HISTORIC MARION COUNTY

Ocklawaha River
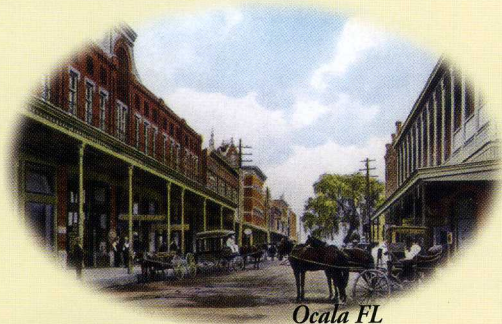
Ocala FL

Street In McIntosh

History

Marion County's earliest inhabitants were the Paleo Indians (c. 12000 years ago), the Timucuan speaking Ocali and Acuera Indians (c. 2,000 years ago to the 1750's), and the Seminole Indians (c. early 1700's until c. late 1840's when they retreated to south Florida).

The land area, which now encompasses Marion County, has seen five flags fly over its territory: the Spanish flag (1513-1562), (1565-1763) and (1783-1821), the French flag (1562-1565), the flag of Great Brittan (1763-1783), and the stars and stripes of the United States of America (1821 to the present), except when Florida seceded from the Union during the War Between the States, also referred to as the Civil War, and raised the Confederate flag (1861-1865).

Marion County was established March 3, 1844, by the Territorial Florida legislature, however, historical events took place on Marion County lands long before this date. The Spanish granted eleven land grants within present day Marion County boundaries that were working sugar and cattle plantations when the United States raised the stars and stripes over the Territory of Florida in July 1821.

Supplies for inland Marion County were transported from the St. Johns River by barge and steamboat on the Ocklawaha River, to the headwaters of Silver River, not far from where the Indian Agency for East Florida was situated in 1823. Within Silver Springs Attraction is a statue of Osceola, the Seminole leader who led the uprising of the Indians in 1835 and 1836 against the area's white settlers and the soldiers stationed at Fort King.

A historic site marker for Fort King identifies the location of the 1827 fort which has been designated as a National Historic Landmark. After the Second Seminole War ended in 1842, many settlers came to Marion County to farm 160-acre parcels of rich soil under the Armed Occupation Act.

Florida became a state in 1845. Marion County officials selected **Ocala** as the county seat and had it surveyed in 1846. Lots sold quickly with many of the surrounding farmers building houses in town. With many new settlers arriving, the county grew in the 1850's. Cotton, sugar, cattle and vegetables thrived on large plantations and small farms throughout the county, where numbers of black slaves worked. Florida seceded from the Union in 1861. While Marion County men fought against the North, the women managed the plantations and farms. Their cattle provided beef and their sugar mills provided sugar for the Confederate army.

Development during reconstruction years is represented by the Tuscawilla Park historic district (c. 1870), located north of Silver Springs Blvd.. The earliest part of downtown Ocala, south of Silver Springs Blvd., was destroyed by fire in 1884 and rebuilt. Downtown Ocala and the adjoining S.E. Fort King street vicinity date from 1885. After the Civil War, many black families worked for their former owners in exchange for land. Black people built homes, churches, businesses and served in political office. Many attended Old Fessenden Academy at **Martin**, Howard Academy in Ocala, and worshiped at Mount Zion AME Church.

The railroad pushed into north central Florida in 1881, replacing the steamboat and horse and wagon which had moved everything for the early settlers. Nineteenth century communities such as **Citra, McIntosh, Reddick, Sparr, Anthony** and **Flemington** flourished. The railroads provided faster transportation north for the citrus fruit which replaced cotton as the major cash crop.

Citrus grew in abundance in the northeastern part of the county on the banks of Lake Kerr and along the Ocklawaha River. Part of the 1885 Quaker settlement at **Kerr City** appears much as it was originally built. New citrus varieties were originated in the southeast communities around Lake Lillian in **Belleview** and in **Weirsdale** and **Ocklawaha**. These historic communities also date from 1885.

