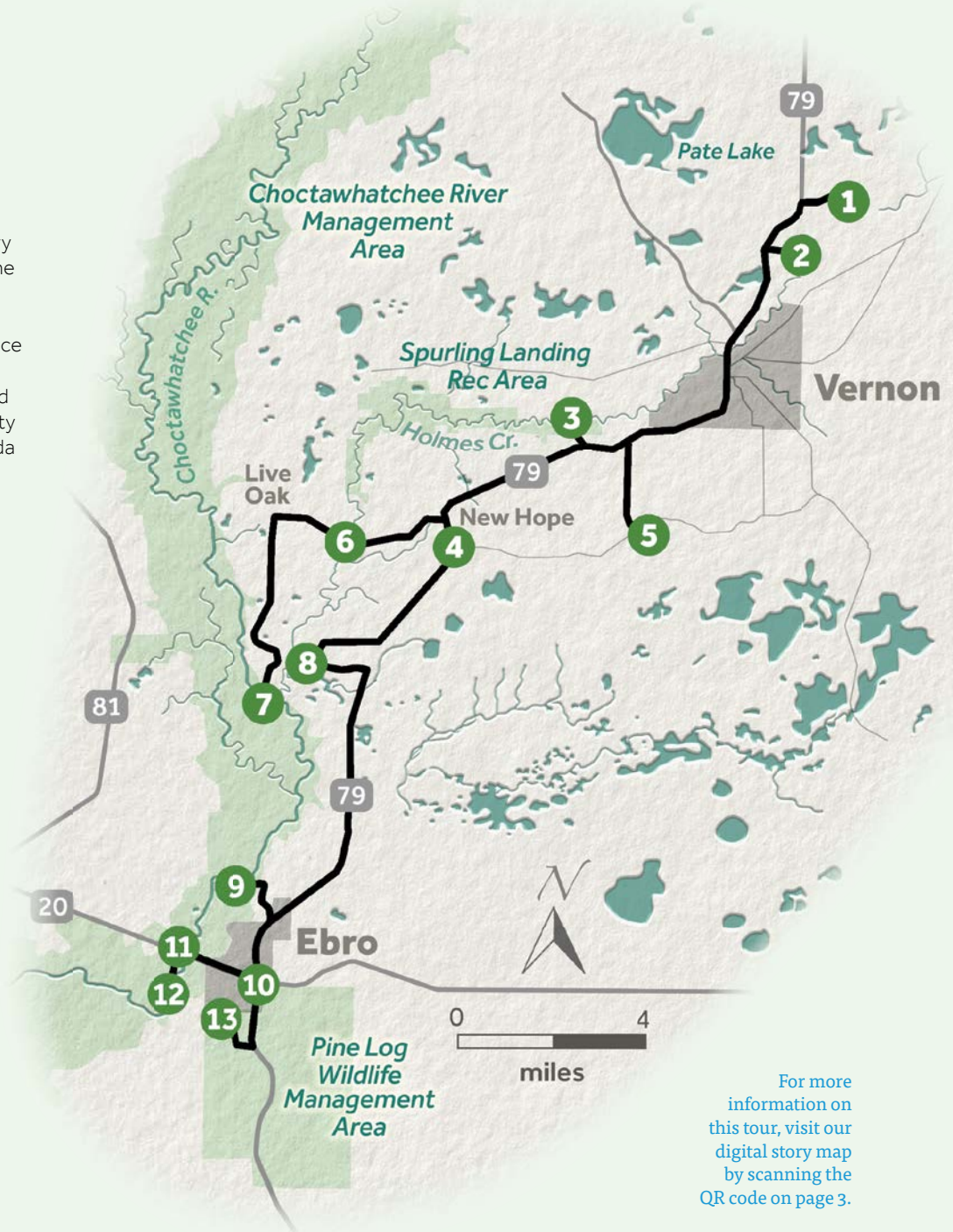
13 THE RAID ON CEDAR BLUFF

Downstream from this point is Cedar Bluff, an important early landing, Captain Gabriel Floyd's company from the 4th Florida Infantry was camped at Cedar Bluff on February 8, 1864. The Confederates were surprised at 10 p.m. that night by a raid by a part of 35 men from the 7th Vermont Veteran Volunteers and what would become the 1st Florida Cavalry (U.S.), a regiment of Confederate deserters and

Southern Unionists. The Confederates surrendered without firing a shot. When they left camp on February 9, they were charged on by a company of Confederate cavalrymen. The prisoners were freed, and half of the Union soldiers were captured, along with their arms, ammunition and teams of mules.