The railroad extended into southwestern Marion County in 1888. That same year, hardrock phosphate was discovered near **Dunnellon**. Phosphate, used for fertilizer and munitions, became a major industry in the county during the late 1800's and early 1900's. The Dunnellon Boomtown Historic District dates from 1889.

Tourists and sportsmen also came by steamboat from the North. They explored the Ocklawaha and the Withlacoochee rivers as well as Orange Lake, Lake Kerr and Lake Weir. They stayed at hotels in theses communities advertised in glowing terms by developers. Many remained, built Victorian frame vernacular houses, settled down to grow citrus and vegetables and raise livestock. Rapid growth continued in Ocala and Marion County throughout he early 1900's.

Ocala (1846)

1. **Ocala Historic District**, South of Silver Springs Boulevard: 265 buildings covering 55 square blocks; brochure at Ocala Chamber of Commerce

2. **Tuscawilla Historic District**, North of Silver Springs Boulevard: 27 historic homes

3. **Ocala Historic Commercial District**, includes the square and the four blocks facing the square

4. **Westside Ocala Historic District**, bounded by W. Silver Springs Boulevard, N.W. 4th Street and N.W. 12th Avenue

5. **Ritz Historic Inn (c.1925)**, 1205 E. Silver Springs Boulevard
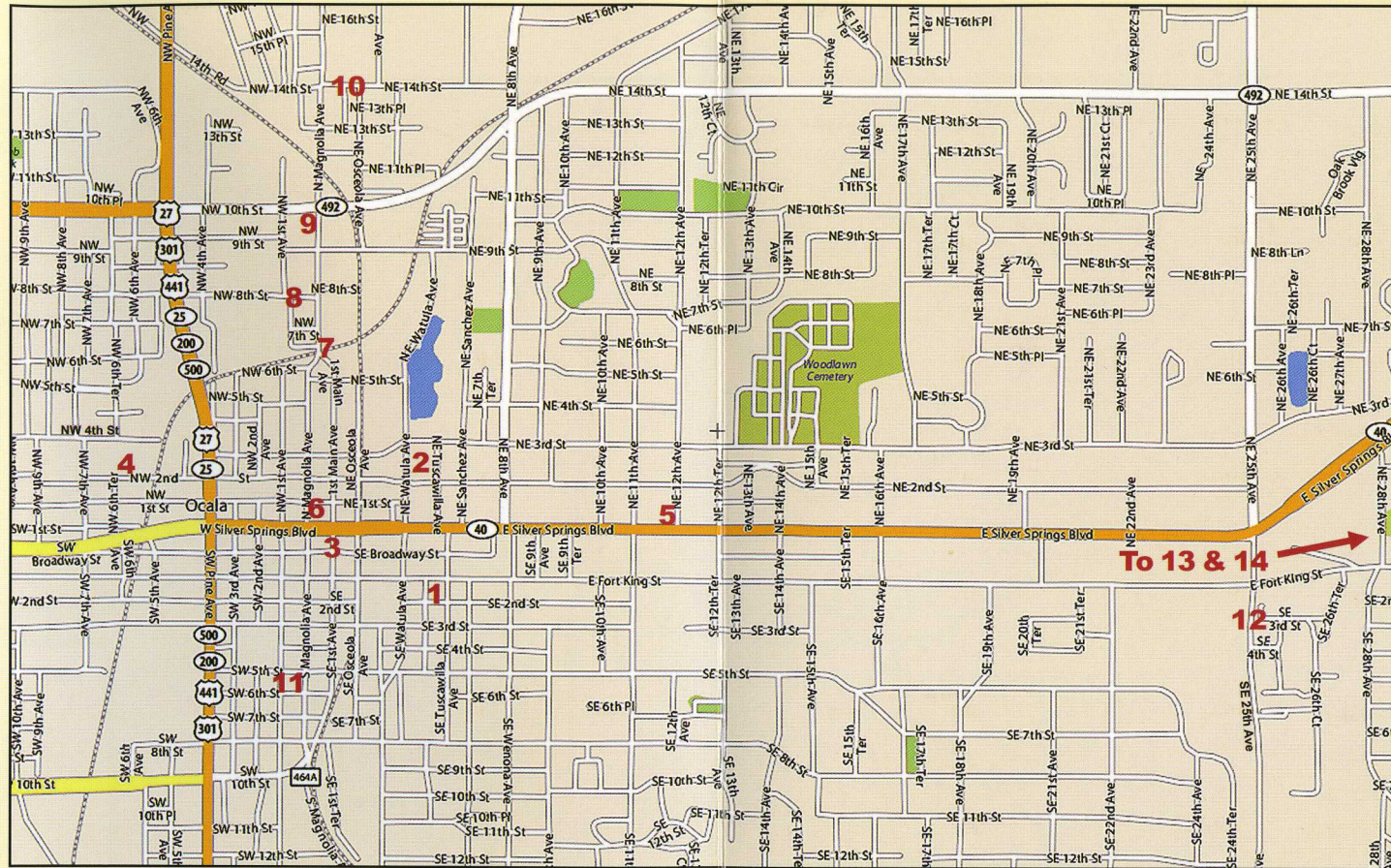
6. **Marion Hotel (1927)**, 108 N. Magnolia Avenue