14 PINE LOG STATE FOREST
Pine Log State Forest is

Florida's oldest state forest, with its original 6,670 acres purchased in 1936 from the Henderson-Waits Lumber Company. Today, it contains approximately 7,000 acres in Washington and Bay Counties. Home to a diverse mixture of animal and plant species, it is operated by the Florida Forest Service for management of timber, wildlife, outdoor recreation and ecological restoration.



For more information on this tour, visit our digital story map by scanning the QR code on page 3.



DOUGLAS FERRY This ferry was established by Scottish immigrant Alexander Douglas as a high water crossing of the Choctawhatchee River. The ferry stayed in service until the Old Spanish Trail National Highway was completed in 1929. *Photo by Dale Cox*

Raiders, River & Sacred Harp Singing Tour

1 HINSON CROSSROADS
This charming community owes its existence to hogs. Harrison and Joshua Hinson, two brothers from Jackson County, and Joshua's son, Oscar, came here around 1887. Seeking land to homestead, they released five hogs, then returned home. After a season, they returned to find that the swine had flourished. Relocating with their families, the community soon grew to the area

known as Hinson's Crossroads. At its height, the village was home to several businesses, including a grocery store and a millinery shop where women and girls bought hats and bonnets.

2 PLEASANT GROVE CHURCH & SACRED HARP SINGING
This historic church and cemetery were founded during the 1880s by members of the Hinson family as they settled at

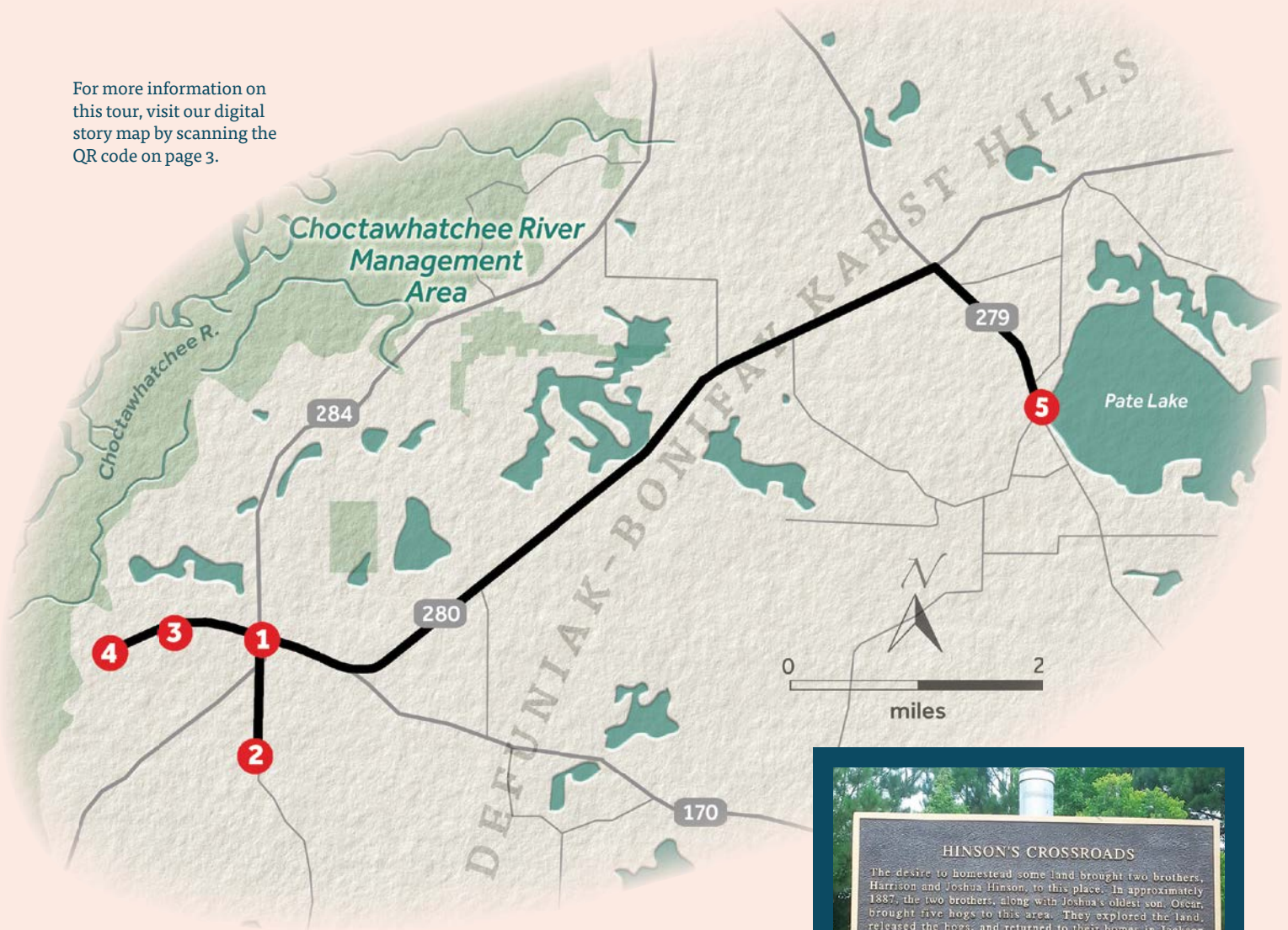
Hinson Crossroads. It was also the location of Pleasant Grove School, established in 1883. The church was the location of many Sacred Harp singings, or four-note singings, over the years. This unique and beautiful form of choral music originated in the South during the 1840s. One Sacred Harp session at Pleasant Grove lasted for three days.