7. **Union Station (1918)**, 531 N.E. 1st Avenue

8. **Evergreen Cemetery (1850)**, N.W. 8th Street between N.W.1st Ave. and N.W.4th Street

9. **Coca-Cola Bottling Plant (c.1930)**, 939 N. Magnolia Avenue

10. **Temple Cemetery (1873)**, corner of N.E. 1st Ave. and N.E. 14th St. (Magnolia Avenue)

11. **Mount Zion AME Church (1894),** 623 S. Magnolia
    Avenue

12. **Marion County Museum of History,** East Hall (1936),
    McPherson Government Complex, 625 S.E. 25th
    Avenue: collections of books, artifacts and exhibits on
    loan from the Marion County Historical Commission
    and other benefactors

13. **Fort King Site (1827),** 3925 S.E. Ft King Street:
    Historical Marker

14. **Fort King Burial Ground (1835-1842),** 3811 S.E.
   Fort King Street: Historical Marker

15. McIntosh (1882) - U.S. 441
Victorian era town with 68 sites listed on the Historic Register that includes: homes, four churches, commercial buildings, restored rail depot that houses a railroad museum (open by appointment) and cemetery (1893); tour map and history available at the town office.

16. Center Point Cemetery (c.1880's) – U.S. 441.

17. Orange Lake Community (1865) – U.S. 441.

18. Shiloh, school (c. 1902) and cemetery (1883) – CR 320.

19. Flemington (c.1840's), Baptist church Cemetery (1847) – CR 329.

20. Citra (1881) – U.S. 301
Victorian era town includes homes, United Methodist and Baptist Churches (1880), bank building (1922) and cemetery (1883); northern most orange grove in the county.