3 DOUGLAS FERRY ROAD
This historic road, worn deep into the earth by more than 175 years of traffic, was a main traffic route for many years from Washington County to all points west. Established in the 1830s, it led from Miller's Ferry over Holmes Creek to Douglas Ferry on the Choctawhatchee River. Approved by Florida's Territorial Legislature, the road became an important stagecoach and mail route. It was a predecessor of today's historic Highway 90 and remained in use as a major route until the Old Spanish Trail highway was completed in the 1920s.

SACRED HARP SINGING Sacred Harp Singing, also known as "Four Note" singing, was a beautiful form of choral music that originated in the South during the 1840s. *State Archives of Florida*



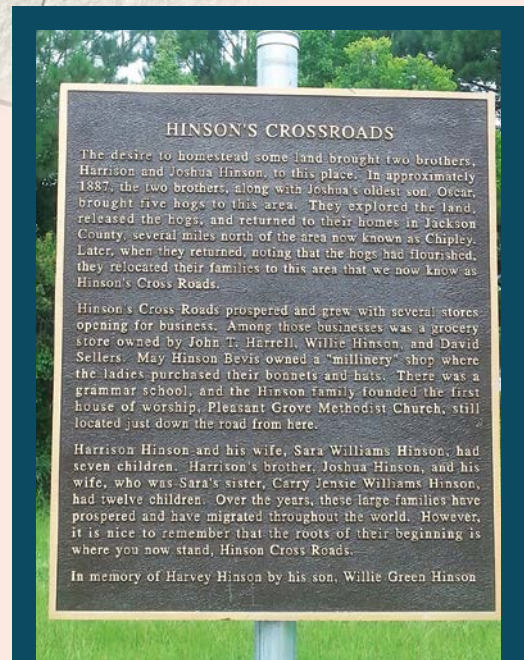
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4 DOUGLAS FERRY
A ferry was established at this site during the early days of U.S. settlement in Florida by Alexander Douglas. As part of the large community of Scottish immigrants and their descendants that settled in the Euchee Valley of today's Walton County, Douglas was impressed by the potential of this site for a high-water route crossing of the Choctawhatchee River. The ferry operated until the completion of the Old Spanish Trail national highway, which made its continued use unnecessary.

5 PATE LAKE
This beautiful lake was originally called Yates Lake, most likely due to

its proximity to the Yates Homestead, and later called Pate Pond. Native Americans hunted and fished the lake area for hundreds of years before the first U.S. settlers arrived. The lake is more than one mile long from east to west and is unique from other large lakes in the county because it is part of the DeFuniak-Bonifay Karst Hills. The rolling hills around Pate Lake were formed by stream erosion thousands of years ago as a river delta flowed across what is now the Florida Panhandle. The surrounding land contributed to the economic growth of the region with its virgin timber, which was turpentine for the naval stores industry and logged for the sawmills.



HINSON CROSSROADS This marker tells the story of Harrison and Joshua Hinson, two brothers who created the community in 1887, when they left their hogs on the property and found that they flourished. *Washington County Tourist Development Council*



The Washington County Historical Society Museum

is housed in the Chipley Farmer's Market Complex, built in 1989 in the vernacular of the original Chipley Railroad Depot.

685 7th Street
Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 326-9498

wchistorical@gmail.com

WashingtonCountyHistoricalSociety.com



The Vernon Historical Society Museum

is housed inside the historic Vernon High School. The school was originally built in 1931, serving as a school until 2006.

2808 Yellow Jacket Drive
Vernon, FL 32462
(850) 535-2444

admin@vernonfloridahistoricalsociety.org

VernonFloridaHistoricalSociety.org





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