MARION COUNTY HISTORIC SITES
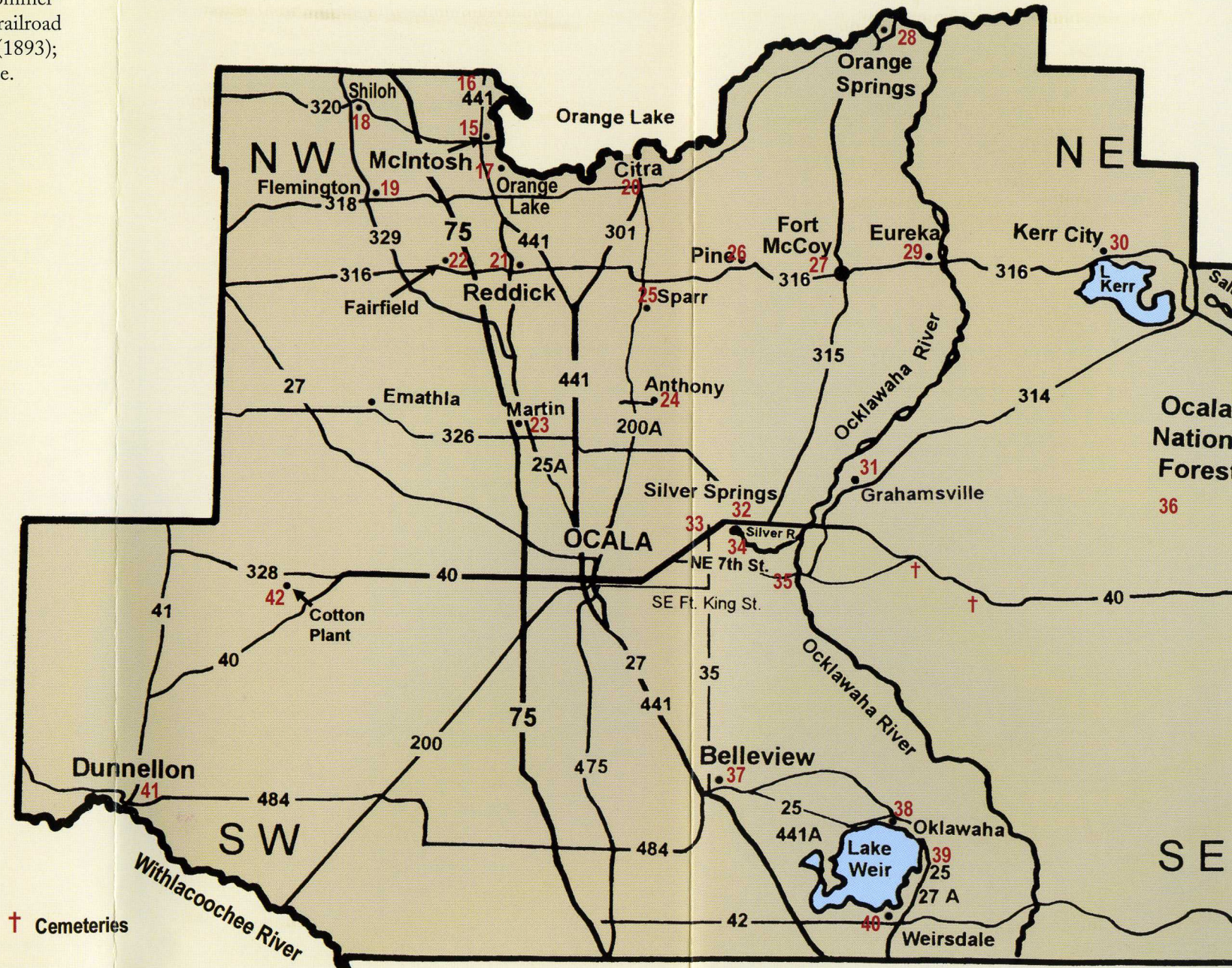
† Cemeteries

21. Reddick (1882) - CR 25A
Victorian era town including: homes, United Methodist Church (1876), Presbyterian Church (1884), bank building (1923), school (1925) and Millwood cemetery (1865).
Nearby:

22. Fairfield (c.1850's) Presbyterian Church and cemetery (1905) - CR 225 and 316.

23. Martin (1850) – CR 25A
Fessenden Academy (est.1868), now Fessenden Elementary School.

Northeast

24. Anthony (1882) – CR200A
United Methodist Church (1880); cemetery (1857).

25. Sparr (1856) - CR 200A and CR 329
(Originally Souterville), United Methodist Church (1893).

26. Pine United Methodist Church (prior to 1856 organized as Andrews Chapel) – CR 316

27. Fort McCoy (1836) – CR 315 and CR316
(Originally, Fort MacKay), community cemetery (1854).

28. Orange Springs (c. 1820) – CR 315
Community Church - formerly established as Methodist Episcopal Church South - and cemetery (1845), Townsend House hotel (1912).

29. Eureka (c.1850's), cemetery (1869) – CR316.

30. Kerr City (1885) – CR 316
Historic District: Quaker settlement.

31. Grahamsville (1885) – CR 314
T.W. Randall House (1887), private, may be seen from the road.

Nearby: ✝ Ocklawaha Bridge Baptist Cemetery (1889); ✝ Waldena Cemetery (c. 1854)

East Of Ocala

32. Silver Springs (c.1820), SR 40, East of Ocala
Named for the headwaters of Silver Springs and Silver River, noted worldwide for their unsurpassed beauty and crystal clear waters; providing transportation for the earliest explorers and then serving as a depot and railhead for commercial riverboat traffic for settlers in the area.

33. Silver Springs Attraction, SR 40, East of Ocala

34. Silver River Museum, in the Silver River State Park, SR 35; open weekends 9AM –5PM

35. Marshall Plantation Site (1855), N.E. 7th Street (Sharpes Ferry Rd.) at the Ocklawaha River Bridge: Historical Marker for Marion County's only Civil War battle

36. Ocala National Forest (1908), SR 40, East of the Ocklawaha River.
The oldest National Forest east of the Mississippi River; covers 430,000 acres

Southeast

37. Belleview (1885) U.S.441
The town of Belleview was platted around Lake Lillian. A movement was started to make this center of the old town (the former Nine Mile Pond-the distance from Fort King) into a historic district because of the historic structures and shaded old streets.
Of particular interest: the old library, believed to be one of the first libraries in Florida and the Grange building on Stetson Avenue, which is being restored.

38. **Ocklawaha (1885)**, CR 25
Alfred Ayer House (c.1885), private, may be seen from the road.
Robert Bullock House (c.1885), S.E. 119th Ct., private, may be seen from the road.
T.R. Ayer House (c.1885), S.E. 128 Place Rd., private, may be seen from the road.

39. **East Lake Weir,** CR 25
James Riley Josselyn House (c.1895), private, may be seen from the road.
Lake Weir Yacht Club (1909), private club.

40. **Weirsdale (1885)**, CR 42
Scenic Victorian Historic Area.

Southwest

41. **Dunnellon (1889)**, U.S. 41
Boomtown Historic District: Many of the houses from West Pennsylvania Avenue to Park Avenue once were home to supervisors of the early phosphate mines. Presently, many are antique and specialty stores. The old train station on U.S.41 (c.1908), houses a museum, open Tuesdays and during community events. A map for a walking tour of the area is available at the depot.
Dunnellon Presbyterian Church (1893)
Rockwell Cemetery (1889), now part of Dunnellon Memorial Gardens
Albertus Vogt House – "Rosebank" – (1889), private residence

42. Cotton Plant (c.1850), CR 328
St. John's United Methodist Church (1892) and cemetery (1852)

HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

To Learn More, Visit Or Contact:

Ocala/Marion County Chamber of Commerce – 110 Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala (352) 629-8051

Marion County Public Library – 2720 E. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala (352) 671-8551

Marion County Historical Commission - P.O. Box 5002 *4383*, Ocala, Florida 34476

Historic Ocala Preservation Society – HOPS, - (352) 351-1861

Marion County Museum of History – East Hall, McPherson Government Complex, Ocala (352) 629-2773 *236-5245*

Marion County Black History Museum – Howard Academy, 306 N.W. 7th Ave., Ocala (352) 629-7082

Silver River Museum – Silver River State Park, (352) 2326-5401; silverrivermuseum.com

Ocala National Forest – Ocklawaha Visitor's Center, SR 40 and CR 315

Ft. McCoy Public Library – (352) 438-2560

McIntosh Town Office – (352) 591-1047 or www.townofmcintosh.org.

Reddick Public Library – (352) 438-2566

Belleview, Citra, Dunnellon and Marion County have historical societies

Marion County Clerk of the Court – www.marioncountyclerk.org, links to historical documents, photos and videos

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